

## **Administration Building ("Old Main")**

The Administration Building was the first building built by the State of Nebraska on the site of Nebraska State Normal School at Kearney.

At its October 4, 1903 meeting in Lincoln, the State Board of Education selected George A. Berlinghof as architect.

On March 25, 1904, the Board approved Berlinghof's plans and bids were called for, to be opened April 26, 1904.

The bid of Knutzen and Isdell of Kearney of \$41,500 for concrete stone was accepted. A. Dussell & Son of Columbus was selected for the heating, plumbing and electrical work. Kearney Hydraulic Stone Company was the maker of the concrete stone, finished to represent granite and gray sandstone.

The new building measured 170' x 74' and was, by order of the board, located 250' back from the lot line of 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue facing to the east with the center of the building aligned with the center of 25<sup>th</sup> Street, Kearney's main east-west street. Two public driveways 50' wide were extended from 25<sup>th</sup> Street and 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue in a curved line around both ends of the building to 25<sup>th</sup> Street and 10<sup>th</sup> Ave.

The cornerstone was laid on the afternoon of Tuesday, Oct 18 1904. Norris Brown of Kearney was invited to deliver the oration. The cornerstone measured 48 ½" x 21 3/16" on each face and was laid by the Masonic Grand Lodge of Nebraska. A severe thunderstorm, accompanied by hail, interrupted the ceremonies, which were continued at the Opera House.

The building was a three-story structure. The first floor included two large rooms for manual training and domestic science, four classrooms, and lockers. The second floor provided a board reception room, two offices, three model schoolrooms, recitation rooms, and rest rooms. The library, chapel, four science laboratories, lecture rooms and a storeroom occupied the third floor.

The halls were paved with marble tile. The windows, doors, and moldings of each room were of white oak.

The fall term was scheduled to begin on Wednesday, September 20, 1905, but the building was not fully ready. According to President A O Thomas's report to the Board of Education on December 20, 1905, "[W]hen we opened school on [Wednesday] the 20<sup>th</sup> of September, 1905, we were unable to get into our new building. The Board of Education of the city schools kindly adjourned the high school for two days, in order that we might organize our school in their building. We entered our own building however on the following Monday [September 25, 1905]. At that time we were not in very good shape for the opening of school. The windows were in place temporarily on the upper floor. Canvass [sic] was stretched over the windows on the second floor, while on the lower floor the windows remained open. Temporary stairs were put up so that we could get into the rooms on the third floor, that being in the best condition of any. There were no floors on the halls, the concreting was in on the upper floor. We had little furniture on hand at that time, and little equipment of any kind....The faculty and students have observed the unfolding of this educational plant from the bud to the full-blown flower. They have watched the windows placed, the halls tiled with marble, the casings fastened, doors hung, floors laid, iron stairs adjusted, and the general cleaning up. In fact they have watched almost every process connected with building.

We had no heat for some time after beginning. Oil stoves were placed in the normal building proper....These served for some weeks, but as the weather became colder it became necessary to make better provision. We secured traction engines, two for the main building and one for the dormitory, for the purpose of furnishing steam for the buildings."

According to a feature article in The Kearney Hub of October 21, 1905, the first month of school was described as an interesting one for both students and faculty. The progress made by the workmen was "heralded with joy" by faculty and students as "it betokens comfortable quarters in the future."

This original building, although known as the Administration Building or, more familiarly, "Old Main," bore the official name of the "Mickey Building," in honor of the governor who signed the legislation authorizing its construction.

## **North Wing**

The original building, the Mickey Building, was designed so that major additions could be made on the north and south ends. A bill was introduced into the 1907 legislature providing funds for the construction of the wings. Although the bill received legislative approval, it was vetoed by Governor Sheldon.

The North Wing was finally built in 1909-1910, and the South Wing in 1911-1912. In March, 1910, the January 8, 1910, bid of W. F. Crossley to build the North Wing for \$49,207 was accepted and construction began. Minor design modifications increased the actual total cost to \$49,972. On February 1, 1911, President A. O. Thomas certified that the North Wing was fully completed according to contract, and at the June 17, 1911 meeting the State Board of Education accepted the building. The North Wing bore the official name of the "Shellenberger Building," for the governor signing the authorizing legislation.

