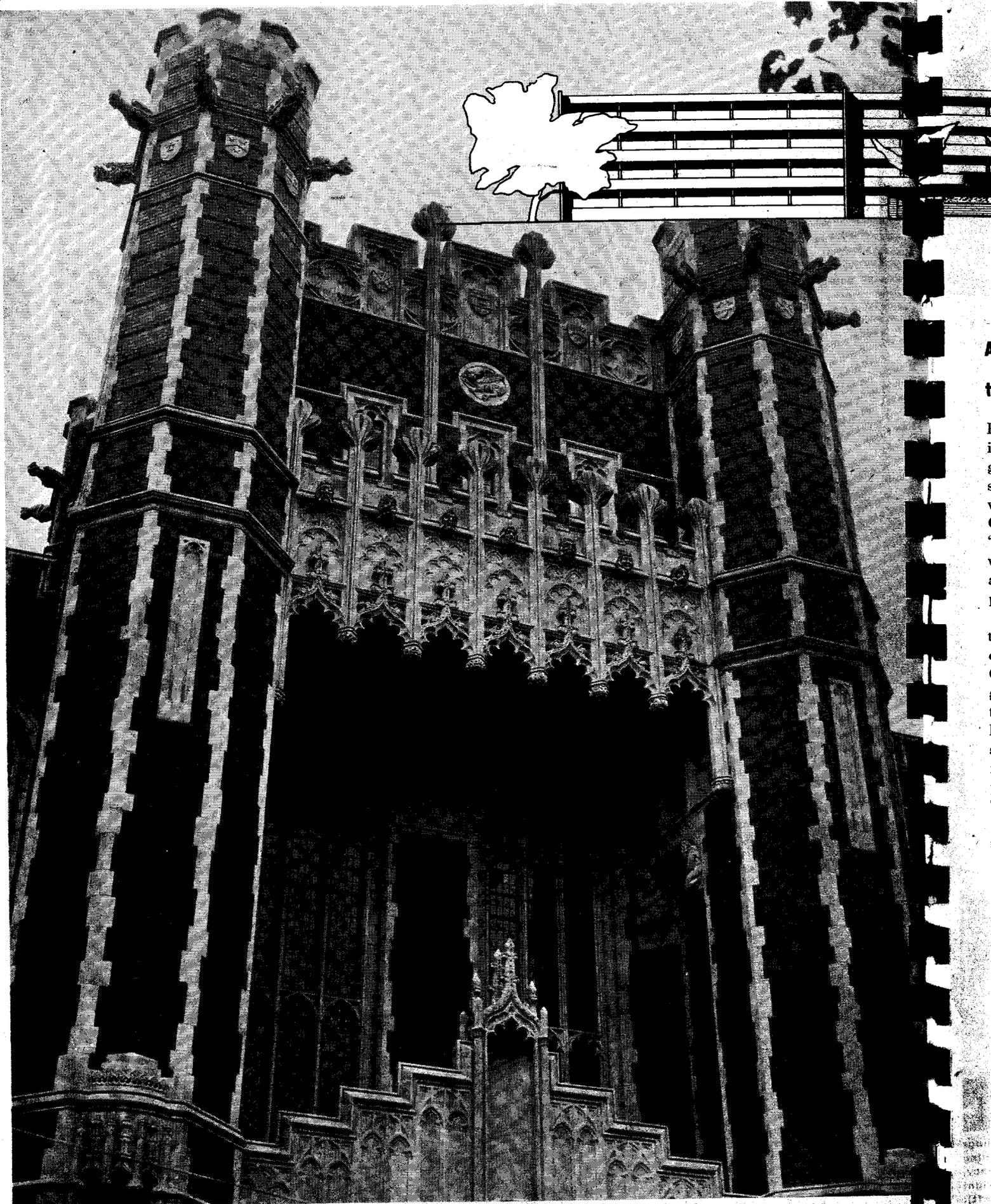


REPRINTED FROM

THE ARCHITECTURAL FORUM
SEPTEMBER 1945

SAVOIE LOTTINVILLE



1930 LIBRARY WAS DUBBED "OKLAHOMA'S CROWN JEWEL." NEW DORMITORY, ABOVE, TYPIFIES CURRENT PROGRAM



OKLAHOMA UNIVERSITY goes modern

A typical state university debates the eclectic versus contemporary approach to architecture, decides in favor of modern, and launches a bold, long-term program.

People don't know enough about Oklahoma. Many think of it as the state from which the Okies fled, while a more recent group are convinced that everyone there greets the new day singing, "Oh, What a Beautiful Morning." As for the University of Oklahoma, most have not given it a thought since Governor "Alfalfa Bill" Murray wrote it off as the place with "too many footballs, highballs and screwballs." Yet this university is now embarked upon its postwar building program, and from plans perhaps more truly modern than any so far proposed in America.

The struggle that the University of Oklahoma has gone through to obtain its fresh architectural approach is typical of many now raging on campuses throughout the country. Current structures are inadequate to meet future needs in general, and those of returning veterans in particular. Extant teaching plants cannot be scrapped, and many are part of long-established plans calling for the continuation of a chosen style of architecture. Advanced groups are clamoring for more modern thinking in the solution of campus building problems; harassed conservatives are fighting for tradition. The national conflict between the eclectic and modern approach to architecture is coming into its sharpest focus on the university campus.

Oklahoma's plans began as a series of studies concerning trends in student housing in 1942. Through the leadership of a forceful young architect abetted by two modern-minded presidents of the University, the studies grew into a complete building program with detailed plans for four of the new structures suggested. The proposal was breath-taking in its refusal to deal further with the University's tattered Gothic program, in its espousal of completely modern planning and construction. With great tact, general approval of the modern program has been secured from traditionally conservative faculty, regents and alumni. Finances to construct the four initial buildings are assured, and work has begun on the apartments for married veterans.

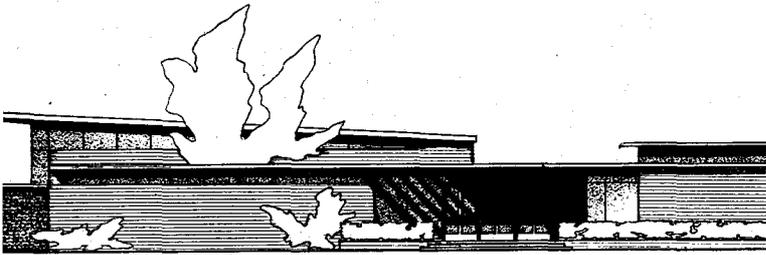
This vigorous new think has come from one of America's younger state institutions. The University of Oklahoma was established in 1890 as one of the first acts of the Legislature of the newly-created Territory of Oklahoma, whose inhabitants—the "boomers" and the "sooners" of the land settlement runs of 1889 to 1901—were anxious for education in

their new western world. When the Indian and Oklahoma Territories were combined into the state of Oklahoma in 1907, the University became the keystone of the state educational system. Since then it has had the typical rapid expansion of students, faculty and facilities, fitfully supported by the state legislature. Before the war a faculty of 301 was teaching on the flat campus of 222 acres in 41 more or less Gothic buildings.

