

Melissa Mayhew

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Instructor: Prof. David Defries

### Castles of K-State

**Abstract:** One of the most notable things about the Kansas State University campus is its abundance of castles. This paper argues that these castles were designed to match earlier buildings that were a part of medieval revival styles in architecture, particularly the Romanesque. What the medieval meant to the adopters of the Romanesque was different from the ideas of Englishness and aristocracy of the Gothic revival, yet they shared the use of medieval architecture as a statement against the standardization and cold logic of the Industrial Revolution. While the meaning and significance of the K-State castles has changed over the century or so they have existed, the differing values of what the medieval and modern symbolize still appear when new castles are built and the old ones restored.

One of the most striking features of Kansas State University's campus is the number of 'castles' it contains. Although these buildings are not technically castles, their towers, castellated parapets, and turrets, such as those seen on Nichols Hall and Holton Hall, stir most people to identify them with the large stone fortresses built in the Middle Ages. Most of the buildings on K-State's campus are over a century old and while various reference books, histories, newspapers, and guides available in K-State's Special Collections Archives helpfully say what styles the buildings are and point out that those styles were popular at the time the buildings were built, the sources do not discuss the significance of the buildings' architectural styles. Why choose styles inspired by medieval rather than Classical or Renaissance buildings? What does being a part of medieval style revivals mean? Were the designers just following trends or was there more to the story than that? And if they were simply trying to gain prestige through architecture, why choose the less popular Romanesque of Antioch College or Stanford and not the Gothic of Harvard or Yale? Although the Middle Ages are often thought of as

barbaric and unsophisticated, the planners of K-State had a different notion. An analysis of the buildings and the documents associated with them reveals that they sprang from a romantic perception of the Middle Ages as a period before Industrialization, which replaced traditional craftsmanship, ruined landscapes with pollution and was characterized by large urban migration.<sup>1</sup> The castles present a specific vision for a land grant university focused on agricultural research.

Although K-State's buildings exhibit more traits of the Romanesque style, it has some Gothic examples as well. This is worth noting as the Gothic and Romanesque revivals of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries drew from the same well of concepts so it should come as no surprise that they share much in common. Three of the most important influences on the architectural aspects of these revivals were the picturesque aesthetic, associationism, and medievalism; specifically romantic notions of the Middle Ages. The picturesque aesthetic favors a landscape between the sublime and the beautiful -- a natural, liminal space that neither overwhelms one with awe nor is completely serene. The Flint Hills around K-State are a good example of the sort of landscape favored by the adherents of the picturesque aesthetic as the area's gently sloping hills and meandering creeks coupled with the all-consuming vastness of the sky demonstrate pleasant beauty and the awesome sensation of the sublime. In architecture the picturesque is made up of pleasingly irregular and diverse elements like the varying shapes and sizes of the brickwork of buildings such as the historic Farrell library as opposed to the strict symmetry, formality, and control of the neoclassical aesthetic popular during the Renaissance, of which the south side of Seaton Hall is a good example.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael J. Lewis. *The Gothic Revival* (New York, N.Y.: Thames & Hudson, 2002), pp. 44, 55.

Medievalism, the second influence on the architectural revivals that shaped K-State, is the use of concepts or practices that are perceived to have medieval origins. The Gothic and Romanesque revivals were part of the Romantic Movement's reaction to the Enlightenment. Romantic thinkers saw the Middle Ages as a simpler and irrational time. This was in contrast to the Enlightenment's focus on logic and set standards, which seemed cold, detached, and unable to recognize the value of strong emotions. In the case of aesthetics, the idea was to judge objects by the profound emotions and other mental sensations they provoke rather than judge them solely by technical skill and adherence to pre-set standards. This idea comes from associationism which is a philosophy that preceded and influenced the picturesque, and both used medieval art and architecture as their prime examples. Michael J. Lewis states in his architectural history book, *The Gothic Revival*, that it was these concepts; medievalism, associationism, and the picturesque that set the stage for the Gothic revival.<sup>2</sup>

The Gothic style with its pointed arches, soaring vaults, and walls of glass, was originally prominent in Europe from the 12<sup>th</sup> century through the 16<sup>th</sup>.<sup>3</sup> Its initial popularity tapered off when the revival of architectural styles from classical antiquity and the growing desire for rationally structured art and architecture during the Italian Renaissance led to the Gothic being disparaged as irregular and savage, not because it was technically irrational but rather because it looked irrational.<sup>4</sup> Even so, Gothic churches continued to be built in parts of Germany and England well into the 17<sup>th</sup> century but not nearly in the numbers that they had been. The transition from Gothic Survival to Revival in architecture started in England in the mid-18<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Lewis, *The Gothic Revival*, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> V&A "Style Guide: Gothic Revival." Victoria and Albert Museum. Accessed March 27, 2015. <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/s/style-guide-gothic-revival/>

<sup>4</sup> Lewis, *The Gothic Revival*, p. 10.

century, initially as a fad in decorative landscaping which led to the adoption of the picturesque aesthetic.<sup>5</sup>

One aspect of the medievalism attached to these revival movements was romantic values tied to the Middle Ages as backlash against the consequences of Industrialism, which is a common thread throughout the medieval revivals. This includes the early K-State castles and buildings constructed as recently as Hale Library (built in 1997) which will be discussed in more depth later. The Gothic revival occurred alongside the Industrial Revolution and was often critical of Industrialism's social consequences. Picturesque Gothic landscapes hinted at continuity in English life at a time when the parliamentary enclosure movement was privatizing communal land and displacing thousands of agricultural workers and the Industrial Revolution was changing rural/urban demographics.<sup>6</sup> Industrialism also led to the devaluation of human labor since workers could be replaced by machinery and production was segmented so that no one person made the whole product.

