

AN HISTORICAL STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC
SPEAKING ACTIVITIES ON THE CAMPUS OF
KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY 1864 - 1951

by

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B.S., Kansas State University, 1976

A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Speech

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1977

Approved by:



Major Professor

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Acknowledgments

I would like to express my thanks to all of those who made this study possible. First, a word of thanks to my major professor, Dr. William Burke, for all of his helpful suggestions. I would also like to thank Dr. Norma Bunton and Dr. Harold Nichols for consenting to be members of my committee and for all of their helpful comments and criticism. A special word of thanks must go to Mr. Evan Williams, Special Collections Librarian, for all of his valuable help and information. Most of all, I would like to thank my wife, Ashanna, and my parents for giving me the support and encouragement needed to complete this project.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report has been to take an historical look at the way public speaking activities emerged on the Kansas State University campus. The process of public speaking is traced from its beginning, in 1864, to the point that it became an event which was highly selective and competitive, in 1951.

The first literary society on this campus was started in 1864. These societies continued to gain popularity, until a total of ten societies were established. These societies flourished until the 1940's. It is the consensus of this report that several factors influenced their decline. Fraternities and sororities were gaining popularity, and they could offer more social activities of a different nature. The process of selecting a debate team to represent the University was also becoming much more rigorous. Not everyone had the opportunity to be involved in inter-collegiate debate. The last factor contributing to the decline was World War II; students had very little time to be involved in the work of the societies.

During the time that literary societies were popular, the students took part in many inter-society contests. These contests consisted of orations, declamations, debates, and musical numbers; however, with the passing of time, intercollegiate debate became more popular and the other activities died out.

After World War II, and the literary societies died out, debate became a much more selective and competitive activity. Public speaking was no longer an activity in which all students could participate. This was because the intercollegiate public speaking activities had become very selective and competitive in nature.

Of the hundreds of campus organizations and clubs that have been established over the years, the early concept of the literary society was probably most important in terms of providing social and educational agencies for the student. For almost 200 years, these societies played a major part in the education of thousands of students, while at the same time providing a center for the students' social life. Through the organization of these societies, the student was given excellent training in the art of public speaking, while also gaining social involvement with his peers. These literary societies, which were generally started by the students, carried considerable force, and by the late 1800's they had earned a distinguished and honored place in the colleges and universities of the United States.¹

In the early American colleges, the students' social and educational activities were closely controlled by the school administration. The daily life of the student was designed to reduce to a minimum the time the devil might find employment for idle hands and idle minds.²

Although the students' daily activities were closely supervised, their schedule did offer them some free time, and it was necessary for the student to find some approved method of working off this excess energy. In most of these early colleges, the company of ladies was usually forbidden during college sessions, organized athletics were unheard of, and "even the privilege of reading contemporary periodicals, much less current fiction, was denied him because the ordinary college library contained few if any 'authors who have written within these 30 years.'"³

The privilege of being able to socialize with fellow students was practically the only legitimate form of entertainment that these students could take part in. Because of the limited social opportunities available

to the student, it was to be expected that some type of organization, offering social and competitive activities, would be established on college campuses.

Although religious societies for students existed as early as 1716, the first college literary and debate society appears to have been the Spy Club, established at Harvard in 1722.⁴ With the Spy Club taking the first step in establishing formal literary societies, other major colleges soon followed. By 1825 most of the prominent eastern colleges had at least one literary society.

Literary Societies began to gain popularity and many of them were formed as soon as a new school had opened its doors. In most cases, they were formed a year or two after the first classes were scheduled, but at Hamilton College, the Phoenix and the Union literary societies were founded the year in which the college was chartered.⁵

As was stated earlier, literary societies proved to be a social and educational organization for the students. They gave students the opportunity to form a social life with their peers, and they also provided valuable practice in mastering and improving their debating and public speaking skills. Although early society records indicate that the members were involved in spelling contests, importing prominent speakers, and conducting exhibitions for the enjoyment of the public, their primary focus from the 1820's until their decline, was on public speaking and debate.

Before the rise of literary societies most American colleges only approved of one form of public debate. This form of debate was the Latin Syllogistic disputation, which was first introduced in medieval universities.⁶ Its format was controlled very strictly, by rules found in prominent textbooks on logic.

Although the format was very simple, the debate itself was a very complicated project, usually following this pattern: the college president or a professor selected a question dealing with one of the subjects taught; this question, which was generally accepted as the truth, was to be defended by one person, chosen by the person who picked the topic; the other students were to be opposed to the question. They raised logical objections, which the defender either affirmed or denied.

The defender opened the debate by reading a carefully worded speech. The speech, which was in Latin, stated and defined the question, and also presented the strongest logical arguments. The rest of the class stated objections to the case. These objections were presented as syllogisms which denied the major or minor premise. The defendant had to counter the arguments with syllogisms of his own. The arguments continued until "truth" logically won.⁷

Because this type of debate was so formal and closely supervised by members of the faculty, the literary societies quickly adopted types of exercises that were more flexible and fun to take part in. Although these new forms of public speaking were still carefully worded and well thought out, most literary societies banned the use of Latin, and began to present the exercises in English. There were probably two major reasons that the societies took this action.⁸ First, the societies were established so that the student would have some type of social life and be relieved of some of the classroom boredom. Since Latin was a major study, the students probably wanted to forget it for awhile. Also, English was the primary language and it was much easier to speak and listen to; thus, it was the most natural language for them to use. The second reason had to do with the proof of

their arguments. In the Latin exercises use of emotional proof was expressly forbidden, while the English disputation actually encouraged the use of emotion. This added an extra dimension to the art of argumentation, and thus made it more exciting.

The next method of public speaking to become popular was the Extempore disputation or extemporaneous debating which, by the end of the eighteenth century, most literary societies used as an additional form of debate. Although this was a very popular form of debate, it is not clear what this style involved. The extemporaneous styles seemed to range from a debate within a debate, which was arranged in a very impromptu manner, to the debate form known today, in which the debators are assigned a topic in advance to provide them time to adequately prepare the material.⁹

Intersociety debating became popular in the early 1800's. This type of debating seems to have developed from the intense rivalry which existed among the societies on the same campus. Each society wanted to prove that it was the best, and because of this, intersociety debating was born. From these intersociety debates, it was a very short step into intercollegiate debating.

Aristophanes once said "Nothing is more useful to man than to speak correctly," and the activities of the literary societies seem to have reinforced his statement, for through literary societies some of the greatest names in American oratory got their start.

In the so-called Golden Age of oratory in America, Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, John Calhoun, and Patrick Henry began their careers in public speaking while they were members of literary societies.¹⁰ Daniel Webster received his speech training at Dartmouth University, where he was a member

of the United Friends literary society. He built his reputation as an orator by taking part in their weekly debates. Henry Clay helped form a literary society while attending Richmond, and it was there that he was able to improve his speaking voice. John Calhoun was a member of the debating club at Waddel's school, and it was there that he received his training for his later debates with Webster and Clay. Patrick Henry was not a member of a formal literary society, but he received basic training in an informal discussion group that was set up in his general store.

Other prominent figures who were involved in literary societies and debating were Abraham Lincoln, William Seward, Booker T. Washington and James Garfield.¹¹ This list of names is by no means complete, but it helps to clarify the generalization that many of America's most prominent speakers were members of literary societies.

It is also important to remember that it was not the literary societies themselves, but the training and experience that they provided that helped improve the skills of the speaker. It is, therefore, easy to see why this sort of activity should continue, even if the formal literary societies disappeared along the way.

When reading about the early literary societies, it is easy to stereotype the members as very serious people involved in discussing the great public questions of the day, or as persons trying to find the ultimate truth. However popular this view may be, it is not a complete picture of the societies. These societies also had their share of practical jokers, unmotivated students, and trouble-makers.

Most literary society minutes are very colorless and dull accounts of the meetings, even though evidence points to the fact that a secretary

occasionally recorded subjective comments in the notes. Even though the accounts of a few instances cited here certainly do not justify wide generalizations about the excitement of literary societies, they give some insight into the lighter side of the societies.

One of the major problems facing the societies was that of disorderly conduct among members. The Philo Society of Jefferson College seems to have had a large problem with the conduct of its members.¹² In reports, prepared by the society's presidents, the charge of disorderly conduct and poor preparation of materials appears many times between 1851-1861. On May 18, 1854, the report of the president noted that in one meeting, an intoxicated member drew a weapon on another member. Worse yet, one member reported that incident to the faculty. Obscene language was also a problem; many societies fined their members for any such outbreak.¹³ K-State was not without its problems of this type, for it can be noted in the Bluemont Society minutes of November 11, 1865, that Wendell Williston was expelled from the organization for "misconduct toward the society."