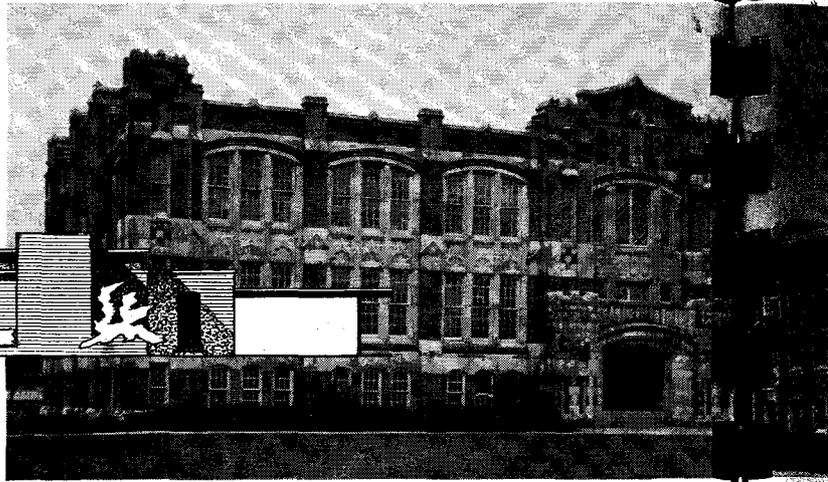
When J. A. Brandt took over the presidency of the bustling University in 1941, he found an acute housing shortage. Of the 6,900 students, only 500 were sheltered in dormitories, leaving the other 6,400 to the questionable mercies of clubs, rooming houses and commuting. President Brandt set about to rectify this situation, but before constructing new dormitories in the University's watered Gothic manner, he wanted to know how the eastern colleges were building their new "house" plans. Accordingly, a young Professor of Architecture, Henry L. Kamphoefner, was dispatched in the spring of 1942 on a tour of Harvard, Yale, Princeton and the University of Virginia. This tour resulted in designs by Kamphoefner for a completely modern men's dormitory, embodying the best features of the eastern "houses" adapted to the Oklahoma environment. But the new designs met with little approval from faculty or citizens.

This espousal of modern architecture was but one of the unpopular advanced ideas of President Brandt, all of which contributed to his resignation at the end of 1943. He was succeeded by the current President, George Cross, who inherited the housing shortage and Kamphoefner and his proposals for its solution. Cross found himself in basic agreement with most of his predecessor's ideas, but realized that a more light-footed advance was required, particularly in regard to architecture. Majority of faculty opinion was expressed by one of its leading members: "I think Gothic architecture is the only architecture now." One of the Planning Commissioners of nearby Norman gave the point of view of many citizens toward postwar planning by saying, "We have gotten off to a good start. We have changed some of the names of the streets." And Oklahoma architects recently had turned down an AIA proposal to present a gold medal to Frank Lloyd Wright by a vote of 25 to 5.

Oklahoma's most recent class buildings, those for Business



SIDE VIEW OF THE NEW DORMITORY-DINING HALL CONTRASTS SHARPLY WITH GOTHIC ORNAMENTATION OF THE EXISTING UNIVERSITY BUILDINGS AT RIGHT



SOLID AND ORNATE, THE 1919 GEOLOGY BUILDING TYPICAL OF THE UNIVERSITY'S POST-WORLD-WAR-I BUILDING PROGRAM

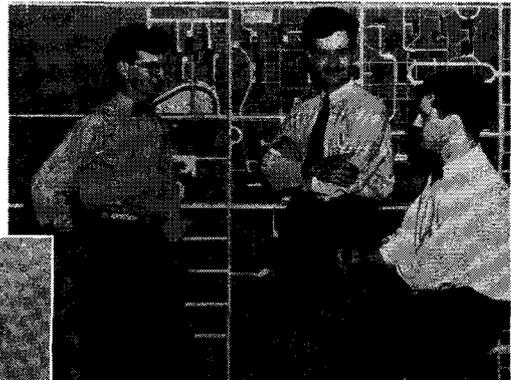
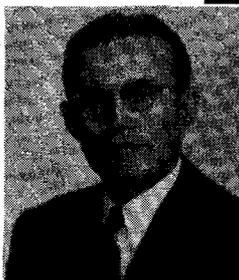
Administration and Biological Sciences, had been designed in 1936 by the Director of the Department of Architecture, J. E. Smay, in the Gothic manner. But these structures represented little advance over campus buildings executed 20 years before, being essentially "just a block mass with a corridor running down the center." The windows on the south side of both buildings had been painted to keep out the intense sun, and the western classrooms were used as little as possible because of their extreme heat. Smay had said: "I am not in accord with a radical departure from Collegiate Gothic. I think that if Modern has something to justify it, I am strong for it. Merely to say 'Modern' for the sake of being different or being modern . . . I don't quite see it . . . The more I study it the more I commence to wonder whether I know anything about architecture." Future plans for Oklahoma came under an organization called University Utilities, whose head, when questioned about modern planning, had said: "We don't need any campus plans . . . I've got seven plans in my office already . . . I've even got buildings over there without a name."

Since none of the extant University Departments or other organizations seemed disposed to consider the realities of the building needs, President Cross appointed an advisory committee composed of the Directors of the Departments of Art and Architecture, the head of University Utilities, and Kamphoefner. The President asked the committee to consider chiefly the style for the new buildings on the campus, since style seemed to be the main bone of contention among all parties. After discussion, each member of the committee was to submit a separate report to the President. "I listen to the committee," says Cross, "then recommend what I think should be followed to the Regents; then they make up their minds." The contents of the four reports was not divulged, but shortly thereafter a Campus Planning Group, headed by Kamphoefner, was established by the President to work out a new building program for the University.

The policy of the new Group was boldly stated by Kamphoefner: "Planning of lines of advance for . . . the well-being of Oklahoma can be expressed through a basic understanding of the true role of architecture. If we satisfy the requirements of our buildings, create simple, workable structures, orient these structures to the sunlight, the prevailing winds, and the

physical characteristics of the property, we will find very little need for serious discussion . . . of 'style.' We should prefer to justify the building as an expression and embodiment of the life and structure within rather than as an 'authentic' reproduction or rejuvenation of a past style."