Even though the values differed, people in America also perceived the Gothic style as anti-industrialist. As America began to industrialize, dramatic, and some might say traumatic, changes to the American landscape such as rapid deforestation, increasing river pollution, and urban migration led to nostalgia for a picturesque nature just as it did in England during its industrialization.<sup>7</sup> A desire for Gothic cottages soon followed as landscapers used Gothic buildings to complement their picturesque designs. The anti-industrialist stance of key figures in the Gothic revival such as Augustus Pugin, John Ruskin, and William Morris spurred a related

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<sup>5</sup> Lewis, *The Gothic Revival*, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Lewis, *The Gothic Revival*, p. 44.

<sup>7</sup> Lewis, *The Gothic Revival*, pp. 54-56.

movement in both America and Europe called the Arts and Crafts movement which was popular from the 1880s through roughly the 1910s. This movement shared the admiration of medieval styles, natural forms, and the romantic ideas of craftsmanship and medieval community found in the Gothic revival.<sup>8</sup>

Thinkers such as Andrew Downey Jackson also tweaked the ideas of the Arts and Crafts movement when it reached America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Downey, a leading figure and theorist of the movement in America, promoted the Gothic more for its functional and moral qualities as opposed to its artistic value which he thought would be more appealing to Puritan values of minimalism and piety. He held up Gothic cottages in particular as “a symbol of Republican simplicity, unaffected natural life and an absence of pretense” rather than as extravagant art or to appeal to medieval nostalgia and English culture with their implications of aristocracy and ownership.<sup>9</sup> Even so, the Gothic has many associations with England and Englishness as a consequence of the revival’s origins there and its use in promoting English nationalism, so the earlier medieval style of the Romanesque became an alternative for those seeking a different type of symbolism.

The Romanesque style developed in Europe in the 5<sup>th</sup> century and was commonly used for buildings such as churches and castles until sometime in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The Romanesque was styled off of Roman architecture, particularly the semicircular arches. The arches allowed for the construction of larger buildings, but they could not distribute weight as well as the pointed arches of Gothic so Romanesque buildings were stockier and had a horizontal profile

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<sup>8</sup> Lewis, *The Gothic Revival*, pp. 160-161.

<sup>9</sup> Lewis, *The Gothic Revival*, p. 56.

while Gothic was more open and vertical. In fact, Gothic arches started as a modification to Romanesque arches and eventually their efficient weight distribution allowed for the development of enough architectural features to become its own style and replace its predecessor for almost six centuries.

The Romanesque revival began its rise in the 1830s in Germany. It shared many of the values of the Gothic revival such as the picturesque aesthetic, emphasis on practical and functional design, and romantic ideas of the medieval as more devout, community-centered, and with better craftsmanship than modern times. Both the Gothic and the Romanesque had a kind of dignity and solidity as well as a power and primitiveness about them. In fact, one of the appeals of the Romanesque as an alternative to Gothic, particularly for Protestant churches, was that it was seen as *more* primitive and therefore closer to a perceived unsullied form of early Christianity as opposed to the corrupted Late Middle Ages.<sup>10</sup> The Romanesque was later considered a more secular style than Gothic by other institutions due to its simpler ornamentation and the lack of overt Catholic associations that Gothic buildings had.<sup>11</sup>

As implied earlier, it is important to note that the shift from Romanesque to Gothic did not occur overnight. Since medieval Gothic developed from Romanesque there are many early buildings with mixed features. Considering this mixing as well as issues deciphering medieval terminology, and a lack of consensus on what was pure or transitional, it is not too surprising that in revival buildings Romanesque and Gothic features are often mixed, and as Kathleen Curran points out, frequently on

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<sup>10</sup> Lewis, *The Gothic Revival*, p. 97.

<sup>11</sup> Lewis, *The Gothic Revival*, pp. 73-74.

the same building.<sup>12</sup> Lewis also points out that there was a precedent for mixing styles since the beginning of the Gothic revival. He says that when association theory was the main guide of the movement, up until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Gothic revival did not see any significance in the precise time periods for architectural styles nor did it care about the function like matching a style to the function of a structure. In fact, if mixing anachronistic elements increased the sensation of gloom, romance, chivalry, etc. the building was supposed to inspire, so much the better.<sup>13</sup> This melding of the Gothic and Romanesque is demonstrated in the early architecture of K-State such as Holtz Hall and Anderson as well as in more recent buildings such as the Hale Library.

In order to understand why K-State currently has its many castles, it is necessary to know about the earlier, now-gone campus buildings since their styles set a precedent for the castles to come. K-State started out as Bluemont Central College, and the first building was erected in 1859. It was given to the state in 1863 and became known as the Kansas State Agricultural College, which was the first land-grant college in the United States.<sup>14</sup> Although this building was a mile west of the current campus and is no longer standing, it would set a precedent for the Romanesque style in other buildings. Romanesque features are visible in paintings and photos of the building, such as the semicircular arches in the cupola and the stone bricks. As stated earlier, medievalism in this century commonly perceived simplicity, quality work, and religious devotion as ideal features of the Middle Ages. These ideas would have likely come into play since Bluemont was an agricultural school “under the supervision of the Methodist Episcopal denomination” which was the largest Protestant

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<sup>12</sup> Kathleen Curran, *The Romanesque Revival: Religion, Politics, and Transnational Exchange* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), pp. 225-258 & Lewis, *The Gothic Revival*, p. 44.