Lack of preparation for scheduled activities was also a major problem which affected the societies. Members of all societies became apathetic and many who were scheduled to speak failed to show up on the night assigned. Many times, when the speakers did show up, the grammar and preparation was so poor, it took the enjoyment out of the meeting.¹⁴ The Bluemont Society at Kansas State College suffered from this problem, also. On one occasion, June 20, 1868, four speakers were to present a debate. When called upon to speak, it was discovered that not one of the four was present. More speakers were chosen from the audience, but they refused to speak.¹⁵

Practical jokes and an air of frivolity were necessary in order to help relieve the burden of serious debating and everyday studies. One of the favorite actions of the K-State Bluemont Society was to confuse the president on his parliamentary rules.¹⁶ They enjoyed confusing him as much as possible in order to throw the meeting into total chaos. Other actions which added an air of lightness to the societies were debating, card playing, dancing, theatre, and female companionship. A favorite topic of debate was the age-old "chicken or egg dilemma." No one ever worded the proposition more eloquently than the South Carolina Clariosophic society, however. The question was presented in the following manner:

To which female member of the gallinaceous tribe does the infantile gallus belong? Whether to that female member of the tribe gallinaceous which did give birth and light to the ovum or to that individual of the same tribe which by setting upon the afore-said ovum did generate and thus put forth the gallus upon the earth.¹⁷

Although the literary societies had their problems and some of their time was spent on humorous matters, they did accomplish their major goal of providing a social organization to promote the improvement of public speaking abilities. Much of their time was spent on serious matters, with serious debates being presented.

As higher education spread to the western states, the literary and debate societies followed, supplying the social and educational needs of students. During the rise of these societies in the West, many of the older societies in the Eastern and Southern states were in a period of decline, because of the apathy of some members.¹⁸

The literary societies at Kansas State University developed in much the same way as the earlier societies in the East; they were strong, long

lasting organizations, which offered a wide variety of public speaking activities in which the students could take part.

Literary societies received an early start on this campus. This college, first known as the Bluemont College, opened its doors on September 2, 1863. By November of 1864, the Bluemont Literary Society had been formed.¹⁹ Although it is thought that the first meeting was held on November 26, 1864, this date can not be verified because the minutes of the first three meetings were not dated. The fourth meeting was held on December 17, 1864. Because subsequent meetings were held once a week, it is reasonable to assume, by back-dating three weeks, that the first formal meeting was held on November 26, 1864. Admission to this society was open to men and the main activity of the society was to be debate, with the understanding that parliamentary law, written speeches, and orations were also to be included in the function of the society. By very good fortune, the original minutes of this society still exist, so it is possible to see exactly how this society functioned. By the third meeting, which was probably held on December 10, 1864, three women, Mary Green, Hattie Mather and Ellen Denison, were admitted to the society.²⁰ There is no mention of their taking part in debates or orations at later meetings, however.

The society held meetings once a week. The meetings usually opened with a prayer or devotions of some type. This was followed by a business meeting and then the speaking contest or debate.²¹ The debate topics covered a very wide range of interests, but they usually presented a concrete, practical question. Over the years, the same question might reappear, stated in a different manner.

Since the Bluemont Society was organized during the Civil War, many of the first debates centered around topics connected with it or with war in general. A select list of topics follows:²²

Resolved, That the North is the most guilty party in this war.

Resolved, That the highest good of a state demands occasional wars.

Resolved, That the United States should assist in expelling the French invaders from Mexico.

Another topic that produced broad interest was education and sociological problems. Many of these topics were chosen several times and modified a little each time. Some examples are:

Resolved, That slavery is a greater evil than intemperance.

Resolved, That education produces more happiness than wealth.

Resolved, That capital punishment should be abolished.

Resolved, That the teaching of military art and science in our state institutions will be detrimental to the best interests of the United States.

In the 1860's, just like today, economic and political topics were of constant interest, but party differences seldom seem to have been discussed. Perhaps this was due to the strong, one-sided conservative political view that most Kansans held during that period. The following shows the broad range of topics:

Resolved, That the city of Manhattan would be benefited by licensing a liquor saloon.

Resolved, That the signs of the times indicate the dissolution of the Republic.

Resolved, That women have the natural right to vote and hold office of public trust.

Religion was also a popular subject for the debates. The following topics give some idea of the religious values held by the students during this early period.

Resolved, That man is an immortal soul.

Resolved, That the wicked will be subjected to endless punishment.

Resolved, That a plurality of denominations is a benefit to the cause of religion.

With a debate held each week, the selection of suitable topics became somewhat difficult. Because of the difficulty in picking serious, interesting, and timely topics, the questions sometimes became humorous. These light-hearted topics sometimes became abstract in nature, thus requiring a debator to have a good ability at invention. Some of the subjects were:

Resolved, That pride and ambition have caused more evil than ignorance and superstition.

Resolved, That city life is preferable to country life.

Resolved, That learning is more powerful than wealth.

The early inter-society debates were ordinarily comprised of two disputants on each side. Of the two, one was usually a more experienced debator, and the other was a novice. The more experienced affirmative speaker opened the discussion, and he was followed by the experienced negative speaker. The novice speakers spoke in a similar order, and then the experienced speakers each had a second turn in which they spoke in rebuttal of the points their opponents had attempted to make.²³

Even though debate was the main feature at these meetings, there was also room for essays, orations, and sometimes a lecture by someone outside the group. Extemporaneous speaking was also a favorite, with the topics being assigned to the members without advance notice.

The Bluemont Society continued to function until October 7, 1868, when it was disbanded as a result of a major conflict within the society.²⁴ No one is sure just what caused the controversy, but it was violent enough to cause the dissolution of the society. The minutes of the final meeting do not contain many clues, either, as they state,

There had been a desire among quite a number of the members for disruption of the society. Accordingly, under the head of miscellaneous business, after other things of unimportance, the question was laid before the society. After a lengthy and hot discussion it was decided in favor of the affirmative. Mr. Johnson then left the chair and 'The Bluemont Literary Society' was formally declared dissolved, and its constitution and laws null and void.²⁵

The campus was not long without a literary society, for from the disbanded Bluemont Society, the Webster Society and the Alpha Beta society were formed.

The Webster Society was organized on October 10, 1868,²⁶ and one of the major organizers of the Webster Society had been the secretary of the old Bluemont Society. The secretary produced the old Bluemont Society minute book, and the Webster group began to use it for their own minutes. It was probably this small coincidence that saved the minutes of the first literary society on this campus. The Webster Society used the book to keep a record of their meetings from October 10, 1868 until September 24, 1870. According to the College Symposium, the first published annual, or yearbook on campus, the Webster society was on very weak footing for the first three years of its existence, because members "spent most of their time electing new officers and the remainder of their time challenging the Alpha Betas to joint debates, instead of attending to their legitimate duties." Because the Webster constitution stated that their purpose was to promote debate

and improve their speaking ability, the College Symposium statement seems overly critical.

Since a complete university library did not exist in 1872, the Webster Society started its own in February of that year. It began when a faculty member agreed to give five dollars to a library fund, if the society would match it. As a result of many contributions and donations, the society library grew to 250 volumes by 1885. By this time, however, it was not necessary for the society to keep a library, since they had the use of the more complete college library. The society sold its library in order to raise funds to meet the costs of furnishing its new meeting hall. The books were authorized to be purchased for the university library by President Fairchild. The sale of the books netted the society \$17.00.

The Webster Society suffered one minor setback in 1875. The membership became divided on the question of whether women should be admitted into the society. The controversy was not resolved before some of the men withdrew from the Webster. They joined other students and organized a society called the Diagnothean Society which would admit both sexes. This society was very short-lived, lasting a year or less. There is no mention of it in 1876.

The other half of the old Bluemont Society formed the Alpha Beta Society, which was organized on October 17, 1868.²⁷ This society was originally established for men only, but on November 19, 1874,²⁸ it was voted that women be allowed to join. This society got off to a slow start, and on several occasions, meetings were not held during the second half of the semester because of poor attendance. The society got a fresh start at the beginning of each new semester, because of the efforts of a few enthusiastic

and dedicated members. There is some evidence to support the conclusion that the reason for admitting women was simply to increase the number of members and to promote more interest in the society.

The Alpha Beta Society's activities included public debate, plays, and the writing and delivering of orations. At this time, their only competitors were the members of the Webster Society.

By 1884 the two existing societies had grown so large there was a need for a new society to help distribute the memberships. On November 8, 1884, the Hamilton Literary Society was organized because "the old societies did not furnish sufficient training to their members on account of the large numbers."²⁹ There were sixteen members the first year, and they had to work hard to make their society a success; their hard work and dedication paid off, because the Hamilton Society, lasting eighty years, was to become the oldest on campus. The all male society disbanded in 1944, because most of the members were going to war. During the time they were active, their main interests were debate and other forensic activities.

By September 1887 another society, this time an all woman group, was formed under the name of the Ionian Society.³⁰ This society, unlike the previous societies, was mostly interested in music and literature. Debate was not a major concern of this group, even though they did occasionally hold debates.

At the close of the nineteenth century, there were four active literary societies, and each had full membership. The societies that existed were the Webster and Hamilton for men, the Ionian for women, and the Alpha Beta for men and women. The Ionian was the only one which was not primarily interested in debate and public speaking.

A society could not provide adequate experience to all of its members if it got too large, so most of them tried to hold their membership down to a number where there would be opportunity for all. At this time each society had between fifty and seventy-five members. By 1902, there was enough interest to establish another society and so the Franklin society was born. Established in May 1902, both men and women were invited to join. The origin of the idea for this society is not quite clear; it was first mentioned in the College paper, The Industrialist, on February 4, 1902 as a group for men only. It seems that between February, when the society idea came about, and May, when the society became an official organization, the men had a change of heart and decided to admit women, also.