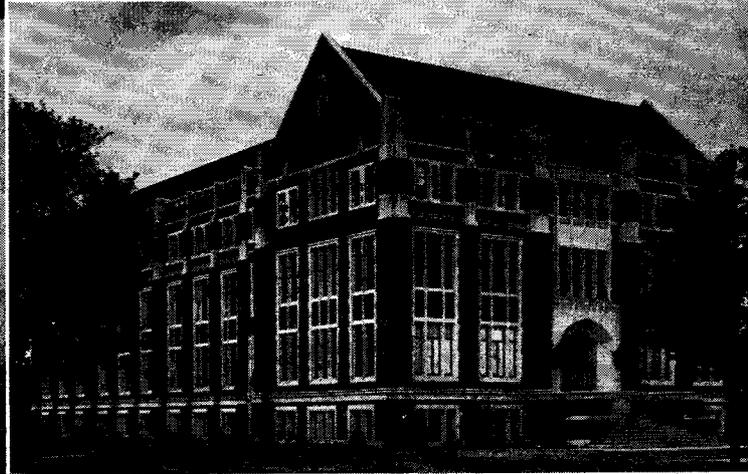
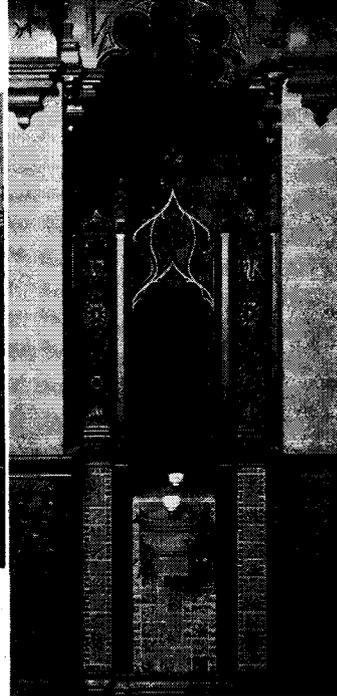
The Campus Planning Group began at once to make its principles tangible in a series of excellent drawings and a campus model, and to furnish President Cross with logical written and verbal explanations of all details. The Campus Planning Group consists of Kamphoefner and two other young architects, James W. Fitzgibbon and Martin S. Kermacy. Kamphoefner was born in Des Moines in 1907 and received his architectural education at the University of Illinois and Columbia. Before coming to Oklahoma he had excellent office experience in New York, Washington, Chicago and Sioux City. Fitzgibbon was born in Omaha and Kermacy in Hungary, both in 1915. Both studied architecture at the University of Pennsylvania, and worked in various offices before coming to Oklahoma. Fitzgibbon was "easily lured to Oklahoma by Kamphoefner's vivid word pictures of new worlds to tackle," while Kermacy came when Fitzgibbon wrote, "Here is a fine chance to work on a group of buildings that look as though Le Corbusier slept here." The Planning Group has operated



MODERN campus plan and four buildings have been designed by Campus Planning Group composed of architects Kermacy, Kamphoefner and Fitzgibbon (left to right above) backed by President Cross (left).



MILLION DOLLAR LIBRARY (ABOVE)
CONTAINS FANCY FOUNTAIN AT RIGHT



BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES BUILDING FINISHED IN 1936
CONTINUED USE OF ILL-ADAPTED "GOTHIC" STYLE

with perfect team work, turning out a Campus Plan for the future expansion of the University and detailed drawings for four new buildings.

The Campus Plan is no H. G. Wells fantasy. It is a down-to-earth realization that Oklahoma will have to use every building it has for the present and perhaps a long while in the future. So no sweeping demolitions are proposed. The campus has been re-zoned, each of the major functions of teaching, living and recreation being given several campus areas of their own. Within each of the ten new zones, various renovations and additions are proposed to render old buildings suitable, and certain new buildings will be added. Greatest current need has established priority for the first four construction projects: a classroom building, a building for the University of Oklahoma Press, a women's dormitory, and fifteen veterans' housing units—drawings for all of which are shown on the following pages.

Final approval of the Campus Plan and the four new buildings had to be obtained, first from the seven Regents of the University, and then from the nine Regents of Higher Education who coordinate all state institutions. In addition to esthetic approval, definite financial support had to be arranged. Let Kamphoefner tell about the meeting with the University Regents in 1945:

"President Cross gave a short talk on what we had started to do and then asked me to carry on the informal discussion. We had a group of Kodachrome slides of the recent work at Wheaton College to show how well Hornbostel and Bennett had succeeded in making the modern work fit harmoniously into the old campus by Cram. I went into details on the change we wanted to make and stressed the use of matching color, in the same materials and textures as the adjoining buildings, and in a similar scale. . . . The Board of Regents is

a very progressive group of successful Oklahoma business and professional men, and we are well satisfied with the kind of questions they asked. The inevitable question, however, came from one of the most progressive members, a newspaper publisher and National Democratic Committeeman for Oklahoma. He said, 'It is still a bit difficult for the average layman to believe that there will not be a clash between the old and the new work.' I asked him then if he felt a clash between the old and the new work at Wheaton, and he told me that he did not think so. I said that we believed we could do as well . . . as had been done at Wheaton. That statement seemed to convince all the members, and after a short discussion with the President in his office, they gave us a blanket approval on everything that we had done. We think this paved the way for the building of probably 20 to 30 modern buildings on the campus within the next ten to 20 years."

Since the approval by the University Regents, conservatives have tried to whip up opposition among the Alumni, but President Cross called a special meeting of the Alumni Board and explained the aims of the entire scheme. The Alumni Board gave the President a unanimous vote of confidence. Consent likewise has been obtained from the State Regents, and funds have been allotted or bond issues approved for actual construction of the four buildings. In fact, self-liquidating, 20-year bonds issued by the University Regents on the income-producing veteran's project have already been sold, with interest at the low rate of 2¾ per cent, and work on this group has begun. A similar financing plan will be used on the women's dormitory, while the press and classroom buildings will use allotted state funds. All buildings will be executed under the direction of the Campus Planning Group, whose preliminary studies will be taken over by various state architectural firms for carrying through the stages of working drawings, specifications and construction. In this manner, the firm of Sorey, Hill and Sorey of Oklahoma City is now executing the veteran's project.

From the University of Oklahoma, one of the younger of America's state universities, has come the first large-scale re-thinking of collegiate architecture to go into construction. In Oklahoma there are still "boomers" for expansive ideas, and "sooners" to rush such ideas into actuality. People don't know enough about Oklahoma.



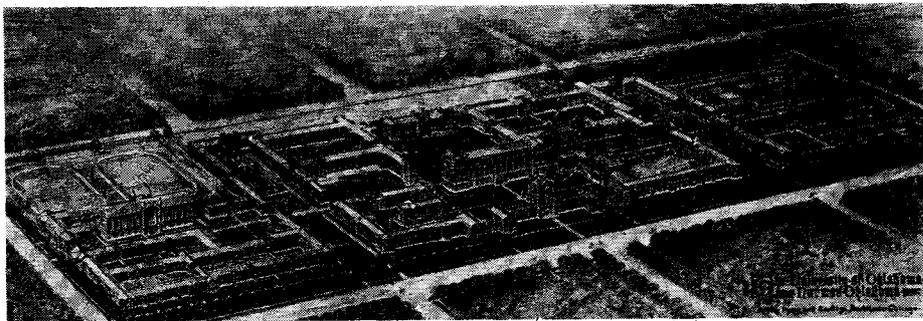
ECLECTIC approach to campus is represented by Director Smay of University's School of Architecture who designed recent Business Administration Building (above).