<sup>13</sup> Lewis, *The Gothic Revival*, p. 44.

<sup>14</sup> J.T. Willard, “Bluemont Central College: The Forerunner of Kansas State College,” *The Kansas Historical Quarterly* 13 (1945), 336. <https://www.kshs.org/p/kansas-historical-quarterly-bluemont-central-college/12997>

denomination in the United States at that time.<sup>15</sup> Many of the recognizable building names at K-State such as the residence halls Marlatt and Goodnow were named after founders of the college who were heavily involved with the Methodist-Episcopalian church. In fact, Washington Marlatt was a Methodist minister as was the first president of the college Rev. Joseph Denison, who frequently held religious exercises at the college.<sup>16</sup> Choosing a medieval style would have worked double duty as being prestigious while romantically recalling a time when most people were farmers and Christian. Choosing Romanesque seems probable for a Methodist-Episcopal run institution if they subscribed to the idea that the more primitive style was better reflective of the common Protestant medievalism of piety and purity as mentioned previously.

In addition, practical considerations might have added to the attraction of medieval revival styles, especially considering the landscape. K-State is located in the Flint Hills which is a perfectly picturesque area. Not only does the area already have the rough yet pleasing picturesque aesthetic, but the irregularity of the landscape makes it practical to choose styles that conform to the land rather than choosing ones that require symmetry and therefore large-scale ground levelling. While there are no extant records stating specifically why a medieval style was chosen, it is not unreasonable to assume that practical concerns such as these were taken into account when choosing a style for the budding college, especially since these styles had come to ascendancy at American educational institutions.

Twenty years after the Bluemont College building was erected, Anderson Hall, the current symbol of K-State, was erected. Anderson has an interesting mix of Gothic and Romanesque features as it has both pointed and semicircular arches as well as semi-arches and

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<sup>15</sup> Willard, "Bluemont Central College," 337.

<sup>16</sup> Willard, "Bluemont Central College," 340.



a mix of steeply pitched and gently sloping roofs. It also has a pointed tower, hood molded square windows, finials, and pointed dormers common to Gothic buildings but it also has corbel tables and a belt course common in Romanesque structures.<sup>17</sup>

As briefly mentioned earlier, examples of mixed Gothic and Romanesque features are not rare on campus. Around 1846, Robert Mills, made a distinction between what he called Saxon, Anglo-Saxon, and Norman styles while working on a design for the Smithsonian. These styles are characterized by semicircular, pointed, and a mix of arches respectively.<sup>18</sup> The association of Romanesque with German (Saxon) and Gothic with English (Anglo-Saxon) appear in this distinction as it also does with the distinction of the Gothic and the Romanesque revivals. It is not such a strict association of course, as Lewis points out, during the Italian Renaissance the Gothic was mocked as the ‘German Style’ but the popularity of each revival in the respective countries over time changed these associations.<sup>19</sup>

This geographical split is visible in American universities as the most famous Gothic campuses (Yale, Harvard, Princeton, etc.) are near the east coast and have strong ties to English culture. Yale and Harvard are located in New England, in fact, and as the top schools in the US it makes sense that they would model themselves after the Oxbridge schools in England, which are Gothic. Romanesque campuses such as Stanford and UCLA in California, Rice in Texas, Antioch in Ohio, and of course Kansas State in Kansas are usually found further west, where German influences were more important.

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<sup>17</sup> See Appendix: A.1

<sup>18</sup> Curran, *The Romanesque Revival*, p. 250.

<sup>19</sup> Lewis, *The Gothic Revival*, p. 10.

It is at this point that it is worth mentioning that at the time K-State was founded and for a couple decades after (mid-1850s-1890), there was a large influx of German immigrants to Kansas and the United States in general, and they were in fact the largest group of European immigrants to the state.<sup>20</sup> It was also during these decades that America was looking toward European institutions as models for its own, with Germany and Switzerland being the preeminent influences on educational institutions such as public libraries. Curran argues that part of the reason the Romanesque revival took off in America is because it was the style of choice for educational institutions in Germany by the 1830s and 1840s.<sup>21</sup> In light of America's search for models in Europe, the prestige that German culture and education had at the time, and the influx of German immigrants, among whom were many architects, it is no surprise that the Romanesque became a favorite style for public educational buildings like public libraries, museums, and universities.

While there is no direct evidence of a connection, it seems likely that K-State was also affected by this German influence. In fact, when Holtz Hall (1876) was being planned, Professor W.K. Kedzie went to several universities in Europe at his personal expense to get ideas of how to model the chemistry lab planned for the building, although unfortunately the specific countries and universities he visited were not listed on his trip.<sup>22</sup> Holtz Hall is one of the earliest examples of Romanesque at K-State, or at least a mix of Romanesque and Gothic as it has semi-

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<sup>20</sup> William D. Keel, "The German Heritage of Kansas: An Introduction," Swiss Mennonite Cultural and Historical Association. Accessed April 18, 2015; "German Settlers in Kansas," (2015) Kansas State Historical Society. Accessed April 18, 2015. <https://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/german-settlers-in-kansas/16710>.

<sup>21</sup> Curran, *The Romanesque Revival*, pp. 225-226.