The library moved into the Shellenberger Building in 1911. It contained 6,000 books and subscriptions to 101 periodicals. The reading room contained 8 tables and 80 chairs. One of these original tables has survived and can be seen (and used) on the second floor of the Calvin T. Ryan Library on the Kearney campus. On the second floor, the east end was devoted to art, including pottery, and the west end was designated for music, reading, and elocution. Biological and agricultural sciences and labs occupied the third floor.

### **South Wing**

On May 3, 1911, plans for the South Wing were approved and the architect was given instructions to complete full drawings and specifications. On June 23, 1911, W. F. Crossley's bid for \$53,732.50 was accepted for the construction of the South Wing. On June 28, 1912, the new South Wing was formally dedicated. Governor Aldrich was present for the dedication. It bore the official name of the "Aldrich Wing," to honor the governor signing the bill authorizing its construction.

The Aldrich Wing duplicated the Shellenberger Building. The first floor housed the model schoolrooms and vocational arts; the second German, education, penmanship, and mathematics; and the third physical science. In 1917, manual training classes expanded into a large 129 by 20 foot basement room excavated under the Aldrich Wing

### **Auditorium (West Wing)**

In 1915, the legislature approved funds for the construction of an auditorium. On August 3, 1915, the bid of W. F. Crossley of \$57,867 was approved. The cornerstone was laid in October, 1915, and the building was completed in 1917, and seated 1,500 people. The auditorium was attached to the west side of the Mickey Building. The auditorium was two stories high with a balcony on the second floor and rooms for the music department on the third level above it.

The auditorium was used for daily chapel convocations, invited speakers, musical and theatrical programs, and pep rallies.

A pipe organ was given to the College by the alumni in time for the Silver Anniversary in 1930, and installed in the Auditorium.

Serious structural problems in the Auditorium were brought to light in 1968. At that time, the Auditorium was found to be structurally defective due to failure of the trusses supporting the roof and third floor area over the auditorium. The wing was officially closed by President Milton J. Hassel on February 6, 1968, and on February 9, 1968, the Department of Fire Prevention, State of Nebraska, ordered the wing evacuated. On May 11, 1968, President Hassel announced that the Auditorium would be demolished in 1968.

### **Condemnation and Demolition**

On June 27, 1968, the Office of the Fire Marshal ordered the College to plan for the replacement of the entire facility. While still maintaining careful use of the original building, the College completed Founders Hall, declaring it ready for occupancy in January 1977. On June 15, 1984, Skeen Construction began demolition of the original building, taking less than three weeks for the job. It was demolished in the reverse order of how it had been built. First to go was the South Wing, then the North Wing, and then the Mickey Building. Demolition cost \$69,444. Two of the four columns were sound enough to be saved.



Administration Bldg.  
KSC 1968

*Robert S. Myers*

**This aerial view of the Administration Building, taken in March 1968, looks to the northeast.**

**The photo clearly illustrates the four parts of the building.**

- 1. In the center is the original building, the Mickey Building, completed in 1905.**
- 2. The North Wing, officially named the Shellenberger Building, was completed in 1910.**
- 3. The South Wing, officially the Aldrich Wing, was finished in 1912.**
- 4. The Auditorium Wing was added to the west side of the Mickey Building and completed in 1917.**

**The Auditorium Wing was demolished in 1968, and the rest of the building in 1984.**



**This photo was taken on October 18, 1904, during the ceremonies at which the cornerstone of the Administration Building was laid. The ceremonies were interrupted by a severe thunderstorm with hail, and continued indoors at the Kearney Opera House.**



Laying the sidewalk to the Mickey Building, 1905.