The function of the Franklin Society was essentially the same as that of the Webster and the Alpha Beta. Their main activity was inter-society debating, but they also took part in orations, declamations and extemporaneous speaking.

In January, 1905, women saw a need for another society, and so the Eurodelphian Society was founded for women only.³¹ This was the first of several new societies, encouraged and recognized by the Faculty Board, that came into existence.

The Eurodelphian Society held its first meeting on Saturday, January 14, 1905, with twenty-five women members. The purpose of this organization was similar to that of the Ionian: they did not put much emphasis on debate and public speaking, but they were interested in music, literature and composition.

January, 1907, saw the founding of another new literary society, the all male Athenian Literary Society.³² This group had a very strong start

and it developed into one of the major societies on campus. Debating was a very prominent feature of this society, but like other public speaking oriented societies, it also concentrated on orations and extemporaneous speaking.

The last society to be formed on this campus was the Browning Literary Society, which was formed in October of 1910 for women only.³³ Named for Elizabeth Barret Browning, who was considered to be a model woman providing examples of living a good life,³⁴ members of the society were pledged to follow her example. Their major function, like that of the other women's societies, was to deal with literature and music; little emphasis was to be placed on declamation and debate.

This is a complete list of the literary societies which were established on the Kansas State College campus. The Bluemont was the first, established in 1864 and the Browning was the last in 1910. With three societies for women, three for men, and two for both men and women, each student was able to find a group to fit his or her needs for improvement in public expression.

These societies flourished until the early 1900's when they began to disappear, one by one. These once proud societies, which performed a very useful educational function when they were at their height of their popularity, now live only in the long forgotten records and newspaper clippings in the University Archives. Why did the literary societies disappear? There were several possible reasons; however, there is no concrete evidence to support any of the reasons. From the first, the social opportunities which the societies created were an important segment of the attractions to membership. Man is a gregarious animal, and these early literary societies

were able to bring together men with men, women with women, and men with women. With the establishment of the Greek letter fraternities and sororities, which provided greatly superior social opportunities, that feature of the attractions of the literary societies was more than offset. Training in writing, speaking and debate came to be offered in college classes for credit toward the requirements for graduation; this reduced the contributions of the literary societies in promoting those skills. As the College enrollment increased, rooms available for the use of the societies were difficult to get, and joint use became necessary to a greater extent. Athletic events made Saturday afternoon meetings for societies impractical, and many students were too busy to meet at night. Improvements in high school speech training were being made and this further reduced the need for the societies. Another possibility to help explain the societies' decline was the rapid development of new mass media devices. With radio, film, and efficient same day newspaper printing, the need for literary societies as an agency for public information was drastically reduced. So, while there were features of the literary society work that were not covered by present opportunities, they were not sufficiently prominent to continue such organizations on a going basis. The Hamilton Society was the last survivor, disbanding by vote at the end of the spring semester, 1945. This action came in part as a result of loss of members to national defense service. The decline and disappearance of literary societies may be classed as a casualty of World War II.

Now that a brief history of the literary societies has been presented, it is important to look at individual occurrences which influenced the outcome of societies in general.

The earliest record of literary society exhibitions appears in the Faculty Record of December 1, 1868. This faculty meeting appears to have

been held for two reasons. First, the faculty wanted to assign "parts to the students who were to take part in the exhibition." These exhibitions were much like the speech contests of today, except that the competition was between societies, and not schools. These exhibitions involved music, orations, essays, and other examples of public speaking. The second reason for the meeting was to accept a petition presented by an unnamed literary society. In this petition, the society asks that women be allowed to join the society. This request was turned down, because the faculty "thought it inexpedient to grant the request." No further reason was given for the action.

The societies were permitted to give one exhibition each term, so that there was time for thought and preparation for each presentation. The members of each society took the exhibition occasion very seriously, looking on it as an opportunity to prove their superiority in talents over members of other societies.

The faculty made every effort to be sure that the society exhibitions did not interfere with the students' classwork; as was mentioned earlier, the faculty allowed only one exhibition per term. They assigned parts, designated the time for the exhibition, and controlled the choice of guest lecturers whom the societies could invite to speak. On March 18, 1889,³⁵ the faculty voted that no society lecture could be given after the middle of the spring term, unless all societies united as one group to invite a lecturer on or near commencement week.

The Administration and Faculty were also much opposed to the idea of the societies charging admission to the exhibitions. On several occasions, the students presented petitions to the faculty, requesting that admission be charged, but they were turned down each time. On December 3, 1894, the

societies presented a petition requesting that they be allowed to charge an admission price of 10¢ for the exhibitions.³⁶ The petition was voted down even though the money collected was to go to refurbish their meeting rooms.

On April 2, 1896, a committee, composed of one person from each literary society--Hamilton, Webster, Ionian, and Alpha Beta--presented a petition to the Board of Regents, asking that the college chapel be open to the societies for their exhibitions, and that permission be given allowing them to charge admission.³⁷ Four major arguments for charging admission were presented; first, that attendance at the exhibitions was continuing to grow; second, that students and faculty got first pick of seating and the public got any seats that were left; third, that the entertainment was free to the public, but it cost the societies about \$250.00 a year; fourth, that because of a rule that the Regents had passed several years earlier, it was impossible for the societies to regulate attendance or charge a fee. On the following day, April 3, 1896, the Board of Regents voted not to grant the request made by the literary committee.³⁸

In January of 1900, a major conflict developed between the Hamilton Society and the faculty. The Hamilton wanted to have its annual, or exhibition, off campus. The members petitioned the faculty, asking to have the program in downtown Manhattan at the opera house, because it was larger and more suited to their needs. They also requested that they be allowed to charge admission. The faculty refused the request, stating that in order for it to be sponsored by the college, and in order to be classified as an annual, it must be held on the college grounds. Faculty also voted to withhold financial assistance from any society that held an entertainment off campus.³⁹

The Hamilton was instructed to hold its annual at the regularly scheduled time in keeping with the rules; members were required to present an outline six weeks prior to the scheduled exhibition date and were instructed to present the full program three weeks before. The faculty further requested that literary societies submit a list of the competitors before final examination dates. Any person not passing the final examination would not be allowed to take part.

With the Hamilton still holding out for the opera house, the faculty, on January 25, 1900, passed two new rulings.⁴⁰ The first rule, passed by unanimous vote, stated that "any society that gives any entertainment contrary to any ruling of the Faculty shall not be allowed the further use of any college property for society purposes." The second rule carried by unanimous vote, stated that all societies sanctioned by the college must obtain the permission of the faculty before giving or taking part in any program outside the college.

On January 30, 1900, the societies won one small battle, but lost another. They requested that they be allowed to hold their program at the Opera House, and that the faculty have no supervision over any part of the program.⁴¹ The faculty agreed to leave the programs completely up to the individual societies, provided several conditions were met. The societies would be directly responsible for any "unbecoming conduct." Each society would appoint an editor to oversee the writing of any material to be presented and be directly responsible for the contents of the paper. Any society which presented an undesirable program would lose the privilege of presenting an annual at all. The faculty still refused to let the societies charge admission, and they continued to insist that the annual be held at the college.⁴²

Because of all of the major setbacks and barriers presented by the faculty, the Hamilton society decided not to give an annual in 1900. With both sides believing that they were right, but with the faculty holding the power, the Hamilton protested by withholding its presentation.

Despite faculty disapproval, the literary societies began trying to establish oratorical contests as early as 1874.⁴³ The faculty's reason for the disapproval of the oratorical contests is found in the 9th Biennial Report, where it states that "it was the belief on the part of the Faculty that the results were too costly to the general growth and development of individual students and a serious intrusion upon the routine of an industrial college."⁴⁴ It was suggested, by President Anderson, that instead of wasting time on oratorical contests, the College should promote contests that involved plowing, blacksmithing, telegraphing, sewing, and other "arts" that were more characteristic of the college.⁴⁵ Even though the faculty was opposed to the idea of a large oratorical contest, they did allow four students to take part in one in 1894. On February 19, 1894, the faculty allowed E. R. Farwell, I. A. Robertson, A. C. Cutler, and F. E. Uhl to take part in an oratorical contest which was held in Topeka.⁴⁶

The idea of an official college oratorical association was first seriously considered in 1899. At this time, a committee, headed by Professor F. A. Metcalf of the English department, was formed to determine whether an association of this type would be in the best interests of the students.⁴⁷ The committee found a strong student interest in the contest, even though it would mean that the societies had to give up their society annual in order to have the oratorical contests.⁴⁸ Although the students continued to show interest in an oratorical contest, the first one was not held until 1901,

when Professor Metcalf finally succeeded in getting the faculty to approve what came to be known as the Annual Intersociety Oratorical Contest.⁴⁹ The first contest was held on March 9, 1901,⁵⁰ with the Hamilton, Webster, Ionian and Alpha Beta societies, the only ones existing at that time, competing. As new societies were formed they were permitted to compete. In preparation for the annual contest, each society held a competition among its own members, and the winners were the representatives of the respective societies. The top three speakers received a medal and a cash prize which went into the society treasury.⁵¹ The winner of the first contest was F. J. Woodworth of the Alpha Beta society. Margaret Minis of the Ionian society won second and C. N. Allison of the Webster society won third place.⁵²

The annual Oratorical Contest developed into one of the most spectacular and popular of the college events, challenging Commencement itself in popularity. Past members of the societies would travel hundreds of miles in order to be present. In addition to the orations, the societies also performed elaborate skits, which poked fun at rival societies through use of songs, yells or slogans.⁵³ In the early years of the Oratorical Contest, these exhibitions became quite wild, several occurring at the same time, between orations or during the lull before the judges announced the winners. Because these skits caused much bedlam during the Contest, the Oratorical Board, which was in charge of the contest, established "Demonstration Rules" in 1911. These rules stated that:

- 1) All plans for demonstrations be submitted to the Board not less than three (3) weeks in advance.
- 2) No stage decoration could obstruct audience view.
- 3) No fire or electrical device, mechanical noise, or floating display allowed.