<sup>22</sup> Emil C. Fischer, *A Walk through Campus*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Manhattan, Kansas: Kansas State University Endowment Assn, 1992), p. 12.

circular arches and a rather low profile while also having steep roofing and dramatically pointed gables.<sup>23</sup>

The earliest buildings that could be said to look like castles due to features such as towers and turrets are Fairchild (1894), Kedzie (1899), Holton (1900), and Old Denison (1902-1934). They were built at K-State in the style of Richardsonian Romanesque, named after the architect Henry Hobson Richardson (1838-1886). His approach to Romanesque architecture gave it a more rugged and “natural” look by using rough-hewn stone bricks, called ashlar. His buildings, unlike previous manifestations of the Romanesque revival were even more horizontal in profile and the feeling of heaviness that is characteristic of the style is achieved by not only using thick ashlar and picturesque massing but also by setting windows and doors deep into the walls. His style often has at least one remarkable tower, usually massive and either crenellated or conical, which is the main feature that gives a building a castle-like appearance. Other common features are robust columns with ornamented capitals and belt courses that align with the floors of the building.<sup>24</sup>

Richardson’s style became popular in the 1870s and 1880s and Richardsonian Romanesque quickly became known as a “uniquely American Style.”<sup>25</sup> According to Lewis and Margaret Henderson Floyd, the reasons for his popularity stems from its blend of medieval and classical designs, both of which were in vogue during the period.<sup>26</sup> In the introduction to *A Walk through*

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<sup>23</sup> See Appendix: B.1

<sup>24</sup> Wentworth “HISTORIC STYLES / RICHARDSONIAN ROMANESQUE 1880 – 1900” Wentworth Studio. Accessed March 27, 2015. <http://www.wentworthstudio.com/historic-styles/richardsonianromanesque/>

<sup>25</sup> “Romanesque Revival in America: In general 1840-1890.” 1997. Buffalo as an Architectural Museum. Accessed March 14, 2015. <http://www.buffaloah.com/a/archsty/rom/index.html#rr> <sup>15</sup> Lewis, 169.

<sup>26</sup> Margaret Henderson Floyd, *Architecture after Richardson: Regionalism before Modernism--Longfellow, Alden, and Harlow in Boston and Pittsburgh* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press in association with the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation, 1994), p. 35.

*Campus*, the preeminent guide to K-State campus buildings, Emil Fischer ties the popularity of Richardsonian Romanesque and the Romanesque in general back to the common threads of medieval revival styles-- a desire for natural, picturesque landscapes in a time when many urban immigrants became disillusioned with the overcrowding, restricted routines, and pollution of the Industrial Age coupled with America's economic expansion and importation of foreign goods, ideas, and institutions.<sup>27</sup>

Richardsonian Romanesque was well suited for mural painting in that the buildings usually have large expanses of blank wall(s) which proved to be excellent canvases for a blossoming of mural painting in America. Art historians even call the mural at one of Richardson's most famous buildings, the Trinity Church in Boston, the "first comprehensive example of American mural painting."<sup>28</sup> Although the two most recognizable castles, Nichols<sup>29</sup> and Memorial Stadium, now have murals, they were painted decades later -- as recently as 1986 for the one in Nichols.<sup>30</sup> However, the murals at the mixed Gothic and Romanesque Farrell Library were painted in 1934, only seven years after it was built and before the popularity of the medieval style revivals wound down after World War II.

Although the subjects of the David Hicks Overmyer Murals in the library are modern, they depict the simplicity and communal aspects that romanticists pined for. The four murals depict the four major academic pursuits of the college when they were painted: science and industry,

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<sup>27</sup> Fischer, *A Walk through Campus*, p. 6.

<sup>28</sup> Kathleen Curran, "The Romanesque Revival, Mural Painting, and Protestant Patronage in America," *The Art Bulletin* 81 (1999), 690.

<sup>29</sup> See Appendix: B. 5

<sup>30</sup> See Appendix: B. 5 and B. 6 respectively.

agriculture and animal husbandry, the arts, and home economics.<sup>31</sup> There are no more than five people in each painting and none are in anything remotely mistakable for a factory or urban setting. The arts and farm murals depict people outside in a clean, bountiful, and wide-open nature while the home economics and science murals have people in a small, simple home or workshop. The farm mural even has what looks like a village with a tall, pointed building that is most likely a gothic church in the background. Also of note, all of the implements the people are using are simple and useful for small-scale production, with the most complicated pieces being a spinning wheel and a violin. The other objects are things like a shepherd's crook, baskets, a test tube, an easel, a scythe, and an anvil. The only tool that could possibly be used for the large-scale industries of modern life is a large gear being carried by a large muscular man. Here in these paintings, although not exclusively medieval in character, the romantic notions of simplicity, community, small-scale craftsmanship, and unpolluted, uncramped spaces are visible and reflective of early K-State ideals.

This is not to say there were not any grand aspirations however. The scale of the murals, which are 11 feet by 15 feet each, and the large buildings that hold numerous classrooms and learning materials on campus attest to that. These high aspirations are also apparent in the bulletin published by the college about the start of one of the most recognizable castles on campus, Memorial Stadium. The stadium was built in phases from 1923 through 1934 although the horseshoe shape in the original plans never came to pass. It was built to honor the soldiers from the college who fell in World War I, and the idea for the style drew on the aesthetic and practical ideas of the Romanesque revival as well as a sense of military loyalty and physical

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<sup>31</sup> "The Great Room Murals" 2014. The Friends of the K-State Libraries. Accessed April 15, 2015. <http://www.lib.kstate.edu/friends-prints>

prowess. According to the facts and figures page of the bulletin, Memorial Stadium was built in the general style of Nichols, another recognizable castle only a few hundred feet distant.<sup>32</sup> The opening page of the bulletin hails the stadium as being a structure of “beauty and dignity” whose “towers and walls built of beautiful native limestone” will make it a “a real building of quiet strength, harmonizing with the other buildings of the city on the hill.”<sup>33</sup> And again on the facts and figures page the towers and turrets of the stadium are described as “lend[ing] themselves particularly well to an interesting skyline.”<sup>34</sup> The author seems proud that this “mighty” building “will be the only Stadium in the country built of stone or with so impressive and complete an architectural treatment.”<sup>35</sup> Here in this bulletin the threads of the irregular beauty and overwhelming sublimity of the picturesque, an emphasis on local materials, which in this case is thick limestone bricks, and the trend of basing new buildings on the styles of those already existing appears yet again.