PRESENT Oklahoma campus (above) typifies most American universities in its mixture of styles and haphazard plan.

PAST plan for Oklahoma (right) was designed by Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge in 1908-10 but not followed.

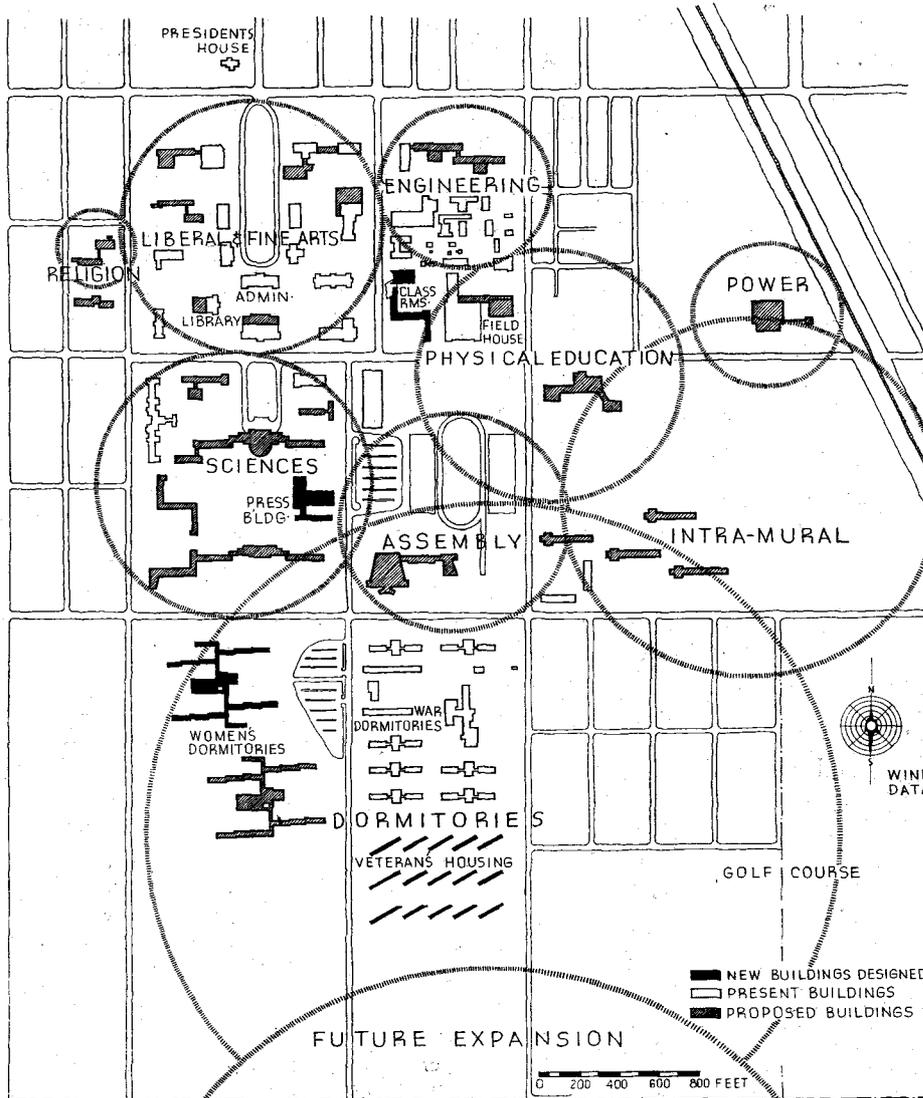
FUTURE expansion layout (below) is by current Planning Group. Four buildings in black are to be built immediately.

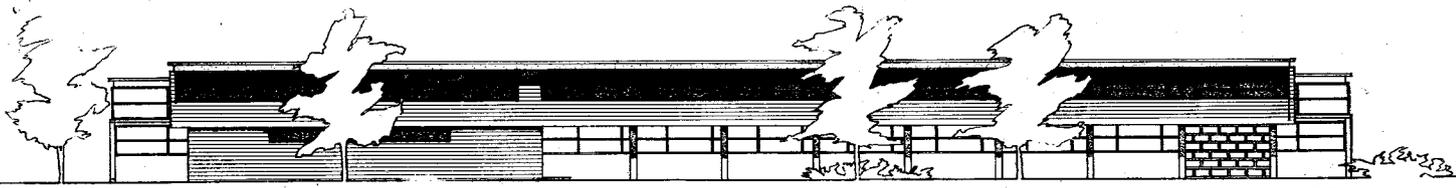


The story of the architectural past and present of the University of Oklahoma is representative of college building throughout the country. The structures on the campus at Norman today may be "Prairie Classic" or "Cherokee Gothic," but most American campuses are full of such records of abandoned architectural trails. Out of such a background Oklahoma's new program has arisen, and out of similar backgrounds many other universities will bring their future schemes.

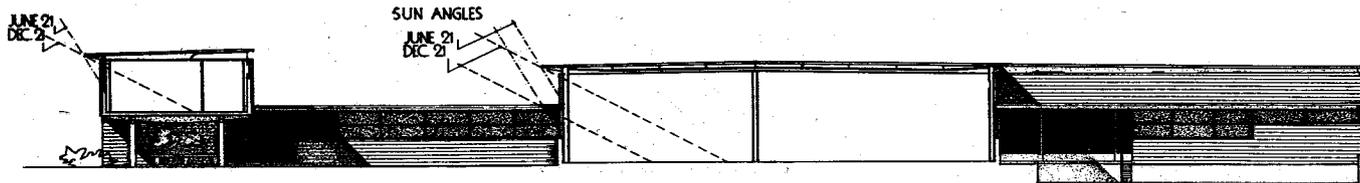
By 1850 the "grand tour" to Europe had made the variety of reviving only two former architectural styles, the Classic and the Gothic, seem dull, and the culture of the expanding new country tried to prove itself by an amazing series of combinations of all former building modes. It was in this latter half of the 19th century that most of America's universities got their start, and it was in this varied architectural mode that their first structures were erected—from Vassar's huge Main Hall in the East to Oklahoma's lonely Administration Building in the Mid-west.

