

11, has had a stormy past and will be officially rededicated Saturday. The building was gutted by fire in 1968 and was the focus of campus controversy

The fire protection system expels halon gas to replace the oxygen supply and smother flames, Wallentine said. When smoke detectors sense a fire, buzzers give occupants of the laboratory 30 to 40 seconds to evacuate. After that time, gas is released into the room, taking about five seconds to fill it. The gas system is used rather than a water sprinkler system to avoid damaging the equipment, he said.

The portion of Nichols occupied by the department is also equipped with a line-conditioning system. The system takes out high voltages in power lines to protect the computer equipment in the event of a power surge, he said.

Another safety feature of the hall is a battery back-up system for the mini-computers in the building. This enables the department to shut down the mini-computer system slowly in the event of a power failure.

In addition to ensuring the safety of high-tech equipment, renovation plans allowed for construction of an aesthetically pleasing facility.

The three-story, oak-rich atrium

makes use of natural light provided by a sun roof. Through the course of a day, shadows play on the natural colors in the deep and narrow lobby. High-backed oak benches nestled into the east side of the atrium afford a retreat from the bright afternoon sun.

In January, a 10-foot by 48-foot mural is scheduled to be placed on the east wall of the atrium, directly above the entrance to Nichols Theatre.

Jerry Katlin, former director of student alumni programs for the KSU Alumni Association, said the mural would highlight student achievement and play upon colors and lines already found in the building.

To offer students greater experience in the performing arts, Nichols Theatre, which will also be used by students as a performance laboratory, was included in the construction plans. The theater's stage, lighting and audio equipment will be used primarily for rehearsals and productions. It will also be utilized for classes in stage

production, said Lew Shelton, associate professor of speech.

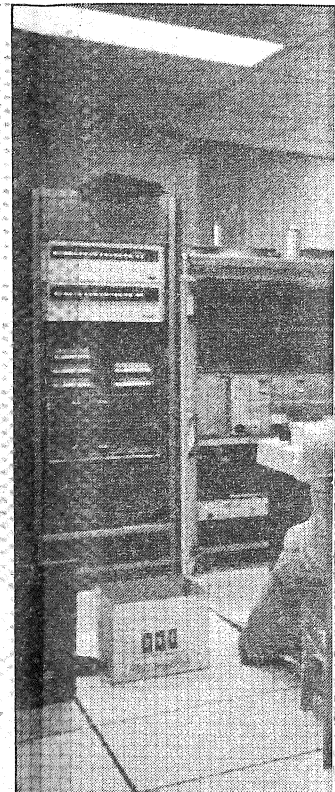
"It's very comfortable. The audience will feel close to anything that happens on stage. It will heighten the effects. It will show how good the students here really are," Shelton said of the thrust-configuration stage.

Thrust configuration allows seating on three sides. The stage can also be converted to a theater-in-the-round, with seating on all four sides of the stage.

The basement of Nichols is being used by Farrell to house between 4 and 5 miles of adjustable shelving for storage of serials, monographs and documents, Cool said.

Nichols has come full circle. Its life was extinguished by flames, but the building is once again alive with the sound of people.

A structure that once stood as a symbol of student rights, a symbol of aesthetics and a symbol of the inability of campus administrators to make a decision, now stands as a symbol of what can be accomplished when a decision is followed through.



1950

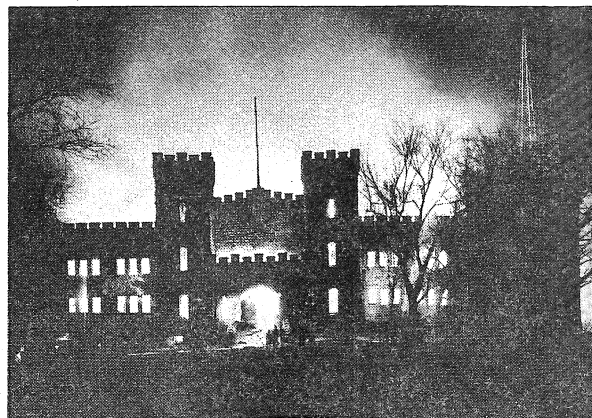


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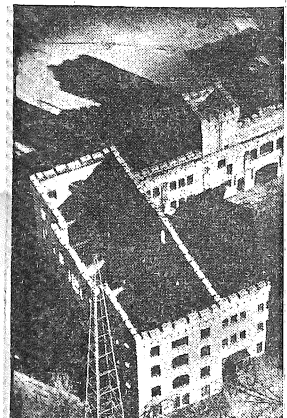
Forced to cling from the rafters in Nichols Gymnasium, proponents of a new sports facility took the opportunity to protest the

1968



The 57-year-old Nichols Hall went up in flames Dec. 13, 1968, and illuminated the sky for firefighters and onlookers. The

19



Nichols Gym vacant since 19 swimming pool building in 191