Unlike for the other buildings at K-State, records exist for Memorial Stadium that explain why a castle design was chosen and what the intended symbolism is. A speech by Coach Charles Bachman given on April 25, 1922 included in the bulletin sums it up best:

“I wonder how many of you have ever given any real serious thought to why our colleges and universities have almost invariably decided upon the Stadium as the most appropriate memorial to their soldier dead. It is because the Stadium is itself a manifestation—an outward and visible sign of loyalty in its most superb form. It symbolizes that moral and physical courage, that determination, that spirit of glory in achievement that characterized our soldiers on the fields of France. Our soldiers have given the highest proof of loyalty that a man can give; and in dedicating this memorial to them we are but faintly echoing their noblest

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<sup>32</sup> K.S.A.C., “Memorial Stadium,” *Kansas State Agricultural College Bulletin* 7 no. 2 (1923): 9.

<sup>33</sup> K.S.A.C., “Memorial Stadium,” 2.

<sup>34</sup> K.S.A.C., “Memorial Stadium,” 9.

<sup>35</sup> K.S.A.C., “Memorial Stadium,” 9.

deeds. They made a great sacrifice for you and for me and we are now privileged to show our gratitude by erecting to their memory this monument of loyalty.”<sup>36</sup>

Although the word ‘castle’ is not specifically mentioned, as noted earlier Memorial Stadium was designed to look similar to Nichols. Also important to know is at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when these two buildings were constructed, it was common to design campus buildings related to military functions to look like medieval fortresses.<sup>37</sup> Nichols was in fact the Military Science Department building as well as a gymnasium and armory when it was built in 1911 and remained so until it was lit ablaze in 1968 by arsonists who were most likely influenced by rising tensions and opposition to the Vietnam War.<sup>38</sup> Nichols has been rebuilt and is now home to the Computing and Information Sciences Department as well as a theater and dance studios. Memorial Stadium is similarly being repurposed for less militaristically inclined purposes at the time of this writing into a Welcome Center.

For the most part, remodeling of the castle-like buildings in the last few decades has been the extent of castle construction since the construction of Memorial Stadium. The Great Depression in that decade and World War II brought a temporary halt to the construction of new buildings at K-State. After World War II there was a building boom on the campus but all the new buildings were in modern styles. Any attempts at matching the older buildings or making anything resembling the medieval was put by the wayside as even additions to the old buildings were modern aesthetically. For example, Farrell Library gained two additions, the first in 1951 and another in 1970.<sup>39</sup> Not only were both additions different from the original’s Gothic

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<sup>36</sup> K.S.A.C., “Memorial Stadium,” 13.

<sup>37</sup> Fischer, *A Walk through Campus*, p. 69.

<sup>38</sup> “Nichols Hall Story” 2013. Wildcat Way. Accessed July 6, 2015. <http://www.k-state.edu/wildcatway/nichols.html>

<sup>39</sup> Fischer, *A Walk through Campus*, p. 19.

style, they were two completely different modern styles. Farrell was essentially three disparate buildings built onto each other. Not unexpectedly, this led to many navigational problems since neither the outside nor inside of the library quite fit together: the third addition's floors were not even at the same elevation as the other parts of the library.<sup>40</sup>

In 1993, architectural teams Brent Bowman & Associates of Manhattan Kansas and Hammond, Beeby and Babka, Inc. of Chicago, Illinois confronted this problem when they were hired to redesign the library. Bowman had previously worked on the remodeling of Holton Hall and Holtz Hall on campus as well as other historic buildings in Manhattan while Beeby and Babka was nationally known for historic preservation and for building new structures in historic districts to look like they had always been there. The goal from the beginning was to design the library to not only be functional, but also to fix the aesthetic problem of having three separate styles. Interestingly, they were given specific instructions to leave the original Gothic sides intact.<sup>41</sup> The modern additions were nowhere to be seen after the new library was completed in 1997 and renamed Hale. Even more interesting about the so-called "centerpiece" of campus is that they decided to unite the three styles under a fourth: Romanesque.<sup>42</sup> Since one of the goals was to make the building harmonize with the K-State campus, it initially seems odd that they chose to match the older medieval styles rather than the newer, more plentiful modern ones.

However, the decision begins to make more sense in view of the features of the historic Farrell Library, the abundance of Romanesque buildings and features on the campus, as well as

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<sup>40</sup> Beeby, Thomas & Bowman, Brent. "The Architects Design Concepts for Farrell Library" *The Library Insider* Fall 1993:1.

<sup>41</sup> Joel Aschbrenner, "Storied Halls," *Kansas State Collegian* October 8, 2008.