The opening of the Administration Building on the new campus of the university on September 3, 1893, was an event for the whole territory. Said the *Norman Transcript*: "Both the interior and exterior of the building is [sic] not alone a picture of beauty, and symmetry, but a model of art, an encomium upon the architect and a living panegyric upon the skill of the contractor." Four years later Vernon L. Parrington, subsequently author of the Pulitzer Prize interpretation of US literature, *Main Currents*.



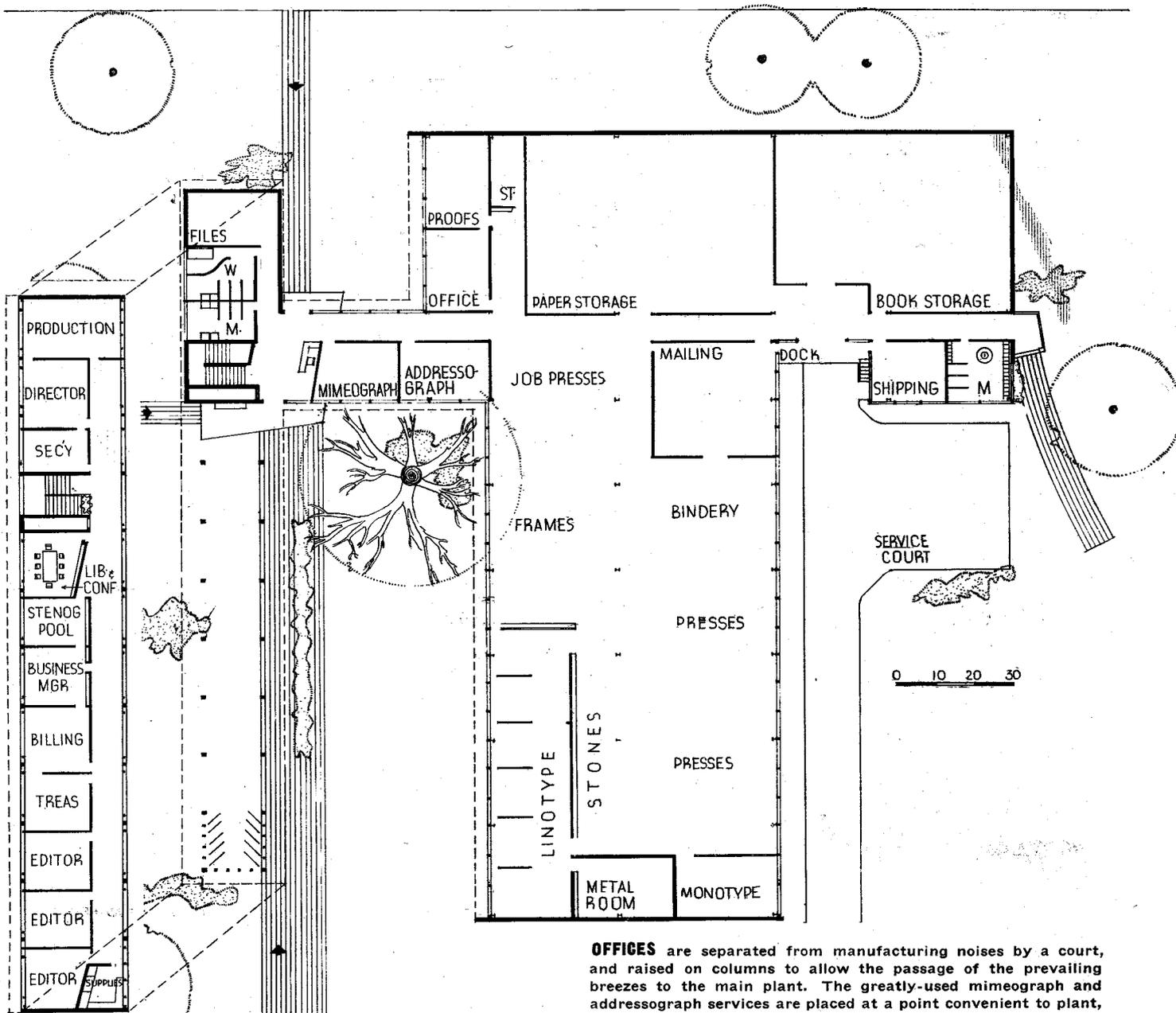


EDITORIAL OFFICES CARRIED AS SECOND STORY RIBBON ACROSS SOUTH WALL CREATE COVERED BREEZEWAY



CROSS-SECTION OF PRESS BUILDING REVEALS CAREFUL ORIENTATION TO SUNLIGHT AND PREVAILING BREEZE

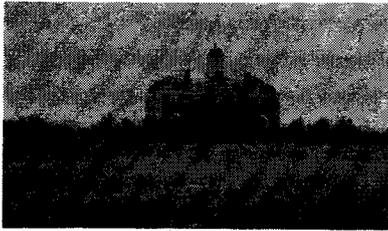
PRESS BUILDING offers a unique arrangement for a complete printing plant.



OFFICES are separated from manufacturing noises by a court, and raised on columns to allow the passage of the prevailing breezes to the main plant. The greatly-used mimeograph and addressograph services are placed at a point convenient to plant, offices and campus entrance. As the University Press serves the whole Southwest, large areas are provided for paper and book storage. The building was designed by team member Fitzgibbon; its estimated cost is \$200,000.

in *American Thought*, came to Oklahoma as professor of English. His description of the campus and the Administration Building is perhaps more accurate:

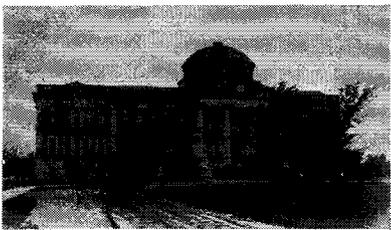
"... As I came on to the campus I stopped—was this the university! . . . A single red brick building—ugly in its lines and with a wart atop—a sort of



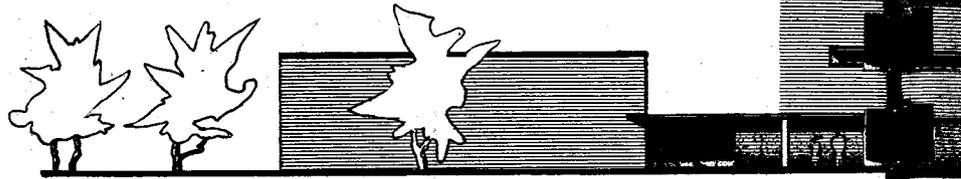
misshapen cross between a cupola and a dome—stood in a grove of tiny elms . . . Some ivy was the most restful thing that met my eyes."

But the Administration Building was no worse than most of the high, rectangular, humorless, all-purpose brick structures that housed the first struggles of higher education all over the country. It even had the added attraction of a central heating system—which, alas, caused the fire that destroyed the structure in 1903. Its architectural style, if traceable at all, showed a touch of Richardson's Romanesque revival—a movement which for a time seemed to be leading out of mongrel architecture back to the comparative dignity of a single style, but which eventually brought on the still-current eclectic, or many-styled era.

