

Inscribed rock marks grave; belies tale of former philology professor

by John Dvorak
Nebraskan Staff Writer

A small rock with a gravestone-like inscription rests about 20 feet northeast of Architecture Hall. Behind that inscription, unknown to most present students and faculty, lies a remarkable and mysterious story.

The inscription reads: Dr. James Thomas Lees, 1889-1926. He Served Well.

Lees was an associate professor of classical philology who came to Lincoln in 1889 and, in 1919, was named Provost of the University. He became ill in 1922 and died in 1926 at the age of 67. He was cremated and the ashes were strewn at the foot of the Schiller linden tree, which lies west of the Sheldon Art Gallery. The small

stone was placed at the foot of the tree in memory of Dr. Lees.

MANY QUESTIONS remain however and some of them may never be answered. What caused his death? Why did he want to be cremated and have his ashes put on the campus?

A check of 55 people who were teachers or students at the University in the 1920's turned up much data about the man, but almost nothing about his death.

Carl A. Donaldson, University business manager, was a student in the 1920's. "It (the cremation) was quite a dramatic thing to do," he said. "But that was the man's wish. Cremation is still not too common, but in those days it was much more

of a shock to a person who first heard about a cremation."

Being buried on campus was not an unusual thing in those days, continued Donaldson. Many universities had small faculty cemeteries where professors could be buried. NU never had such a cemetery however, and to Donaldson's knowledge, no other professor ever was buried or had his ashes spread on the campus.

Other retired professors remember Dr. Lees as a highly respected scholar who was one of the superior men on the campus at the time. Apparently, Lees was a very formal, almost stiff man who was nevertheless loved by the students and faculty alike.

Perhaps one of the reasons for Lees' popularity was the summer excursions he hosted. He was head of the Greek department and also taught other languages such as Sanskrit. But his first love was Greek. For many summers before 1920, he conducted trips to Greece for students, faculty and anyone else who was interested.

JOHN K. SELLECK, former NU chancellor, once went on one of the excursions when he was a student. Just as Lees' classes were interesting, so were his trips, Selleck commented. The summer vacations were not really connected with the University but they did have much educational value, Selleck said.

"He was such a delightful man; I enjoyed him very much," commented Professor Margaret Fedde. Lees, as University Provost, persuaded Mrs. Fedde to become head of the home economics' nutrition department. She didn't want to, but at Lees' urging took the job on a strictly temporary basis. She remained in that post for the rest of her active teaching career.

Retired Dean Theos J. Thompson remembered Dr. Lees as a member of the Athletic Board and for a time, acting athletic director. Lees ruled strictly and quickly on eligibility cases.

"My brother and I used to play baseball up in South Dakota in the summer," Thompson began. "I was a pitcher, and my brother was a catcher. That fall, my brother wanted to go out for football, but Dr. Lees found out about our playing baseball and my brother was never allowed to be on the football team."

IT SEEMS that the only real in-

formation about Lees' illness and death is in newspapers. "He was attacked by a painful and mysterious disease four years ago (in 1922)," the Nebraska State Journal said on February 4, 1926. The Daily Nebraskan on February 5 reported that Lees suffered a "serious breakdown" in 1922. His death however, was "unexpected," and resulted from a "peculiar sickness."

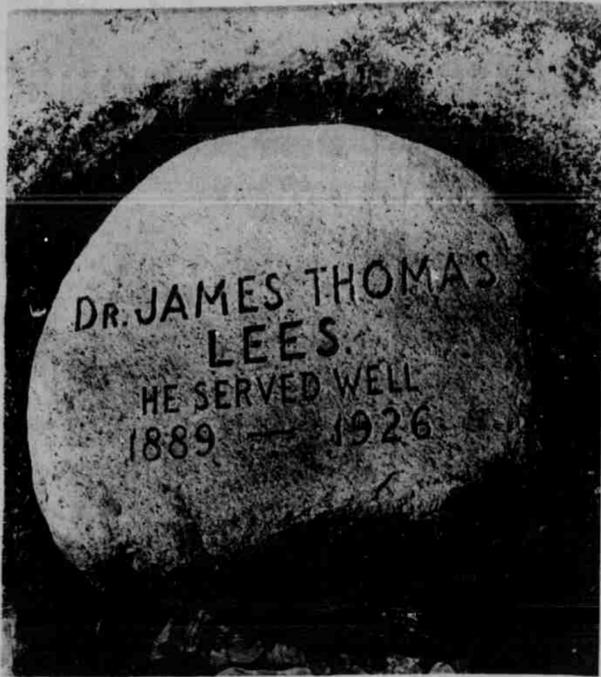
Lees died February 3 in Coronado, California. After services there, cremation took place. The ashes were returned to Lincoln in the spring, after Lees' family returned from their annual winter sojourn to the East. Brief memorial services were held under the Schiller linden tree on May 27, 1926, according to the Daily Nebraskan. Chancellor Samuel Avery presided and at the end of the ceremony, the ashes were strewn about the tree.