- 4) No musical encores.
- 5) Yelling time for all societies be limited to two (2) minutes.
- 6) Appointment of "judge of Demonstrations" to rule out all illegal proceedings.⁵⁴

The annual Oratorical Contest was so important that the winning oration was published and placed in the school library. Reference to these winning orations can sometimes be found in the card catalogue; however, most of them have been preserved in the Special Collections and Archives section of Farrell Library.

Although the exact date is not known, the societies began taking part in the Missouri Valley Oratorical contest, about 1918.⁵⁵ Many K-State students who took part in this oratorical contest went on to become very prominent and well known citizens. Milton Eisenhower won first place at the Missouri Valley Contest in April 1921.⁵⁶ At this time, Eisenhower was a student assistant in the Department of Public Speaking. According to the minutes of the Board of Regents on July 26, 1923, Eisenhower was appointed an assistant in the Department of Journalism and Printing, a position he held until September 1, 1924.⁵⁷ Eisenhower graduated with a degree in Industrial Journalism in 1924; and on September 30, 1945, Milton Eisenhower became president of Kansas State University. Kingsley Given, who later became a professor in the Department of Speech at Kansas State, won second place in the Missouri Valley Contest in 1925.⁵⁸ At the time of his participation in the contest, he was a student assistant in the Department of Public Speaking. Some of the other more prominent students who represented K-State in the Missouri Valley Contest were: Martin Fritz (1924), who later became a professor at Iowa State; Paul Pfuetze (1926), who became a professor at Georgia University; Bob Hedberg (1927), the first orator ever to win by a unanimous decision; Harold Hughes (1928) who became a prominent Manhattan

attorney; John Correll, son of the College historian, who won first place in 1929 with four first place votes and one fifth place vote; and Ann Allison (1945) who was probably the only woman to represent Kansas State at the contest.⁵⁹

Interest in the Oratorical contests began to decline in the early 1940's. The societies lost much of their old enthusiasm and appeal. Individual contests to see who would represent the society were not held because it was becoming harder and harder to find someone willing to spend the time to prepare an oration. Instead of a huge, excited mob crowding into the Auditorium, the audience diminished to the point that the contest was moved to the Recreation Center. During the last year, scarcely 100 people attended the contest. With the failure of the oratorical contests, another important aspect of the once powerful literary society was eliminated.⁶⁰

Even though the major goal of the literary societies was to promote education through public speaking, they also offered many social opportunities. If both sexes were not permitted to be members of the society, there was a distinct tendency for a society of one sex to form an alliance with a society of the other sex. Because of this, the hyphenations Hamp - Io, Web - Euro, and the compound Athenian - Browning were used commonly to refer to the societies. Social gatherings between two societies were held, combination entertainment programs were presented by them, and names of the meeting rooms were shared by them. One example of a combined social gathering was called an "owl bake," a social between the Athenian and the Browning societies. According to Alta Sara Hepler, a former Browning member, the "owl bake" was really a weinie roast.⁶¹ It was called an "owl bake" because

it was usually held at 4:00 a.m.

The early literary societies had little trouble finding places to meet, but as the number of societies grew, a sufficient number of meeting rooms became harder to find. The faculty was of the opinion that the literary societies played a very important role in the education of the student. The faculty and administration felt that the job being done by the literary societies was essential to the total education of the student. Because of this feeling about the impressive quality of the work being done by the societies, the University administration and faculty were always willing to provide some financial assistance, through much of this assistance came in the form of providing meeting rooms for the societies. Two societies shared a room which contained many modern conveniences.

On October 15, 1879, the literary societies officially received their new meeting rooms.⁶² The Board of Regents voted to rearrange one of the large rooms in the "old barn" (later called the Farm Machinery Building, which sat on the north end of campus), so that the societies would have a suitable meeting place. This room was furnished with new seats, a raised speaking platform, and a new coat of paint. But because of the rapid expansion of the literary societies, new and larger meeting rooms were soon needed. On November 12, 1884, the Board of Regents approved new meeting rooms, located near the middle of the second floor on the South end of Anderson Hall.⁶³ The Superintendent of Building and Grounds was instructed to install adequate lighting and seats, and to see to it that the room was ready for society use. On the same date, the Regents also gave the Faculty authority to purchase "from the College societies, such books from their libraries as may be useful to the college, at a fair consideration."⁶⁴ In

a letter, from J. T. Willard, then a society member and later the College Historian, dated November 16, 1884, Willard informed his parents that the societies planned to sell their libraries so that they could raise money to carpet their new meeting room. The societies felt that there was no longer a need for personal or individual libraries, because the College library had grown large enough to meet all the needs of the society's library. On February 2, 1885, the Committee on Library reported to the President that they had purchased several books from the societies. The Alpha Beta society gained \$22.25 and the Webster society gained \$17.00 from this sale.⁶⁵

The societies occupied the room in Anderson Hall until 1894, by which time there were two new societies. The room was no longer large enough, so they moved to the newly completed "Library and Agriculture Science Hall." The societies were given two large rooms in the east end of the basement, the Webster and Alpha Beta societies sharing the south room and the Hamilton and Ionian using the north room. This hall became known as Fairchild Hall in 1902. On October 9, 1895, the Board of Regents voted to assist the societies in the furnishing of the rooms, by providing an unspecified amount of money, to be divided equally between the two rooms, for the purpose of installing inside blinds and new chairs.

In January of 1905, the societies received more money, which was to be used to refinish the meeting rooms. The Webster and Alpha Beta hall received a mural type painting on all of the walls, and the Hamilton and Ionian hall received a new floor and new opera chairs.

Because of the continued growth and the need for better facilities, the literary societies once again needed a place to move. In the "Seventeenth Biennial Report," presented by the Board of Regents to the state legislature

in 1910, the future of the literary societies is presented. C. H. Chandler, the state architect, says (in reference to the new gymnasium)

. . . we found it necessary to carry out a design that, above the main floor, would afford considerable room which could be advantageously finished for the uses of the various literary societies of the College. We find that this space . . . will amount to nine good rooms.

In view of the fact that many of the societies of the College are meeting in basements, in unventilated and unsanitary quarters, with the permission of the Board of Regents, the building was designed so as to provide for these society rooms.

The appropriation was not sufficient to finish these society halls, and indeed I question whether, under the terms of the appropriation, we could have used the funds for such purposes and they therefore remain in an unfinished condition.⁶⁶

The Board and the College felt that the societies were doing excellent work and that they provided benefit to everyone. For this reason they asked for \$22,000 to be used to finish the gymnasium and provide new meeting rooms for the nine societies that existed at that time. The State approved the money, and the societies were granted new rooms in the just completed Nichols Gymnasium.

All societies moved into their new society rooms in October of 1911. These rooms, located on the west end of the third floor, were furnished with the very best materials. According to The Kansas Industrialist, much of the carpet was plush velvet. "The chairs are of solid oak with leather upholstered backs. The president's desk and chair, with the table for the critic and secretaries below, reminds one of a senate chamber. But the real feature of the hall is the lighting system. Large tungsten globes are enclosed in huge inverted brass reflectors which throw the light to the ceiling."⁶⁷ Nichols Gymnasium provided the last, and most elaborate, meeting place for the literary societies. It had been hoped that the provision of a

fancy meeting hall would reinforce continued interest in extra-curricular work. However, this did not turn out to be the case. Because of lack of time, and increasing interest in many other activities, student participation in the literary societies began to fade. The tradition was carried on for awhile by a select few in the form of Debate.

The practice of public debate has been present at Kansas State since the earliest beginnings of the school, with the first recorded instance of a debate in the Faculty Record on October 2, 1871. At this time, the Faculty granted a request to the literary societies to hold a public debate toward mid-term of that year. On November 20, 1871, the societies presented a second petition to the Faculty regarding a public debate. The Faculty voted that they be allowed to repeat the debate already given; but, there is no record of when this first debate took place, or who was involved.⁶⁸

Although the societies usually had to petition the Faculty for permission to hold inter-society public debates, these debates were very popular and were featured at the weekly meetings. The purpose of these weekly debates was to stimulate logical thinking and improve refutation and public speaking ability. Topics for these weekly debates were varied, usually centering around an important and controversial question of that time. Although occasional abstract topics were picked, the question was usually a concrete, practical one.

The idea of intercollegiate debating was, for the most part, conceived in the United States.⁶⁹ The need for intercollegiate debating was highlighted by the decline of the literary societies and the lack of student interest in any form of public speaking. Several people proposed the intercollegiate debate idea, but the idea was ridiculed and nothing came

of it until January of 1892. On January 14 of that year, the first inter-collegiate debate took place between Harvard and Yale, at Cambridge.⁷⁰ After its slow start, intercollegiate debate spread rapidly and, within four years, it had spread across America.

