

# Who's the Wise Guy Wot Coined As It Was . . . That 'Good Old Days' Business

University building, to be realized from the sale of lots in the new capital city. This was the beginning of considerable trouble involving the construction of University Hall, and it was later to figure in the impeachment trial of a governor.

In June 1869, seemingly in anticipation of a contract, one R. D. Silver arrived in Lincoln to establish a brickyard, and on August 18, his foresight was justified by the award of the contract for the University building for \$128,480. Even some of the most loyal supporters of the University thought the policy of letting a contract for \$28,480 more than the appropriation unwise. "The State Journal," however, came to the defense of

the regents, arguing that it was "better policy to begin the erection of a building of sufficient size and well suited to its uses, even if it were necessary to have an additional appropriation, than to spend \$100,000 upon a building that would soon have to be torn down because it was unsuited to the needs of the future."

**DIFFICULTIES** involved in the actual building seem almost unbelievable. According to one early account, the lumber was shipped from Chicago to East Nebraska City, four miles east of the Missouri river in Iowa. It was hauled to Lincoln in wagons over wretched roads, a distance of 65 miles.

At last, however, the building was completed and duly inspected and approved by the regents early in 1871. Before a student had ever entered its doors, the cry was raised that U Hall was insecure. In June of that year three architects examined the building thoroughly and pronounced it safe, with minor repairs, for the present. On September 6 the University opened its doors to a first day enrollment of about 90 students.

Rumors of insecurity persisted and in 1873 a special meeting of the regents was called to consider further repairs. After a report from another set of architects, a new foundation was ordered to be put under the chapel. The foundation walls had not, it was discovered, been built according to the contract.

For a time it seemed that the building might be torn down and a new one erected—at a cost of \$60,000. Lincoln citizens rebelled at the idea of putting up \$40,000 of this amount, and once again repairs were made. A Nebraska City delegation came up with a bid for relocation of the University and this undoubtedly had something to do with a desire to keep some tangible form of the school going in Lincoln.

**TROUBLESOME** as it was to the regents, U Hall seemed wonderful indeed to the first students. The building was so vast that only the first, and a portion of the second floors were needed for class rooms; the rest of the building was rented for dormitory purposes. One of the first students recalled experiences at that time: "And oh! What fun they had among the rafters on fourth floor—cutting holes through the plastering and pouring some foul-smelling compound down into the rooms below and on the beds of the sleeping inmates! Then how sweet the fumes of burning asafetida as they ascended from the balcony to the chapel!"

**IT WAS ABOUT** this time, too, that the earliest regular publication issuing from the campus was established. "The Hesperian Student" was managed entirely by students, but received a little financial aid from the regents. The first editors of the paper worked on the attic-like top floor of U Hall as did the janitor, and they helped to keep up the fires.

The contents of "The Hesperian" were varied. It ran a few original serial stories, and contained an article on "The Beautiful in Art," and one entitled "Nature and Art and Intellect." The editors frequently had to defend themselves with "bludgeon, gun, and staff" as they carried the type through the streets of Lincoln, for many a "combine" was waiting for them.

**"IN THOSE DAYS** there was no iron fence to prevent entrance to the grounds," H. W. Caldwell, later a professor, recalled. "We attached a fine wire to the bell-clapper, and with wire in hand, would ring the bell mournfully, at some safe distance."

The eager young freshmen could pursue one of three courses of study. They were: the classical, the scientific, and the selected. First year subjects included geometry, Latin, Greek, Greek history, English and botany. A sophomore might select surveying and navigation, chemistry or history, while



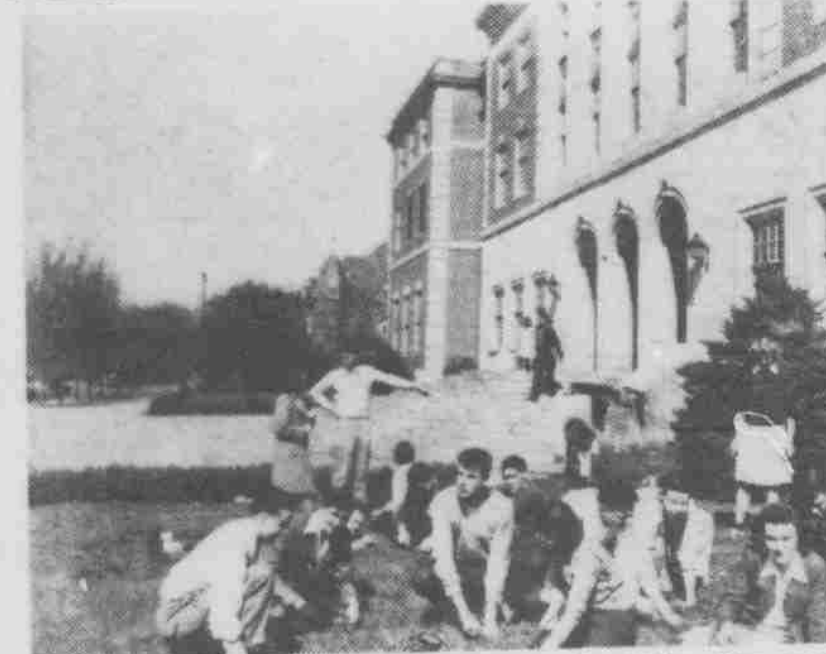
**LINCOLN LOOKED** like this when the University of Nebraska opened its doors to 20 collegians and 110 Latin school students. University Hall (upper left) was located in raw prairie. At this time Lincoln was a community of about 2,000 inhabitants. There was no water except well water and few or no sidewalks. For students who lived with Lincoln families board and room could be obtained for \$3.50 to \$5 a week; for students who batched the cost was \$2 or \$3. Tuition was free to Nebraska residents, but an entrance fee of \$5 was charged. Books were furnished to students at cost.

## Dandelion Digging,



**AT A CONSIDERABLY** later date—1911, to be exact—one of the big events of the year was "All-University Dandelion Day." The activity apparently interested coeds the most. While they industriously attacked the dandelions which infested the lawns of "the campus" a few men students lurked in the background. Shown in the background is U Hall. It was not until 1915 that the outside walls were repaired, although a bulge of several inches had been noticed. Steel rods running north through the entire structure were bolted on the outside with vertical I-beams.

## And 1945 . . .



**THE TRADITION** of the All-University Dandelion Day was revived in 1945. Zones were assigned to students from organized houses with the idea that when they finished their zone they could move in on anyone else. Love Hall on Ag campus collected 13,130 pounds of the yellow weeds and was allowed to choose the Queen of the Dandelions; Sigma Alpha Epsilon turned in 9,093 pounds, while the total for the whole school was near 75,000.

**Theater . . .**  
The students feel helpless because their future doesn't look bright. Although the outcome of future theater projects is still uncertain, things are looking up. Summer plans are definite. There will be a summer theater.

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continuing Greek, Latin and English.

In the junior year Latin, physics, Greek tragedy and literature, Roman literature and astronomy were among the requirements; electives included calculus, French, German, Anglo-Saxon, and French, German and English literature. Seniors struggled with intellectual philosophy, history of philosophy, geology, moral philosophy and Christian evidences, history of civilization, constitu-

tional law, political economy and logic. If they had any time left over they might choose to take more Latin and Greek, or French, German, zoology, physical science, or aesthetics.

The electives published in the catalog were apparently an expression of a desire, however, since it is reported by other sources that electives were not permitted until 1880.

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