<sup>42</sup> Ned Seaton, "Farrell Library's Renewal Makes it the Centerpiece," *The Manhattan Mercury* May 25, 1997.



the negative attitude to the nearby modern buildings at the time. The direction one approaches the library from was taken in consideration by the architects. Hale was designed so that the south and east sides would match the nearby Romanesque buildings on campus such as Holton, Dickens, and Fairchild and the west side was designed as a transition from Romanesque to the Gothic of Farrell and Willard on north side. The Farrell side of the library is impressive, with its rows of large lancet windows, irregular brickwork, and pointed gables that soar into the sky.<sup>43</sup> But it too, was designed to match with the styles of earlier buildings around campus which may be why one of the most gothic looking buildings has several semicircular arched windows as well as pointed ones. In any case, the new addition of Hale almost entirely engulfs the former Farrell library with a Romanesque façade, leaving only the northern side of gothic Farrell visible.<sup>44</sup> Efforts were made to make the transition smoother, as the windows on the west side of Hale were pointed and pointed gables in the style of Farrell were added. If it were not for the different brick shapes that essentially create a boundary between old and new, it would be impossible to tell them apart on the west side.<sup>45</sup>

The decision to preserve the Farrell Library side is in part due to the trend of campus restoration started with the reconstruction of Nichols in the 1980s and with the principle of preserving campus heritage in general.<sup>46</sup> But not only was there an admiration for older styles, there was also growing resentment toward some of the modern styled buildings built in the 1950s and 1960s that were falling apart, particularly Denison Hall. The flurry of newspapers

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<sup>43</sup> See Appendix: A. 3.

<sup>44</sup> See Appendix: B. 7.

<sup>45</sup> See Appendix: B. 8.

<sup>46</sup> Richard P. Dober, "Campus Heritage in the 21st Century: Notable Precedents and Inspiring Antecedents: A Responsible Regard for Campus Heritage is Part of Higher Education's History, and is Becoming More Intentionally Woven into Campus Development," *Planning for Higher Education* 39 (2011), 36.

reporting on Hale does more than just show admiration for the beauty and timeless craftsmanship of the older architecture: among the praises for the skillfully hand-cut limestone, beautifully crafted sculptures by individual artists, and calling the library the “centerpiece of campus” is disdain for the modern buildings around it. Brice Hobrock, Dean of Libraries and overseer of the design and construction of Hale, had quite a bit to say when asked how he would respond to people commenting that Hale was not a modern building:

The architects objective was to try to restore the look of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century/early 20<sup>th</sup> century campus, which was sort of a mixture of Gothic and Richardsonian Romanesque style....The trend today is away from the box-type architecture of the 1950s, 60s, and 70's back to more classic styles. The 1960s architecture in the 1970s building was a disaster. Other boxes on campus -I don't want to make a slur against Bluemont Hall- aren't well-liked by many people.<sup>47</sup>

And if the rancor about Denison Hall is any indication, Hobrock was correct in saying that people did not like the aesthetics nor the quickening obsolescence of the modern boxes.

Denison Hall was built in 1960 on what is now known as Coffman Commons and was torn down in 2004, apparently to no one's regret. An article in the Manhattan Mercury plainly stated that “few tears were shed over Denison's demise” and the English department head, Linda Brigham, was quoted as saying about the demolition: “We all really want to see the wrecking ball come through, so we're hoping we can get some kind of event scheduled through that.”<sup>48</sup> There were many practical reasons people hated Denison, flooding due to pipe-breaks was a big problem, but comments about its ugliness in relation to the newly built Hale are almost as common as complaints about the poor conditions on the inside. Rodgers said it was

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<sup>47</sup> Russel Fortmeyer, “The Fortmeyer Files: This Week Brice Hobrock Dean of K-State Libraries,” *Kansas State Collegian* March 5, 1996, 8.

<sup>48</sup> Tony Herrman, “Division of Facilities Prepares for Destruction of Denison Hall,” *Kansas State Collegian* August 27, 2003, 5.

an “eyesore” next to Hale; five students wrote a letter to the editor that was published in the *Collegian* about Denison and their immediate complaint was that it was aesthetically unappealing and that it blocked the view of the new library.<sup>49</sup> Even though Denison had been slated for removal since the construction of Hale in 1994 it was not torn down until a decade later due to financial and office space issues.<sup>50</sup>

Although it seems like a cut-and-dry case of medieval aesthetic being valued more than modern ones, it gets tricky when taking a look at the plans for Hale’s layout. Denison was noted for destruction at the same time Hale was being built because one of the plans called for the library to expand south either over Denison or a smaller expansion up against it. Before the architects were selected for the library expansion Hobrock said he preferred the southward expansion and the demolition of Denison and was confident that it would indeed go south over it. The third option, expand eastward, was the plan ultimately chosen however. There was a building already standing where the eastward expansion was proposed to go and it was one of the oldest standing buildings on campus.

Simply known as the Art Building, it had stood on the campus since 1902 and was torn down in 1994 to make way for Hale. It was one of the medieval style buildings and considering the fervor over preserving the traditional campus styles and old buildings in general, it is rather surprising that there was not much said about its destruction. It seems that the ideals of romantic simplicity and practicality that K-State probably wanted to identify with when the early medieval style buildings were built changed to an emphasis on heritage and competitive

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<sup>49</sup> Jacob Sorenson, “Campus Building Removal on Hold Pending Office-, Class-Moving Decision,” *Kansas State Collegian* July 18, 1996, 8. Jason Zwahlen, et. al., “University Administrators Should Decide on Fate of Denison Hall,” *Kansas State Collegian* December 3, 1996, 4.