In 1895, the first triangular debating league was started. The schools involved were Princeton, Harvard and Yale. Chicago, Northwestern, Minnesota, and Michigan formed the first quadrangular league in 1897.⁷¹ "These universities debated each other in pairs in January, and the winners of the semi-finals contests came together in a final debate in April each year."⁷² Although this method was very drawn out and time consuming, apparently it was successful and enjoyable, because it continued for several years.

Almost all of the early debates were conducted by "contracts."⁷³ In this type of arrangement, one school would challenge another, and if the second school accepted the challenge, a contract would be signed. This contract specified the topic to be debated and it set down the rules of the debate. The rules and regulations governing intercollegiate debate were by no means constant throughout the United States, and because of this, a contract usually contained criteria for judging, the method of selecting judges, time limits on speeches, and provision for financing the debate.⁷⁴

Choosing a topic that was important and interesting, to all of the schools involved, was also difficult. The most widely accepted method involved the challenging school picking the topic and the opposing school having the option of accepting or rejecting it. If the question was rejected, the opposing school would pick a new topic and present it to the challenging team. Although this was the widely accepted method of picking debate topics,

it "frequently provoked disagreement and foul play."⁷⁵ When examining these facts, it is easy to see why there was not a large number of early intercollegiate debates. Each school could take part in a few debates, because it took such a long time for a topic to be decided upon.

Selecting the judges for the intercollegiate debates was almost as time-consuming as the process of selecting a topic. Because of the rivalry that existed between the schools, the selection of competent, fair judges was a major concern. The same process used in selecting the question was used in selecting the judges. In selecting the judges, the challenging team would present a list of qualified judges and their opponents would select two. They would then present a list of judges to the challenging team, and the challengers would pick one. These three judges would make up the panel to judge the debate.⁷⁶

In the "second age" of intercollegiate debate, or the years between 1904 and 1913, debate expanded rapidly and made some very significant improvements in the overall style of intercollegiate debate. In 1906, the first Pentangular debate league was formed.⁷⁷ In this type of debate, the affirmative and negative teams debated twice. This form of debate became very popular, because it allowed the schools to debate each other more than one time at each tournament.

The "dual plan" for debating also became popular during this period.⁷⁸ In this style of debate, the league required each school to prepare teams that were qualified to debate both the affirmative and negative side of the question. This was a major change in the intercollegiate debate format, but it remains the most widely used today.

During this period, 1904-1913, intercollegiate debate began to become more "professional" in manner. This "professionalism" can be seen by the goals, or criteria, that the debate leagues were trying to establish. The leagues tried to improve themselves in four major areas: academic recognition, improved methods of preparation and delivery, means of rewarding debate proficiency, and some type of intercollegiate forensic program.⁷⁹ These leagues eventually realized all of their goals with the development of national debate honoraries, intercollegiate forensic contests, and college credit for their work.

Debate coaching as a profession was also a product of this second decade.⁸⁰ Students were able to persuade members of the faculty to help the debators prepare for the contests. The coaches soon began helping in the selection of team members by adopting the "try-out" method. The "debate squad" was made up of members chosen from the tryouts. During this period tryouts were opened to all students attending the college. Because many of the members of the debate team wanted credit for their work, the "coaches" organized classes in argumentation and debate, which were specifically designed for the intercollegiate debators.⁸¹

In this "second age" of debate K-State began debating on the intercollegiate level. Kansas State had a very slow start in intercollegiate debating; it took them several years before they became actively involved. Once established, debate's growth and development was similar to the development of intercollegiate debate at other colleges.

On March 1, 1900, the State Normal (now known as Emporia University) challenged the Kansas State literary societies to a public debate.⁸² This debate was to feature three debators on each side and it was to be held on

the K.S.A.C. campus in mid-May of 1900. Apparently it did not take place, because it is not mentioned again.

The next mention of a debate between schools is found in The Student's Herald, December 17, 1903. At this time, a committee, made up of one member from each literary society, was established to try to arrange a debate between Kansas State Agricultural College and Colorado Agriculture College at Fort Collins, Colorado. The debate was to be an annual event. The 1903 debate did not take place, however, because of the lack of support on the part of the students at Colorado, but on March 16, 1904, the Faculty approved a request, by the literary societies, to establish a series of debates with Colorado Agriculture College.⁸³ Six different societies were to take part. The debates were to follow an alternating schedule, with the first debate to be held in Manhattan, the second at Fort Collins, and so on. Although this sounded like a good arrangement, this was the last that was written about the K.S.A.C.-C.A.C. debates until April, 1914.

Unsuccessful attempts to organize public debates with other schools resulted in a diminished enthusiasm for this type of activity. The idea of a college sponsored debating team faltered and the only debate activity found on campus was that of the inter-society weekly debates.

In 1909, the need for an intercollegiate debate team was once again felt. On October 6, 1909, each literary society elected two representatives to form a debating council,⁸⁴ which was to arrange for intercollegiate debates with interested schools. Even though no debates were scheduled for the immediate future, this was the first major step toward intercollegiate debate at Kansas State.

While the Debate Council was trying to arrange some form of inter-collegiate debate, the literary societies continued to have inter-society

debates. These debates served as a means by which the societies could choose their best debators to represent the school on the debating team.

On January 15, 1910, the preliminary debates were held.⁸⁵ The topic, on this occasion, was "Resolved, That the U.S. Government should establish a permanent tariff commission," and this debate found Athenian against the Alpha Beta, Eurodelphian against the Webster, and Hamilton against Ionian. The teams had three debators each, and they were judged on a scale established by the council. Logical argument was sixty per cent of the judgment, physical expression was ten per cent, and vocal technique was thirty per cent. Each speaker was scored, and all points were added together to find the best team score. The top three speakers from each debate were placed on the College team. On this occasion, Athenian beat Alpha Beta, and the winners placed two debators on the team while the losers placed one. In the second debate, the Eurodelphian team won, but placed only one debator on the team. Webster was the loser, but it placed two debators. In the last debate, Ionian beat the Hamilton team, with the winners placing two debators and the losers placing one.

On February 19, 1910, more inter-society debates were held in order to further qualify members to represent the College. The winners of these two debates were to represent the school in their first intercollegiate debate with Fairmount College of Wichita.⁸⁶ The final results of the February 19 inter-society debates were as follows: The Hamilton-Ionian team beat the Franklin team. The Hamilton-Ionian team consisted of P. C. Vilander (H), Lynee Sandborn (I), and Florence Wyland (I). The Franklin team was made up of Albert Mack, Frank McClure, and Louis Williams.

In the second debate, the Athenian-Alpha Beta team beat the Eurodelphian-Webster team. The members of the winning team were G. C. Christie

(A), W. S. Davidson (A), and Ethel Justin (AB). The Eurodelphian-Webster consisted of D. G. Roth (W), R. A. Branson (W), and Amelia Pierson (E). In both debates, the winning team upheld the affirmative.

The first intercollegiate debate, between K.S.A.C. and Fairmount College, took place on April 8, 1910.⁸⁷ The topic was "Resolved, That the U. S. Government should establish a permanent tariff commission," and one debate was held on the K.S.A.C. campus while the other was held on the Fairmount campus. In the Manhattan debate, K-State had the affirmative, while on the Fairmount campus, they had the negative. The affirmative K-State team, comprised of P. C. Vilander, L. C. Christie, and Lynne Sandborn, was declared the winner. The negative K.S.A.C. team, which was made up of W. D. Roth, W. S. Davidson and Frances Wyland, lost to Fairmount. Both debates were judged by outside judges.

On May 5, 1911, Edgar A. Vaughn presented a petition to the Department of Economics and Public Speaking, and to President Waters, requesting permission to organize an honorary debating organization. At this time, Vaughn was a member of the Debating Team and of the Hamilton Literary Society. The petition read as follows:

Dear President Waters:

In accordance with your suggestion, we herewith submit the following statement of the aims and purposes of an honorary debating organization, with such requests as seems necessary if such an organization is to be maintained with the greatest good of the College:

The members of the inter-collegiate debating team are organizing for the purpose of promoting interest in inter-collegiate debating, and of developing worthy debators.

This organization is to be composed of the members of society debating teams in the annual inter society debates. Members of these teams who are drafted or elected to places on these teams are ineligible, as are also alternates of the same team.

It is the purpose of this organization to maintain a strictly honorary organization and to maintain high standards of scholarship for our members. Any person meeting the necessary requirements becomes a member ex-officio.

In order to make membership in this organization desirable, and thus to arouse greater interest in debate, we request that certain privileges be granted:

In view of the fact that varsity debating teams are under the direct supervision of one or more members of the Faculty, and in view of the fact that the scholarship of the members must be maintained while participating in the debate work, we ask that suitable elective credits for debate be prepared by the proper committee of the Faculty.

Since it is a known fact that the requirements for students winning a place on the varsity team are high, we request that this organization be allowed to further arouse interest by being allowed to follow the example of Oklahoma University and certain eastern schools, by awarding the official college monogram to persons winning places on the varsity debating teams, said "K" to be of different style from any now granted and to have the usual protection.

These favors and privileges are asked in the interests of debating and debators at the Kansas State Agriculture College.