Of course the stone remains, but even it has been moved. Charles F. Fowler, long time University staff member and a former head of the buildings and grounds department remembers that there was something "sacred" about the stone and the tree. "We never touched the tree or the stone," he said. "We just mowed the grass around it."

To Fowler's knowledge, the stone had never been moved up until the time of his retirement several years ago.

It has been moved several times, according to George R. Miller, present physical plant administrator. The stone was moved about 20 feet north of its original location a couple of years ago. Within the last two months, it was again moved closer to its original location in order to make room for a new sidewalk.

So, many hard facts are known. But much more of the story remains and it may never be known.



"And a rock feels no pain . . ." but it does conceal the ashes of one of the Universities more colorful characters, Dr. James Thomas Lees.



Basketball best . . . or 1913 roundball champs. We hope the prize was matching jerseys.

ASUN in 1969 . . .

Senate okays Constitutional Convention

by John Dvorak
Nebraskan Staff Writer

By the minimum margin, ASUN Senate approved a motion Wednesday afternoon calling for a Constitutional Convention before March 1, 1969.

Another motion by Sen. Bob Zucker was introduced which provided for the organization of the convention.

Sen. Fred Boesiger asked that the motion calling for the convention, which was defeated at last week's meeting, be reconsidered. It was brought to the floor by unanimous vote.

ONLY SHORT discussion followed. Sen. Bill Gilpin warned that a convention called this spring would be "prejudged" by limiting its agenda. More than just reapportionment should be considered, he said.

Speaker Pro Temp Tom Morgan announced that a roll call vote would be taken and that 27 yes votes, or three-fourths of the Senate, would be required for approval.

Several Senators were absent and one abstained. The final vote ended with 26 in favor of the motion and 5 against, one vote short of approval. Morgan then cast an assenting vote, which put the stamp of approval on the motion.

Sen. Larry Anderson vigorously protested Morgan's vote, but with no success. Morgan cited a rule which allows the Pro Temp to cast a vote when his vote would decide an issue.

THE CONTROVERSIAL proposal had been under consideration for three weeks. Its defeat at last week's meeting sparked unhappiness among many students.

Harper Hall President Cliff Sather had threatened to organize a petition drive which would call a Constitutional Convention without Senate approval.

Most senators agreed that some sort of Convention was necessary, and that some sort of reapportionment should be undertaken to make the Senate more representative. Some senators wanted to reapportion immediately so that the Senate would be elected in April under the new system.

OTHER SENATORS wanted to wait until next fall before calling the convention. Such a proposal was considered at Wednesday's meeting.

Sen. Dave Rasmussen wanted to call the convention on Sept. 21, 1969, which would have redone the entire constitution as well as reapportioning the Senate.

Speaking in favor of that resolution, Rasmussen said that adequate time would then be available to revise and nothing would be done haphazardly. No other alternative, he said, was fair and just.

Rasmussen's resolution was defeated 15-9.

AFTER THE immediate Constitutional Convention was approved, Sen. Bob Zucker introduced an act providing for the organization of the convention.

Minor discussion followed even though the act is major legislation and cannot be voted on until next week. But the Senate meeting, by this time, was nearly two hours old and one senator had already left complaining of hunger. A proposal to adjourn was quickly and unanimously approved.

Under the terms of Zucker's act, which will be considered at the next meeting, the Constitutional Convention would consist of 30 voting members, coming from six different sources.

SIX REPRESENTATIVES would be selected by the Inter-Dormitory Association.

Three delegates from the Greek system would be chosen by the Inter-Fraternity Council and Panhellenic Council.

Nine delegates at large would be selected by a lottery conducted by the ASUN Senate Executive Committee. Any full time student would be eligible.

Seven representatives from the colleges would be chosen from the ASUN Senate membership.

Four representatives from the ASUN Reapportionment Committee would be chosen by that group.

The ASUN 1st Vice President,

Mike Naeve, would also be a member of the convention.

ACCORDING TO Zucker's act, all full time students at NU would be considered non-voting members of that Convention with as of yet undetermined speaking and debating privileges.

All items on the agenda would be submitted in writing to the Executive Committee. The Constitutional Convention would then approve the agenda at its first meeting, March 1.

The Senate took time for other action also. Tim Kincaid, a sophomore from Lincoln, was chosen Business Administration Senator, to fill a recently created vacancy. Kincaid and the other candidate for the vacancy, Ben Cohen, appeared briefly before the Senate.

THE ASUN SENATE'S newest member said that ASUN should have equal power with the Board of Regents in the allocation of student funds. He also thinks that the present apportionment system is inequitable and a much better system must be found.

In a special resolution, the Senate said that it is in agreement with President Richard M. Nixon and other sponsors of the Volunteer Army Act. The senators urged immediate passage of the volunteer army bill.

The Senate also unanimously decided that it still strongly disagrees with State Senator Terry Carpenter's LB8, which would penalize students for the possession of marijuana.

LB8, in its original form, would forever bar from any state college or university any student found guilty of possessing marijuana. In its amended state, LB8 would provide for an automatic 30 day suspension of such students.

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Only Senator Carpenter can revive LB17, (allow 2.2 beer). Write him at the State Capitol.

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