<sup>50</sup> Travis D. Lenkner, “Denison Demise Nears Reality,” *Kansas State Collegian* October 2, 1997, 9.

appeal. It is not simply the old or the traditional or even the medieval that is valued as much as certain kinds of old, traditional, and medieval: specifically the recognizably and monumental medieval. The restored castles like Nichols and Holton show clear characteristics that most people today would identify with castles and millions of dollars were poured into Hale to make it not only match the older buildings but to be even more impressive in size and detail. The Art Building was not nearly as grand and extravagant as the Romanesque buildings or the uniquely detailed Farrell side of the library. It did not inspire the awe or dignity the university desires as easily as the other medieval style buildings and that is probably one reason not much was said when it was razed.

In conclusion, although ideals change over time, they do not disappear completely. It is because of the movement to preserve campus heritage that buildings like Nichols and art like the David Hicks Overmyer Murals are still around. These medieval style buildings were built as part of intellectual and aesthetic movements that looked fondly on a romanticized medieval past. They sought to trigger ideas of sincerity and dedication in an uncomplicated world whether the designers were just following the trends at the time or not. The explicit idea of the medieval past as a response to the consequences of Industrialism may have faded since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century but it is faintly echoed during the reconstruction and remodeling of these castles and in the praises of Hale and will likely continue to echo into the future.

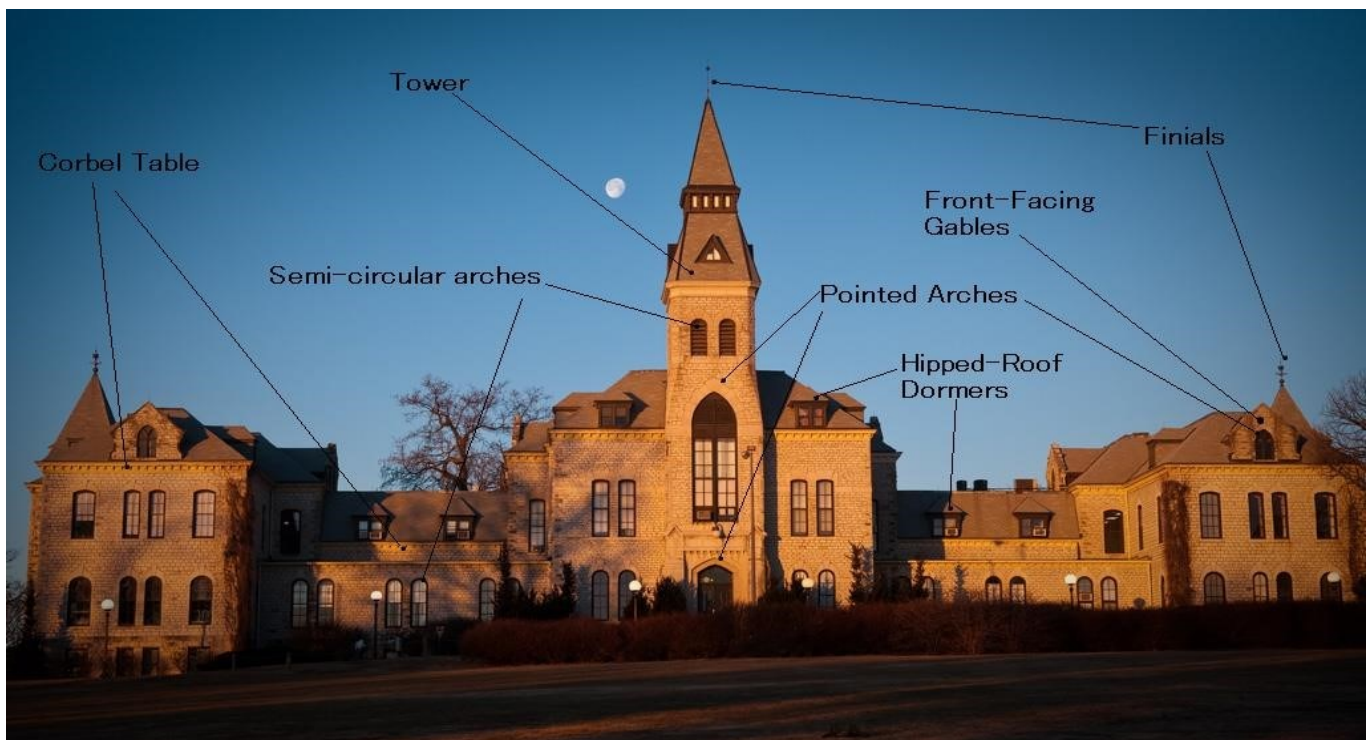
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## Appendix