Respectfully submitted

E. A. Vaughn,

for the committee⁸⁸

On May 10, 1911, five days after Vaughn presented his petition, three faculty members from the Department of Economics and Public Speaking, presented their opinion to President Waters. These three faculty members, J. E. Kammeyer, Ralph Price, and J. W. Searson, recommended that the President grant the request for an honorary debating society, under certain conditions which follow:

- 1) That said organization shall include not only students who have won a place on an intercollegiate debating team, but also students who have represented their societies in any annual oratorical contest subsequent to the year 1910;
- 2) That such an official name be adopted for this organization as will harmonize with the conditions stipulated above;
- 3) That membership in this organization be limited to those who have won representation on debating teams or in oratorical contests only by preliminary competitive contests, and by no other means;
- 4) That college credits be granted to students who have won representation under conditions just named; but that such credits do not exceed four hours per week for one team, that they be limited to the courses regularly offered by the departments of English and Public Speaking, and that the selection of the particular subjects in which credit is to be given be left to the heads of the department concerned;
- 5) That said organization be empowered to confer "K" honors on its members, and that such members be protected by Faculty ruling in the exclusive enjoyment of the privilege to wear K's emblematic of such honors, as is now done with reference to athletic honors;
- 6) That the promoters of this organization at an early date formulate articles of association and by-laws embodying the substance of conditions herein named, and such other provisions as may be essential for successful organization. . . .⁸⁹

Although no specific action was taken by President Waters, at this time, Edgar Vaughn and his committee had taken the first steps in forming a chapter of Pi Kappa Delta, a national debate honorary. Over the next few years the administration acted on the request, a few steps at a time, until 1914 when the entire proposal was in effect.

In the next few years, several events took place, which helped to maintain a strong interest in collegiate debate. In the latter part of 1911, an organization called the "Forum" was organized by student debators and orators, with the help of Professor J. W. Searson of the English Department.⁹⁰ The membership of this organization was limited to students who took part in inter-society and intercollegiate debate and oratory. The major purpose of the organization was to help encourage these activities among its members, which soon numbered well over 100. In 1912, through efforts stimulated by the "forum" leaders, the Faculty Board granted outstanding debators and orators the honor of wearing the college letter.⁹¹

In the fall of 1913, a \$100.00 Debate Scholarship was established by three former K.S.A.C. debators.⁹² This scholarship was awarded to recognize past excellence in debate and to provide an incentive to continue high quality work. This scholarship continued, off and on, over the next few years. In 1914 Professor Searson gave \$100.00 for a debate fellowship open to men and women. The last mention of debate scholarships, is found in The Kansas Industrialist June 2, 1921. At this time, two \$100.00 scholarships were awarded to Opal Seeber, a sophomore in general science, and J. Wheeler Barger, a junior in agriculture economics. Miss Seeber had won the college letter twice and Mr. Barger had been awarded the "K" for the previous three years.

In January of 1914, the faculty voted to grant college credit for work in intercollegiate debate and oratory,⁹³ granting students up to six credit units to be applied toward graduation. One reason credit was granted was that the members of the "Forum" worked closely with the faculty in the English department, and one of the early faculty sponsors was Professor Searson.

The literary societies joined together to form the Intersociety Council in February, 1914,⁹⁴ thus replacing the President's Council, which had been the force which had governed the societies in the past. The purpose of the new council was to govern the societies and provide equal opportunity to all of the societies. Two members of junior or senior standing from each society made up the new council.

In April 1914, the women at Kansas State became actively involved in intercollegiate debate. According to Leroy Cowperthwaite and Craig Baird, in The History of Speech Education in America,⁹⁵ the first women's intercollegiate debate contest in the mid-west took place on May 12, 1921, between the University of Indiana and Iowa State University. This information seems to be in direct contradiction to material found in the Kansas Industrialist on April 18, 1914. The article states that on April 17, 1914, the women from Kansas State hosted the women from Fairmount, in the first women's intercollegiate debate. In this debate, the girls from Manhattan, who debated the affirmative, beat the girls from Fairmount. The Kansas State team consisted of Miss Florence Justin, Miss Madge Thompson, and Miss Edna Barber, who debated the question "Resolved, That through appropriate legislation a minimum wage scale should be put into operation in the United States." Therefore, the women from Kansas State and Fairmount should be credited with the honor of holding the first women's intercollegiate debate, because their debate was held six years earlier than the one cited by Cowperthwaite and Baird.

A story, printed in The Kansas Industrialist, April 25, 1914, reviews the K.S.A.C. debate season for the 1913-14 debate season. The team managed a record of 4 wins and 3 losses; the wins were against Iowa State College,

Colorado Agriculture College, Washburn College, and Fairmount. The losses were to University of South Dakota, Oklahoma A. & M., and Washburn College. Although the team had just finished a very respectable season, they began thinking ahead to the next season. In June 1914, debate try-outs were held, and a squad of eight debators was chosen to represent the school in debates against Iowa State College and the University of South Dakota.⁹⁶ These debates were to be held the following fall. Of the eight chosen, Coach Carl Ostrum picked six to debate. The eight members of the team were Joe Sweet, Florence Justin, Ivar Mattson, L. V. Rhine, Jay Lush, James McArthur, J. P. Rathbone, and H. B. Cravens. Although this series of debates was never mentioned again, the college did debate Oklahoma A. & M. and Colorado Agriculture College in March, 1915. At this time, the Kansas State Agriculture College debators had a new coach, Dr. John Macarthur of the Department of English. The debate was a tri-state one, with one debate being held in Manhattan, one in Fort Collins, and one in Stillwater. The Manhattan debate found K.S.A.C. against Oklahoma A. & M., with Kansas State winning. At Fort Collins, K-State lost to Colorado State and at Stillwater, Colorado lost to Oklahoma A. & M. The debators representing K-State were Shelby Fell, J. L. Lush, J. V. Quigley, and J. B. Sweet.⁹⁷

Over the next few years, K.S.A.C. took part in various debates in which they were winners in the majority of their rounds. Their past success was seen on May 6, 1915, when thirty students were awarded the official college letter. In addition to these thirty, thirty-one additional letters were granted to past debators.⁹⁸

When the outstanding success of the early K-State debate is examined, it is hard to see how this success was possible, considering the large

turnover in debate coaches. During the period between 1911 and 1921, the K-State team had seven different coaches. The first Kansas State debate coach, or faculty advisor, was Professor J. W. Searson of the English Department.⁹⁹ He began his work with the debate team in 1911, and he was partly responsible for helping organize the "Forum." Professor Searson was active in the "Forum" and worked with debate until he retired in 1914. Between 1914 and 1921, the debate team experienced five changes in coaches, which must have made it difficult to produce consistent winning teams.

During this period of uncertainty about coaches, the debate team remained one of high quality, managing some impressive wins, one of which came on April 13, 1918, when K.S.A.C. took first place in the debate pentangular by defeating the College of Emporia.¹⁰⁰ The debators from K.S.A.C., C. J. Medlin, Samuel Jones and I. Richards, also faced teams from Ottawa University, Washburn College, and Baker University. This debate was an important one for the school, because it was the first time that K.S.A.C. had won the pentangular, and the first time in four years that they had won four consecutive debates.

The most successful year for the K.S.A.C. debators came in 1923. During this year, the debate team won eight of ten debate contests, and took third place in the Missouri Valley Oratorical Contest.¹⁰¹ Debate tryouts saw 133 students - 78 men and 55 women - try out for the debate team. Of these 133, 33 were chosen for the men's team and 31 were chosen for the women's team. Of these 64, only 27 actually competed in inter-collegiate debate.

On December 15, 1921, the Board of Regents appointed Hugh E. Rosser as Associate Professor of English and debate coach.¹⁰² Professor Rossen

felt that it should be the aim of the college to give debate experience to a large number of students, rather than concentrating to make a few specialists. Because of this philosophy, membership on the debate team was open to all students meaning that the debators' intercollegiate opportunities were rather limited, with each debator able to take part in only one intercollegiate debate. This philosophy placed a big handicap on the team, because it meant that an entire new team had to be trained for each debate. Coach Rossen also preferred that the debators research several topics, instead of the usual single topic, so that they would have practice in research techniques. When these handicaps are placed against the other schools, who usually picked six or eight debators to research only one topic for the entire year, the successful feats of the K.S.A.C. become much more impressive.

In the early 1920's, intercollegiate debate was growing stronger and more professional in nature, while high school debating was beginning to become popular throughout the United States.¹⁰³ The colleges throughout the United States began to see that by having early debate training in high school, experienced debators could be produced for the college level. Because of this, the colleges began to encourage the formation of high school debate leagues. The colleges became sponsors of local, regional, and finally state debate tournaments, and thus, they were able to recruit the best debators in the state, to join the university team.

The college debators from Kansas State were first used to judge at high school debate tournaments in 1923.¹⁰⁴ There were two major reasons for sending the college students to judge. First, the work load of college professors who had heretofore been used as high school judges could be

reduced. Second, the college debators would now be able to have more of a chance to test their knowledge of debate.

Unlike other campuses in the early 1920's, debate on the K-State campus remained fairly popular, from the spectator standpoint. The average attendance at debates held on this campus was over 500 people, while the average attendance at other schools was between 50 and 100.¹⁰⁵ At a women's debate, held at K. U. on April 19, 1923, only 30 people attended, while 250 saw and heard the women debate here.