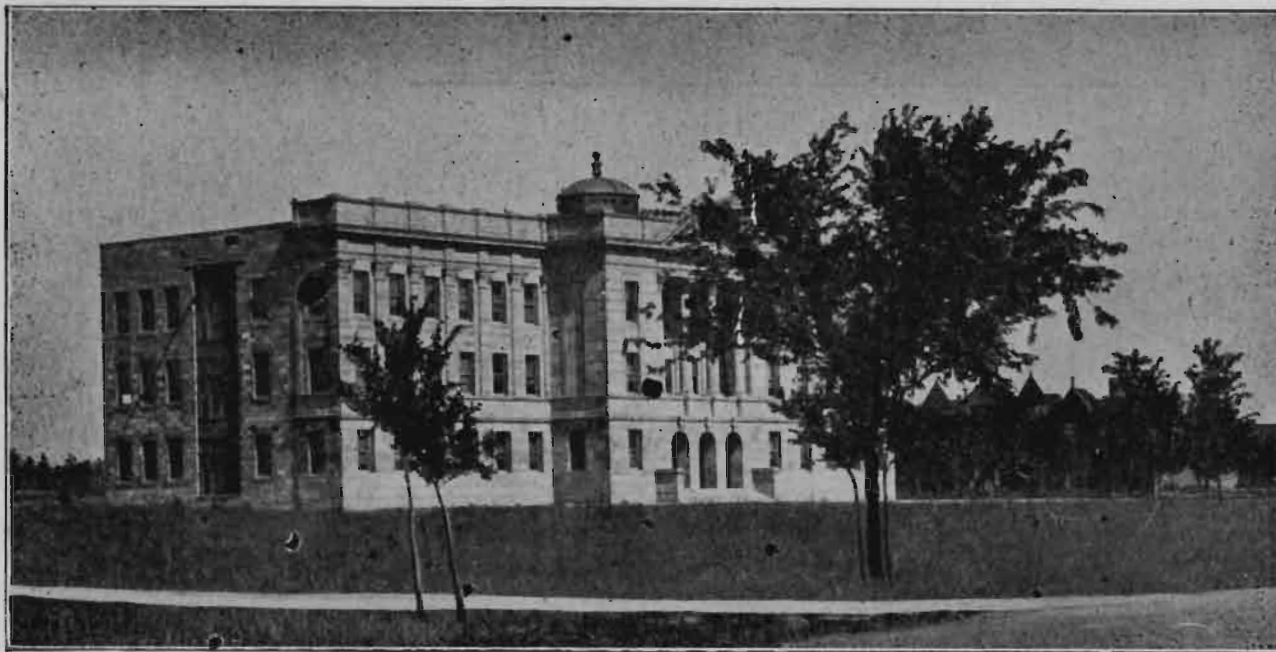




**This view of the Mickey Building, the first of the four parts of the Administration Building to be built, was taken in 1905. It looks to the southwest, showing the east and north elevations. The north elevation clearly shows that the building was designed to accommodate expansion.**

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7K1  
7-1  
ANNEX

ACHIEVEMENT WAITS ON PREPARATION



STATE NORMAL SCHOOL, KEARNEY, NEB.