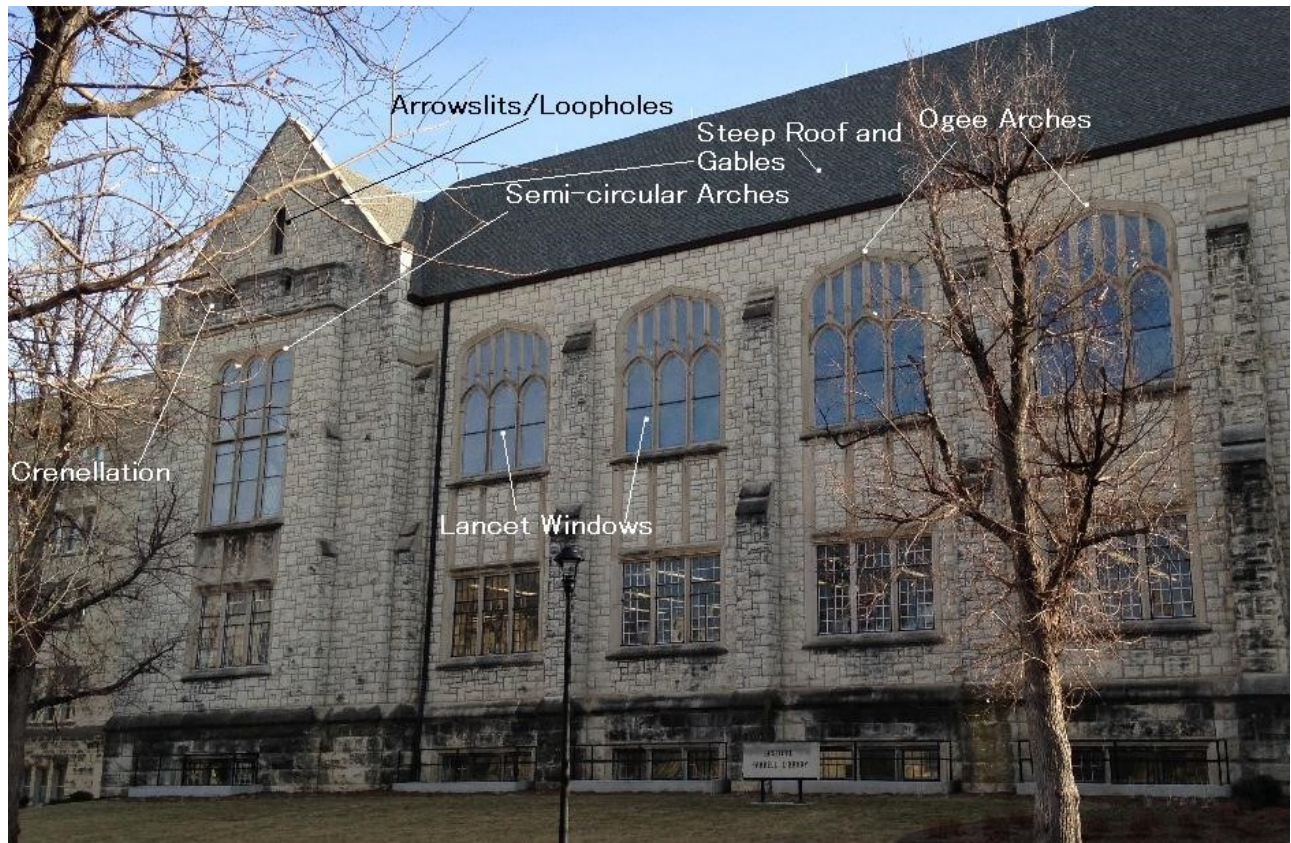
**A.1 Anderson Hall (1879-present) with some labeled features.** The corbel table, singular tower, and semi-circular arches are typical of Romanesque while finials and pointed arches more commonly Gothic. Steep roofs, dormers, and front-facing gables are common to both styles. (Original photo: <http://www.kstate.edu/maps/buildings/A/a.jpg>)





**A.2 Holton Hall (1900-present) with some labeled features.** Geometrical and natural designs such as the sculptures on this building are common for medieval styles. The horizontal stone banding known as a belt course along with squat stone columns and transom windows appear frequently in Richardsonian Romanesque buildings.





**A.3 Historic Farrell Library (1927-present) with some labeled features.** One of the most easily identifiable Gothic buildings on campus has both semi-circular and pointed arches like Anderson. An Ogee arch, also known as a Venetian arch, is a specific type of pointed arch that was popular in the late Middle Ages.



**B.1 Holtz Hall (1876-present).** Holtz is one of the earliest buildings on campus. Semi-circular arches are present on the cupola and the right side under the steeply pitched gable.





**B.2 Fairchild Hall (1894-present).** The deeply recessed window openings and bands of windows are characteristic of Richardsonian Romanesque along with the more recognizable towers and semi-circular arches.



**B.3 Old Denison (1902-1934).** Formerly the chemistry, engineering, and physics building before it burned down. The towers are similar to the ones on Fairchild and the pyramidal roof resembles the Union Pacific Depot a few miles distant. (Original photo <http://digital.lib.k-state.edu/omeka/items/show/71>)





**B.4 Kedzie Hall (1899-present).** Kedzie's tower is much squatter than the other Richardsonian Romanesque buildings such as its neighbor Fairchild Hall.



**B.5 Nichols Hall (1911-present).** Unlike the most of the other medieval-styled buildings, Nichols only has elliptical arches rather than full semi-circular ones.  
(Original photo <http://ksuphoto.zenfolio.com/p618562331/h365AED5#h365aed5>)





**B.6 Memorial Stadium (1923-present).** Like Nichols Hall a few decades before, Memorial Stadium's interior is being totally renovated while its castle-like exterior is being preserved. The new stadium will serve as a Welcome Center.



**B.7 Hale (1997-present).** This is the western corner of Hale as the style transitions from Romanesque to Gothic. The round tower and semi-circular arches of the loggia give way to a buttressed tower with slight crenellation in the style of Willard Hall and a pointed arch with a pair lancet windows.





**B.8 Hale (1997-present).** This is the west side of Hale showing its transition into Farrell. The dividing line is visible if one looks at the bricks, as Farrell has irregular shapes and sizes while Hale has uniform ones. The Hale window is also different as it has a circular foil and a hood mold around its arch as opposed to Farrell's Ogee arches.