On September 1, 1923, there was another change in debate coaches. According to the Board of Administration Minutes of August 18, 1923, Professor Rossen resigned his job effective September 1, 1923. President Jardine appointed Harrison B. Summers to the job of Associate Professor in charge of debate. His job was to begin September 1, 1923, and he was to receive \$2,800.00 for a nine month contract.

One of the more unusual debates in K.S.A.C. history took place on October 18, 1924, when a debate team from Oxford University was invited to debate the K.S.A.C. team.¹⁰⁶ The English team was on a tour of the United States and the college was lucky enough to get them to debate here. One unusual feature of the debate was the fact that the audience decided the winners. This was the first time an audience decision was used on this campus.

On this night, approximately 1,500 people attended the debate, but only 629 voted. As might be expected, the win went to K.S.A.C.; 449 yes, 180 no. It is not known whether the K.S.A.C. debators really did a better job, or whether the audience was somewhat partial, or possibly a combination of both.

The 1925 season was probably the most ambitious schedule the teams had attempted until that time, and it contained its share of unusual debating styles.¹⁰⁷ According to this schedule, the women traveled out of state for the first time in several years. The women planned to travel to Penn College in Oskaloosa, Mo., and Moringside College in Sioux City, Iowa. While traveling out of state, the women attempted several different styles of debate. At Penn College, they selected the question eight hours before the debate, and then they had to prepare without the aid of their coach. At Moringside College, they attempted the Oxford system. Under this plan, they split the teams, with one debator from the K.S.A.C. team switching places with a Moringside debator. The women came home champions, winning all of their debate decisions. In addition to the heavy home schedule that the men had, they also did a lot of traveling. Their schedule took them to the west coast. In the process, they debated Colorado Agriculture College, Wyoming University, Montana University, Washington State College, Oregon Agriculture College, Stanford University, and the University of Southern California.

By 1926, the literary societies had begun to lose much of their appeal and prestige. Debate, once a major function of the societies, was now the activity of the formal Kansas State debate team. Even though the literary societies were still involved in inter-society debates, the activity of intercollegiate debate was left up to the formal debate team. Also, even though most of the members of the intercollegiate team were also members of literary societies, tryouts for the team were open to every member of the student body.

Another reason that the students had begun to lose enthusiasm for literary societies was that fraternities and sororities began to gain

favor among the students. These fraternities and sororities offered much more social interaction for the student than the literary societies. Because of this, the Greek organizations were beginning to be favored over the old literary societies.

In the fall of 1926, Pi Kappa Delta, the national honorary forensic organization, sponsored a series of debates among the social organizations on campus.¹⁰⁸ It was open to all fraternities and sororities, and the winning fraternity and sorority would each receive a gold loving cup. Once again, this points to the fact that the Greek organizations were beginning to pre-empt activities of the literary societies on campus.

In the period of time between 1926 and 1948, the general public manifested little interest in intercollegiate or inter-society debates. Although debate did not die out completely, it received very little public attention. The school newspapers failed to carry any coverage of the progress of the debate teams; therefore, any facts concerning the teams are very sketchy and unsubstantiated. Pictures of the debate team and literary societies are sporadically scattered through the Royal Purple during these years, but this also seems very haphazard and inconsistent, thus producing very little information.

It was during this period that the few remaining literary societies began to disappear. Student interest had gradually declined until there was no longer a need for the societies. As was earlier stated, there is no concrete evidence as to why the students lost interest in the societies, but there are several possibilities. The two most likely possibilities are the fact that students no longer had the time to spend on the tremendous amount of work required by the literary societies, and the fact that the students

were receiving the same type of training in the classroom situation.

In 1948, the press coverage of debate increased tremendously and K-State's progress is much easier to follow. The K-State debate team got off to a very strong start in 1948, winning debates at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln and Ottawa.¹⁰⁹ The topic for this year's debate was "Resolved, That a Federal World Government should be established." In addition to winning the first two debates, the team took second place at St. John's College, Winfield, second place at the Missouri Valley Forensic Tournament at Kansas University, and second place at the Pi Kappa Delta Regional Conference in Fort Collins, Colorado. At Texas University, the team won eight out of twelve rounds. As a result of the successful efforts of the team, five of the members were initiated into the national honorary, Pi Kappa Delta.

On March 10, 1948, four faculty members got a chance to demonstrate their ability in debate.¹¹⁰ Dr. Howard Hill and the College debate team sponsored the event, which centered around the topic of adopting the Marshall Plan. Professor A. B. Sageser of the Department of History and Government, and Professor C. J. K. Erickson of the Department of Economics and Sociology, were on the affirmative. On the negative side was Professor C. M. Correll of the Department of History and Government and Professor A. A. Holtz of the Department of Economics and Sociology. This debate was staged so that the students in history and economics could gain sufficient information on both sides of the question, and so that the general public could be entertained.

On November 13, 1948, this campus hosted its first debate tournament, following the end of World War II.¹¹¹ The tournament involved teams

from Wichita University, Kansas University and Kansas State. Kansas University won all of their rounds, while K-State won fourteen out of twenty.

Even though the debate team continued to win its share of debates, they were not getting the opportunity to debate new schools because of the shortage of funds.¹¹² On October 2, 1950, the Collegian printed an editorial pointing out the fact that as a result of the reduced funding of the debate squad, the school was losing valuable publicity. In the past the K-State team had debated some of the most prestigious teams in the country, and in doing so, they had proven their ability. They had the opportunity to debate against more of these schools, but they had to decline, because of their lack of funds. The Collegian argued that by increased funding, the debate squad could draw more publicity to the college; thus it could be a means of drawing more students to the campus.

The small budget did not stop the debate team completely; despite having their budget cut from \$1000.00 to \$580.00, the team continued to take in as many tournaments as possible. Some students were so committed to the program, that they spent over \$200.00 of their own money to take part in the tournaments.¹¹³

Over the years, K-State managed a successful debate team, despite their very limited budget. In 1951, the team achieved two major goals, which, once again, proved that the Kansas State squad was one of the best in the country. The first event occurred on May 2, 1951. At this time, Delta Sigma Rho, a national forensic honorary, granted a charter membership to K-State.¹¹⁴ This charter was granted only after the Delta Sigma Rho officials had made a complete study of the Department of Speech and the forensic program. With the granting of a charter to K-State, the number

of Delta Sigma Rho schools in Kansas was brought to three, which made Kansas one of the few states to have that many chapters. Kansas State was the only school in Delta Sigma Rho history to be given a charter by a unanimous vote of the executive council, however. The first K-State students to be initiated into the society were Jan Backus, Donald Volker, Donald Hopkins, Wilma Wilson, Lloyd Alvey, John Biggs, and James Tucker.

The second major accomplishment for the team came with their invitation to the Georgetown University Cherry Blossom Debate Tournament.¹¹⁵ Only the best twenty-six teams in the nation were invited to this tournament, and K-State came home with the third place trophy.

The negative team of Charles Crews and Ed Wingate was one of four undefeated teams at the tournament. The affirmative team of Wilma Wilson and Don Hopkins won three rounds and lost four, which gave K-State an overall record of ten wins and four losses. Don Hopkins was also rated as the tenth best affirmative speaker at the tournament.

It is very evident that, by this time, the K-State debate team was becoming more and more professional in their attitude toward debate. It was only natural that they should adopt this attitude because this degree of professionalism was a must if they wanted to compete on a national level. It was this professionalism that contributed to the final disappearance of the literary societies.

Although the main function of the majority of these societies was debate, they were interested in promoting all types of public speaking. The early literary societies succeeded in fulfilling their early goals of providing for the social and educational needs of the students. As the University grew, the need for literary societies gradually diminished. The lack

of interest was due to increased interest in Greek organizations, lack of student time, and duplicate training offered by the high schools and colleges. Debate functioned under the literary societies for many years, but as it became more competitive and moved into the intercollegiate level, collegiate debate gradually broke away from the literary societies. With the formation of the college debate team, debate began to become much more professional in its manner; thus it became an activity for a select few. Because of these developments and changes in the progress of public speaking on this campus, the need for literary societies soon diminished.

FOOTNOTES

¹William T. Brigance, ed., History and Criticism of American Public Address (McGraw-Hill, Co., 1943), Vol. 1, p. 199.

²David Potter, "The Literary Society," A History of Speech Education in America, Karl R. Wallace, ed., (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1954), p. 238.

³Potter, p. 238.

⁴Potter, p. 239.

⁵Potter, p. 240.

⁶Potter, p. 243.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Potter, p. 244.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Hugo E. Hellman, "The Influence of the Literary Societies in the Making of American Orators," Quarterly Journal of Speech, Vol. 28, No. 1, Feb. 1942, pp. 12-13.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Charles W. Lomas, "The Lighter Side of the Literary Societies," Quarterly Journal of Speech, Vol. 39, No. 1, Feb. 1953, p. 45.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Lomas, pp. 43-44.

¹⁵J. T. Willard, "The Early History of Campus Literary Societies," The Kansas State Industrialist, Vol. 67, No. 24, 26 March 1941.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Lomas, p. 48.

¹⁸Potter, p. 241.