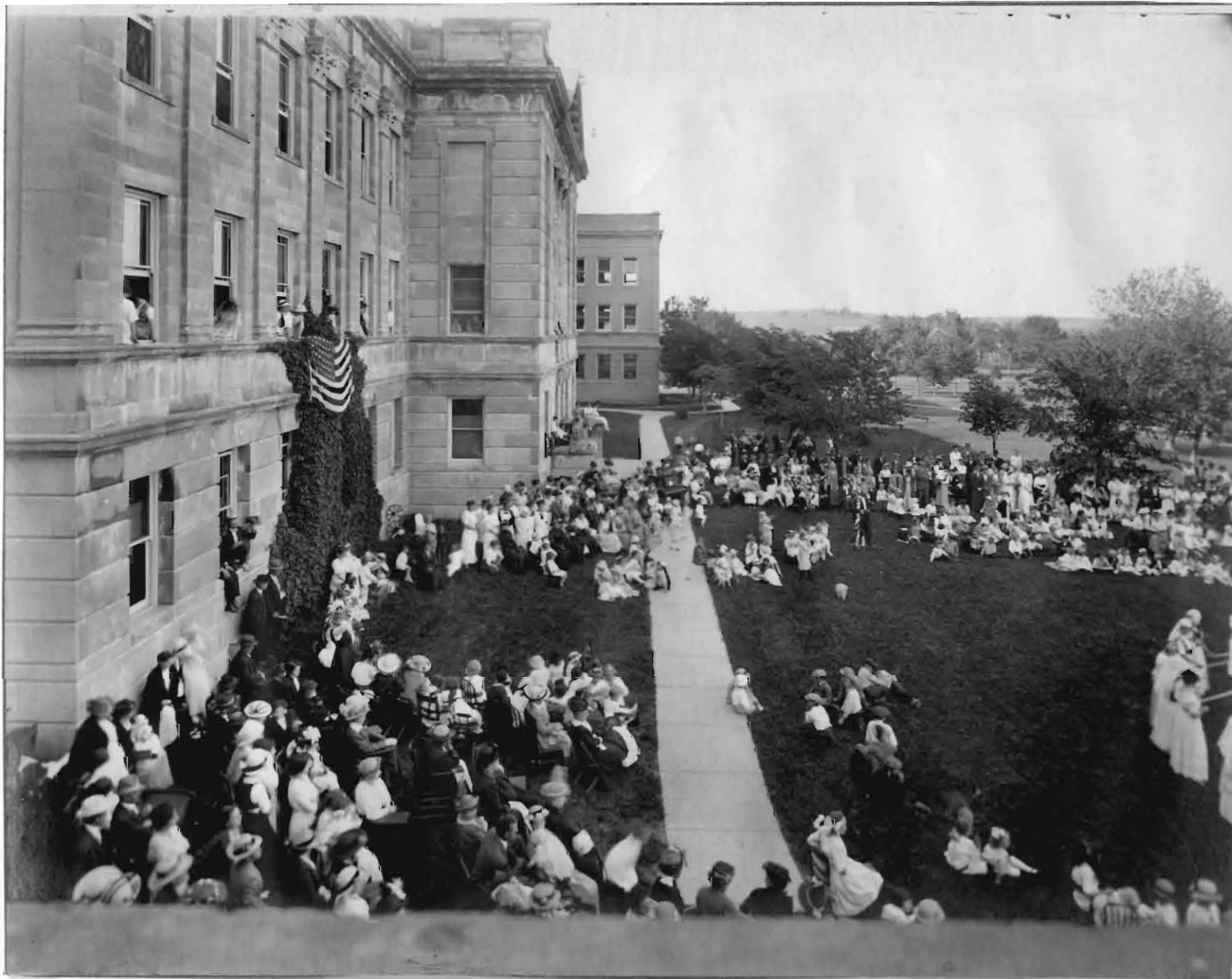
Special preparation for the coming Summer Term, which opens June 6, 1907. Write to the President for further information.

**This is a postcard illustrating the original section of the Administration Building, the Mickey Building. The photo was taken during the summer of 1906. The postcard itself was at some point pinned to a board, and later became part of the Library's collection.**





**The Administration Building in 1912, as seen from the southeast. The Aldrich Wing (the South Wing) has just been completed; landscaping is still being done.**



**This view looks north along the east face of the Administration Building. It was taken from a window in the Aldrich Wing.**

**The Maypole Dance is underway, partly visible on the far right. Note the piano on the sidewalk and the flag draped from the windows.**

**Many undated photos of "Old Main" exist; they can sometimes be dated fairly accurately by how far up the walls the ivy has grown. This one was probably taken in May 1914 or May 1915. It had to have been taken after the completion of the South Wing in 1912. Another clue is the 48-star flag which was adopted with the admission of Arizona to the Union in 1912.**