Oklahoma again reflected the general taste of the nation with her second Administration Building of 1903-4 and the Library and Science Hall which flanked it. A tremendous spurt had been given to Classic architecture and formal layout by the Chicago Exposition of 1893, so Oklahoma put its administration Building at the head of an embryonic axis and balanced the Library and Science structures on either side. The Administration Building, destroyed by

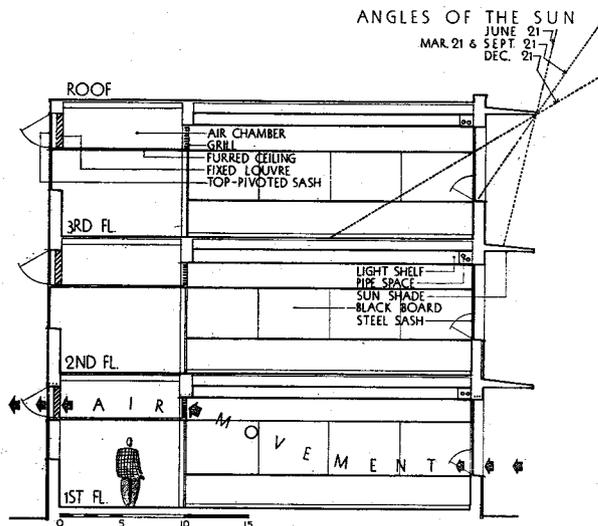


fire in 1907, was of sterile Classic, pompous, inhuman and awkward. The Library, now the Education Building, is still on the campus, and is the most interesting building of the three. Its facade shows a trace of the wide eaves and horizontality of the then-contemporary Chicago School led by Sullivan and Wright.



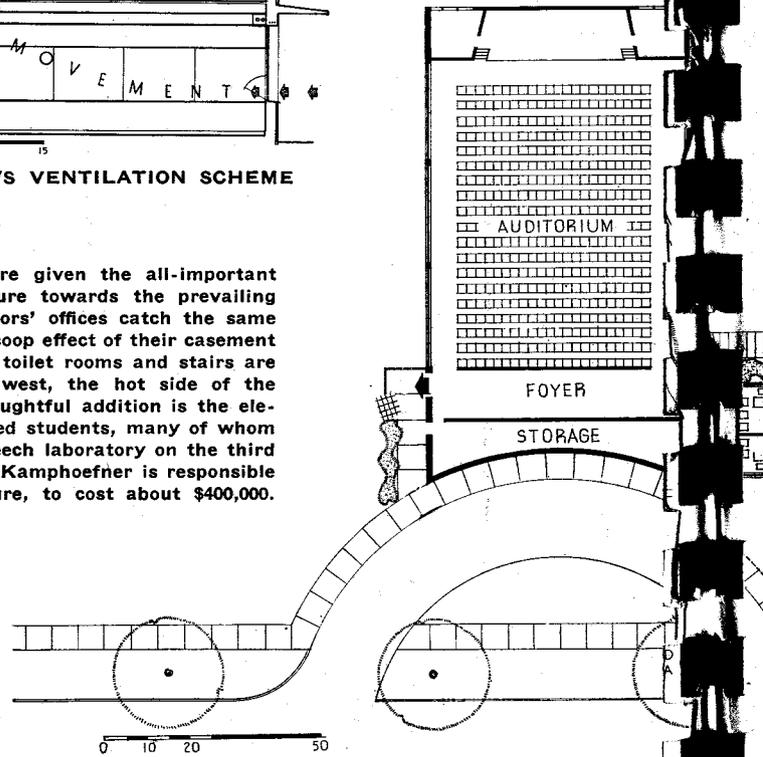
SMALL WINDOWS IN CLASSROOM BUILDING'S ALMOST BLANK WEST WALL

CLASSROOM BUILDING combines special facilities for the University

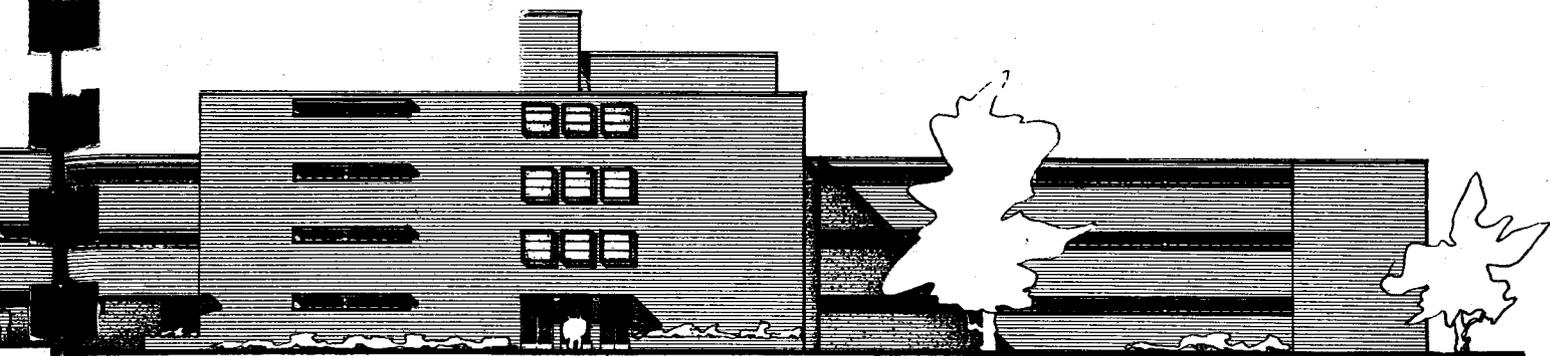


SECTION SHOWS VENTILATION SCHEME

CLASSROOMS are given the all-important southern exposure towards the prevailing breeze. Professors' offices catch the same breeze by the scoop effect of their casement windows. Only toilet rooms and stairs are placed on the west, the hot side of the building. A thoughtful addition is the elevator for crippled students, many of whom will use the speech laboratory on the third floor. Architect Kamphoefner is responsible for this structure, to cost about \$400,000.