¹⁹Minutes of the Bluemont Literary Society, 1864, p. 7. Handwritten manuscript in Kansas State University Special Collections Library.

²⁰Bluemont Minutes, p. 9.

- ²¹Willard, Industrialist, 26 March 1941.
- ²²Ibid.
- ²³J. T. Willard, "Literary Societies," Panorama of Kansas State College, Radio broadcast by K.S.A.C., 1944. Typed manuscript in Kansas State University Special Collections Library.
- ²⁴Willard, Industrialist, 26 March 1941.
- ²⁵Bluemont Minutes, p. 105.
- ²⁶Bluemont Minutes, p. 106.
- ²⁷Information from a pamphlet published by the Alpha Beta Literary Society. It contains information concerning the formation of the society. A copy is located in the Office of the Registrar, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas.
- ²⁸List of members and constitution. Copy located in Office of the Registrar, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas.
- ²⁹Kansas State Industrialist, Vol. 10, No. 14, 22 Nov. 1884, p. 51.
- ³⁰Faculty Records, Vol. B, 3 Oct. 1887, p. 134-5.
- ³¹Kansas State Industrialist, Vol. 31, No. 18, 28 Jan. 1905, p. 286.
- ³²Kansas State Industrialist, Vol. 33, No. 13, 26 Jan. 1907, p. 205.
- ³³Industrialist, Vol. 37, No. 5, 29 Oct. 1910.
- ³⁴Ibid.
- ³⁵Faculty Records, Vol. B, 18 March 1889, p. 276.
- ³⁶Faculty Records, Vol. C, 3 Dec. 1894, p. 246.
- ³⁷Board of Regents Minutes, Vol. B, 2 April 1896, p. 109.
- ³⁸Board of Regents Minutes, Vol. B, 3 April 1896, p. 111.
- ³⁹Faculty Records, Vol. D, 15 Jan. 1900, pp. 147-48.
- ⁴⁰Faculty Records, Vol. D, 25 Jan. 1900, p. 151.
- ⁴¹Faculty Records, Vol. D, 30 Jan. 1900, pp. 151-2.
- ⁴²Ibid.
- ⁴³Ninth Biennial Report of the Board of Regents and Officers of the Kansas State Agriculture College (Hamilton Printing Co., Topeka) 1893-94, p. 40.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵"College Items," Nationalist, 30 Oct. 1874. Also see vertical history file "Oratory", Special Collections Library, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas.

⁴⁶Faculty Records, Vol. C, 19 Feb. 1894, p. 143.

⁴⁷Faculty Records, Vol. D, 4-5 May 1899, p. 113.

⁴⁸The Student's Herald, Vol. 6, No. 12, 29 Nov. 1900, p. 136.

⁴⁹Willard, "Literary Society," Panorama

⁵⁰The Student's Herald, Vol. 6, No. 24, 7 March 1901.

⁵¹Industrialist, Vol. 27, No. 23, 9 March 1901, p. 295.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Willard, "Literary Society," Panorama.

⁵⁴Web.-Euro. Annual, K.S.A.C. Webster-Eurodelphian Literary Societies, 1912, p. 3.

⁵⁵Kansas State Industrialist, Vol. 44, No. 23, 6 March 1918.

⁵⁶"Servant of Thought," The K-Stater, Vol. 1, No. 4, June 1952, pp. 22-24.

⁵⁷Board of Regents Minutes, 14 July 1924. Also see Kansas State Agriculture College Catalogue, 1923-24, p. 331.

⁵⁸K-Stater, p. 22.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Willard, "Literary Society," Panorama.

⁶¹This information comes from a discussion between Evan Williams, Special Collections Librarian at Kansas State University, and Miss Hepler. Although Mr. Williams cannot recall the exact date, it is his belief that the discussion occurred around 1970.

⁶²Regents Minutes, Vol. A, 15 Oct. 1879, p. 284.

⁶³Regents Minutes, Vol. A, 12 Nov. 1884, p. 439.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Faculty Record, Vol. A, 2 Feb. 1885, p. 444.

⁶⁶Seventeenth Biennial Report of the Board of Regents and Officers of the Kansas State College (Hamilton Publishing Co., Topeka), 1908-1910, p. 21

⁶⁷Industrialist, Vol. 38, No. 1, 7 Oct. 1911, 28 Oct. 1911.

⁶⁸Faculty Record, Vol. A, 20 Nov. 1871, p. 26.

⁶⁹L. Leroy Cowperthwaite and A. Craig Baird, "Intercollegiate Debating," A History of Speech Education in America, ed. Karl R. Wallace (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1954), p. 259.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Cowperthwaite, p. 260.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Cowperthwaite, p. 261.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Cowperthwaite, p. 264.

⁷⁸Cowperthwaite, p. 265.

⁷⁹Cowperthwaite, p. 266.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Students Herald, Vol. 5, No. 23, 1 March 1900, p. 184.

⁸³Faculty Record, Vol. D, 16 March 1904, p. 314.

⁸⁴Industrialist, Vol. 35, No. 3, 23 Oct. 1909, p. 61.

⁸⁵Student's Herald, Vol. 15, No. 10, 19 Jan. 1910.

⁸⁶Student's Herald, Vol. 15, No. 40, 19 Feb. 1910.

⁸⁷Industrialist, Vol. 36, No. 24, 23 April 1910, p. 383.

⁸⁸Faculty Record, Vol. D, 5 May 1911, p. 532.

⁸⁹Faculty Record, Vol. D, 11 May 1911, p. 531.

- ⁹⁰Faculty Record, Vol. D, 22 May 1911, p. 531-32.
- ⁹¹Student's Herald, Vol. 16, No. 71, 10 June 1911.
- ⁹²Industrialist, Vol. 40, No. 3, 11 Oct. 1913.
- ⁹³Industrialist, Vol. 40, No. 18, 2 Feb. 1914.
- ⁹⁴J. T. Willard, "College Literary Societies." Typed manuscript.
Special Collections Library, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas.
- ⁹⁵Cowperthwaite, p. 270.
- ⁹⁶Industrialist, Vol. 40, No. 35, 13 June 1914.
- ⁹⁷Industrialist, Vol. 41, No. 22, 13 March 1915.
- ⁹⁸Industrialist, Vol. 41, No. 30, 8 May 1915.
- ⁹⁹Regents Minutes, Vol. C, 7 April 1911, p. 232.
- ¹⁰⁰Industrialist, Vol. 44, No. 29, 17 April 1918.
- ¹⁰¹Industrialist, Vol. 49, No. 32, 8 May 1923.
- ¹⁰²Regents Minutes, 18 August 1923.
- ¹⁰³Cowperthwaite, p. 267.
- ¹⁰⁴Industrialist, 9 May 1923.
- ¹⁰⁵Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁶Industrialist, Vol. 51, No. 6, 22 Oct. 1924.
- ¹⁰⁷Industrialist, Vol. 51, No. 17, 21 Jan. 1925.
- ¹⁰⁸Industrialist, Vol. 53, No. 5, 20 Oct. 1926.
- ¹⁰⁹The Collegian, Vol. 54, No. 39, 2 March 1948.
- ¹¹⁰The Collegian, Vol. 54, No. 43, 16 March 1948.
- ¹¹¹The Collegian, Vol. 55, No. 19, 16 Nov. 1948.
- ¹¹²The Collegian, Vol. 57, No. 17, 5 Oct. 1950.
- ¹¹³Ibid.
- ¹¹⁴The Collegian, Vol. 52, No. 135, 2 May 1951.
- ¹¹⁵The Collegian, Vol. 52, No. 105, 14 March 1951.

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AN HISTORICAL STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF
PUBLIC SPEAKING ACTIVITIES ON THE CAMPUS OF
KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY 1864 - 1951

by

DENNIS S. RICHARDS

B.S., Kansas State University, 1976

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Speech

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1977

The purpose of this report has been to take an historical look at the way public speaking emerged on the Kansas State University campus. The process of public speaking has been traced from its beginning, in 1864, to the point that it became an event which was highly selective and competitive, in 1951. The primary emphasis of this report has been placed on the development of early literary societies and the growth of collegiate debate.

The first literary society on this campus was started in 1864. As the school's enrollment grew, the societies became more popular, which created a need for more societies. A total of ten literary societies were officially established on this campus, and they flourished until the 1940's.

During the years that the literary societies were popular, the students took part in many inter-society contests. These contests consisted of debates, orations, declamations, and musical numbers. However, with the passing of time, intercollegiate debate became more popular and the other activities lost their place of importance in the literary societies.

The decline, and eventual disappearance of literary societies can be attributed to several factors. One of the main functions of the early literary society was to provide social involvement for the student. With the increased popularity of fraternities and sororities, the students began to turn to the Greek groups for a more fulfilled social life. Also, high schools and colleges were now providing the same training that was provided by the literary societies. This training in public speaking was usually required and graduation credit was granted for it. Therefore, the need for the literary society was further reduced. Intercollegiate debate also played a large part in the demise of the literary societies. As the selection of

the college debate team became more selective, it reduced the number of students who had an opportunity to participate in these contests.

After World War II, and the literary societies had died out, organized collegiate public speaking was no longer an activity that included all students. The debate team became much more competitive and professional in its manner. The literary societies, which had once fulfilled a very important need on this campus, were no longer needed, and new activities began to take their place.