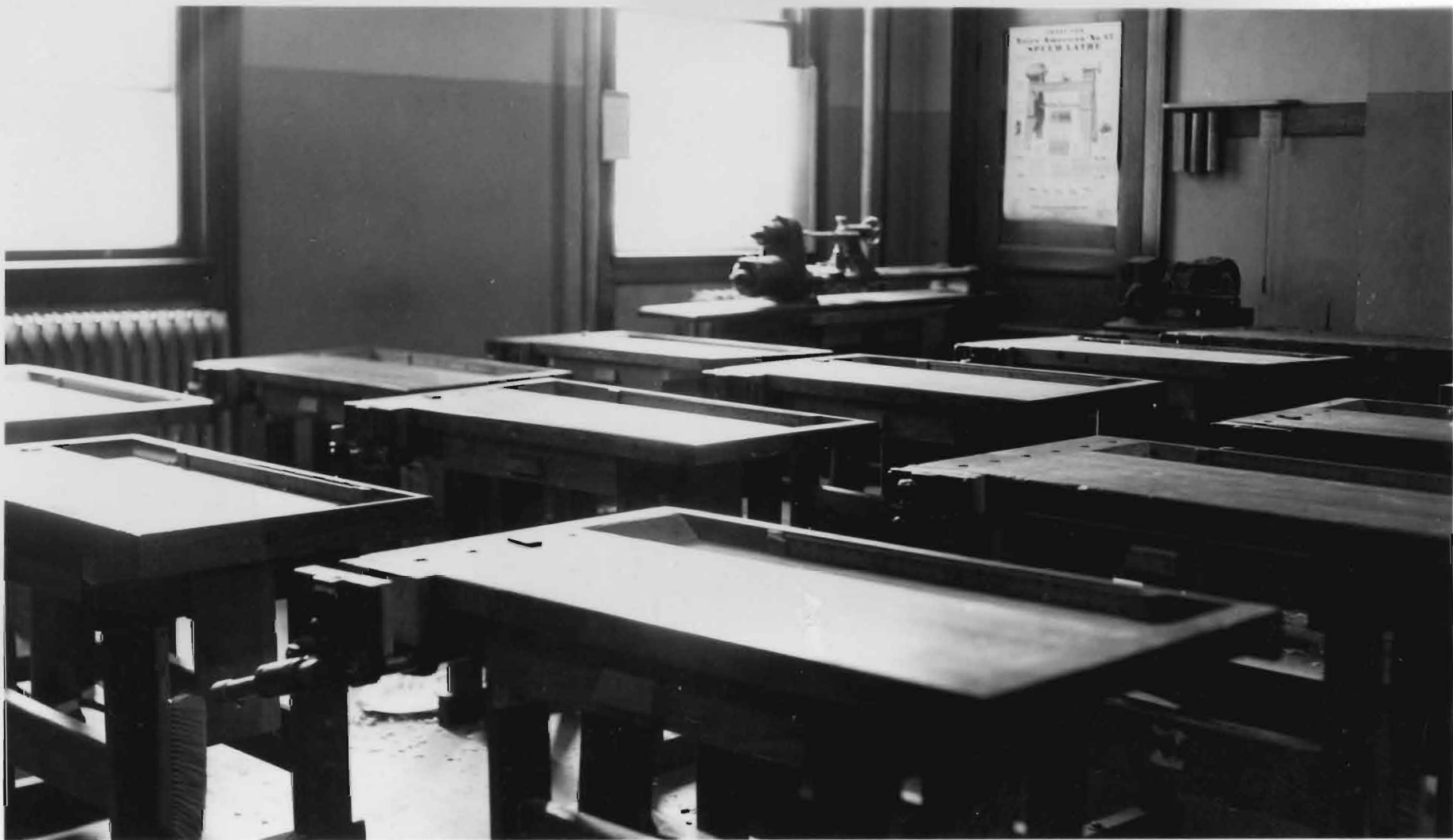


KEARNEY STATE NORMAL - SERIES

**The Administration Building in 1916, from the southeast.**

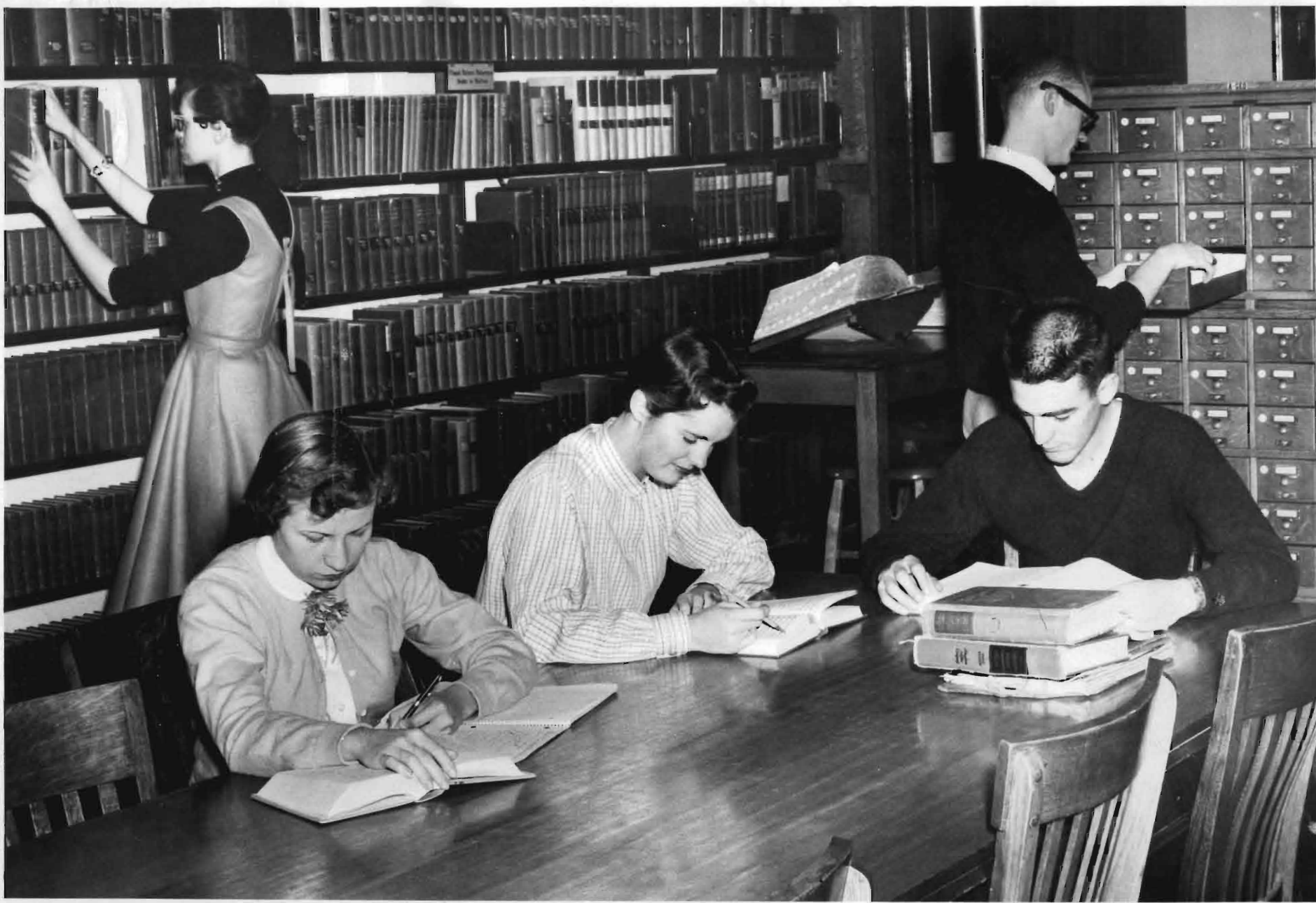


Columns on east elevation of Administration Building, as seen in the 1960's.



**Industrial Arts classroom, Administration Building**





**Library in Administration Building**





**The Auditorium Wing under construction in 1916.**



**Banquet of the Nebraska History Teachers' Association,  
April 27, 1917. First event in the new Auditorium.  
John A Stryker photo.**



5-B

Interior of Auditorium in Administration Building, 1917



**Statue of Abraham Lincoln in the Auditorium.**

**This photo was taken from high in the balcony; what appears to be a staircase railing to the left of the statue is actually the balcony's guardrail. A portion of a mural painted above the proscenium arch appears at the top of the photo.**

**The statue is now (2009) located in a conference room on the second floor of Founders Hall on the campus of the University of Nebraska at Kearney.**



**This photo was taken during the razing of the Auditorium Wing in 1968. Serious flaws were found in the structure, and the Office of the Fire Marshal ordered its evacuation and demolition.**