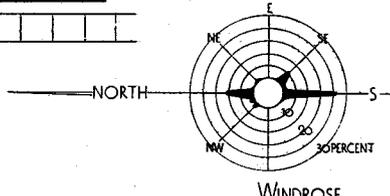
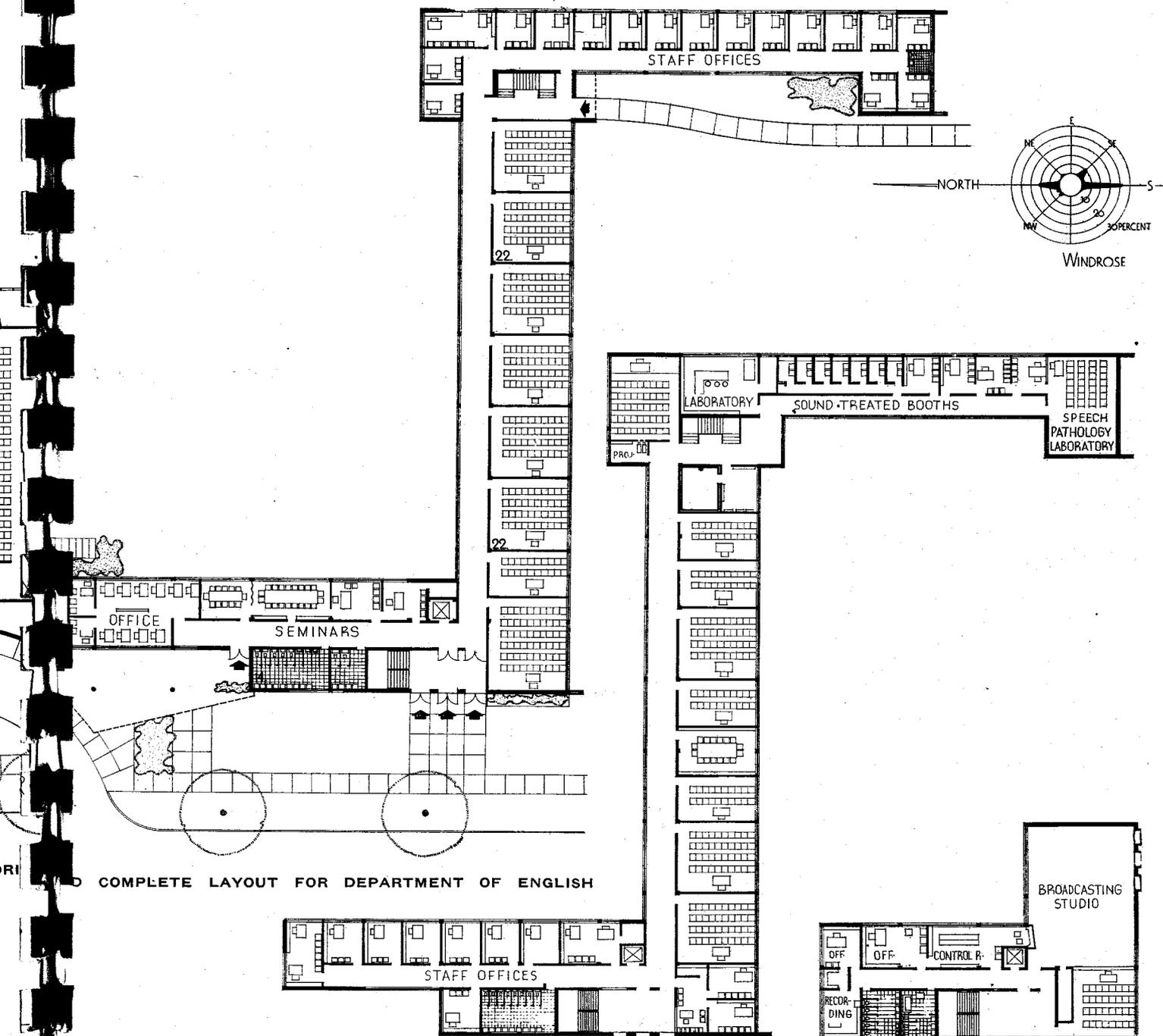


GROUND FLOOR CONTAINS AIR CONDITIONED AUDITORIUM



WALL OPENS UP TO EAST TO PROTECT FROM HOT AFTERNOON SUN, SERVE ONLY CORRIDORS AND WASHROOMS. OPPOSITE WALL OPENS OFFICES TO EAST

University departments with related auditorium and broadcasting studios.



COMPLETE LAYOUT FOR DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

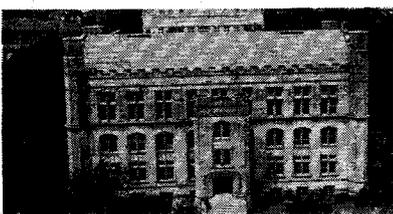
THIRD FLOOR IS FOR DEPARTMENT OF SPEECH. FOURTH FLOOR IS DEVOTED TO BROADCASTING

After the fire of 1907 and before his dismissal by "the Southern Methodists," Parrington took great interest in the campus. Through his influence a Committee of the Board of Regents visited eastern colleges to study their buildings. As a result, the distinguished firm of Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge, the inheritors of Richardson's practice in Chicago and the designers of the great Romanesque layout for Stanford University, were retained to make a general plan for Oklahoma and to design the third Administration Building. The new Oklahoma layout was a huge, tightly organized affair, with quadrangle opening into quadrangle—all in the style of the then-fashionable Gothic. The Administration Building, the northernmost



structure on the main axis of the layout, was completed in 1910, and the Gothic style was established firmly.

Though the general plan for the campus and the new Administration Building were high class work, the university never followed the layout in locating subsequent buildings nor equalled the architectural style set by Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge. The Law Building of 1913 did not even use the same materials,



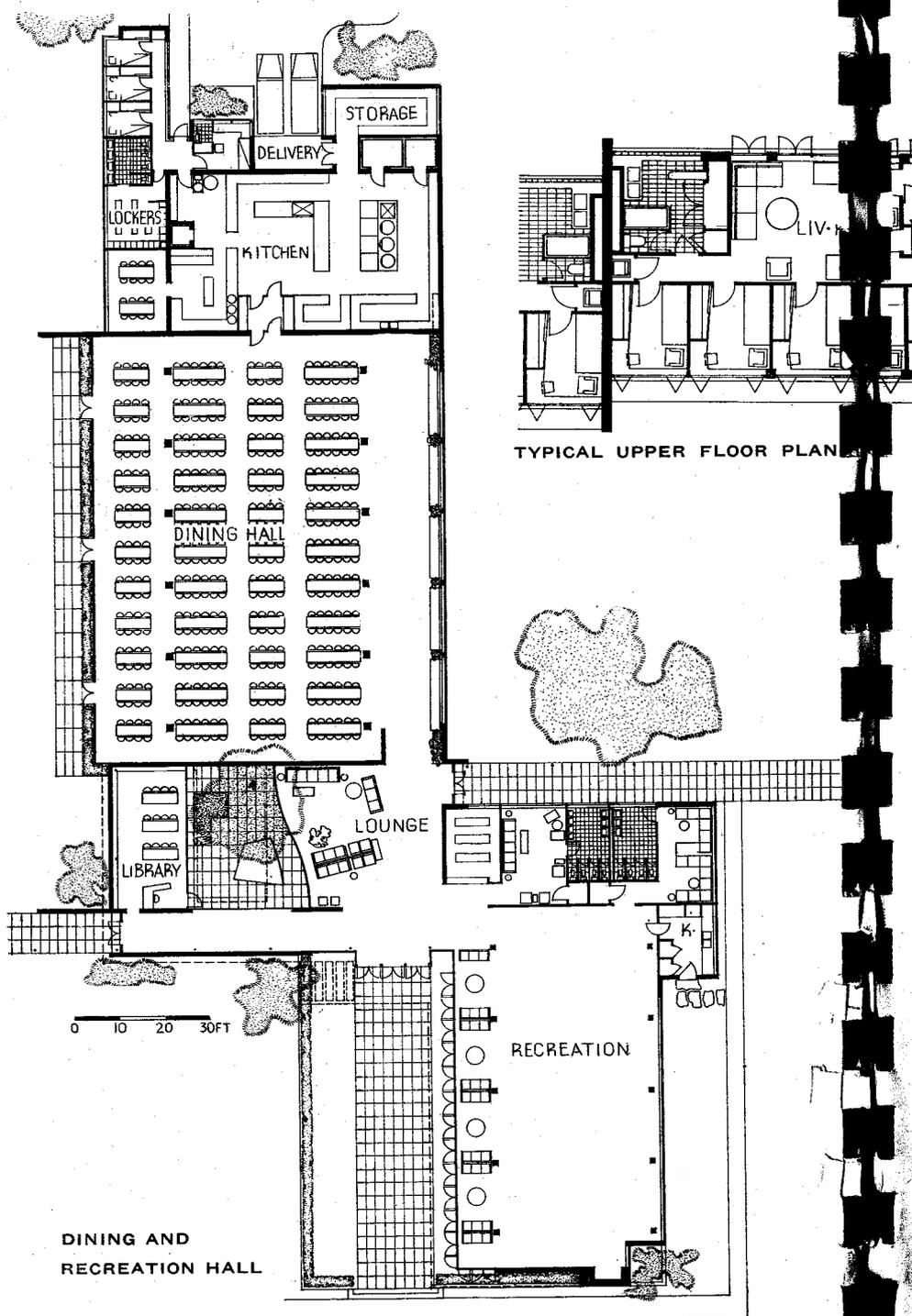
shifting to Indiana limestone and a strangely symmetrical Gothic style of its own. But, in 1930, an attempt was made to return to the manner of the Administration Building when the new million dollar Library—"Oklahoma's Crown Jewel"—was completed with ceremony. Later buildings, such as those for Business Administration and Biological Sciences (1939) followed this general style.

In 1943, perhaps following the precedent set by Yale, Oklahoma built the first of a proposed group of men's dormitories, not in the Gothic manner, but in the Colonial—and, still following Yale, one Colonial building was given a Gothic porch as a "transition from the old campus to the new." At this point, World War II stopped collegiate building for good; and when Oklahoma began again she had her eyes fixed on the architecture of a new era.



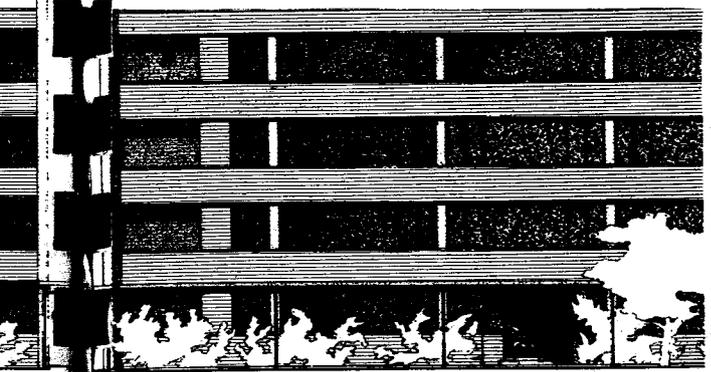
PARTIAL SOUTH ELEVATION HAS LARGE WINDOWS FOR STUDENT BEDROOMS

WOMEN'S DORMITORY is two carefully oriented rows of basic living



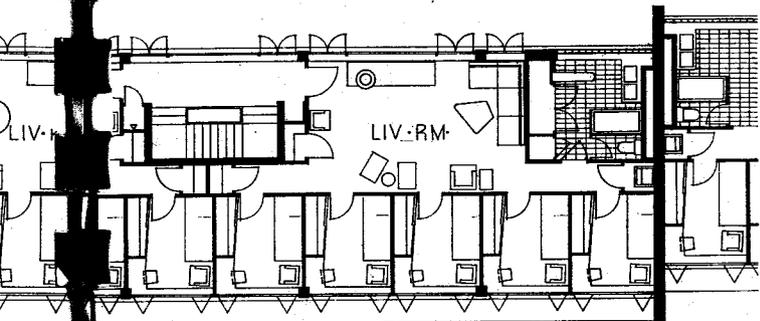
TYPICAL UPPER FLOOR PLAN

DINING AND RECREATION HALL

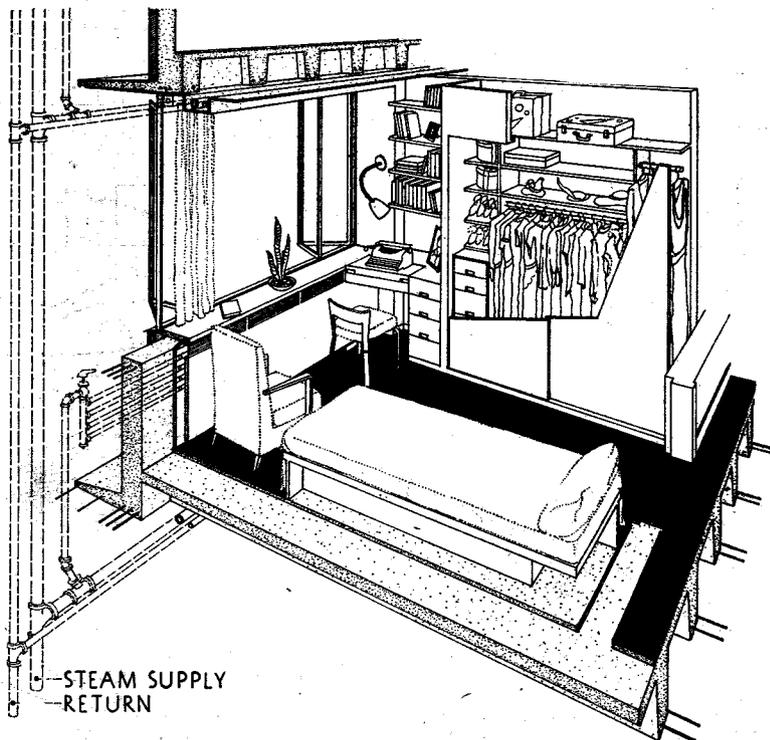
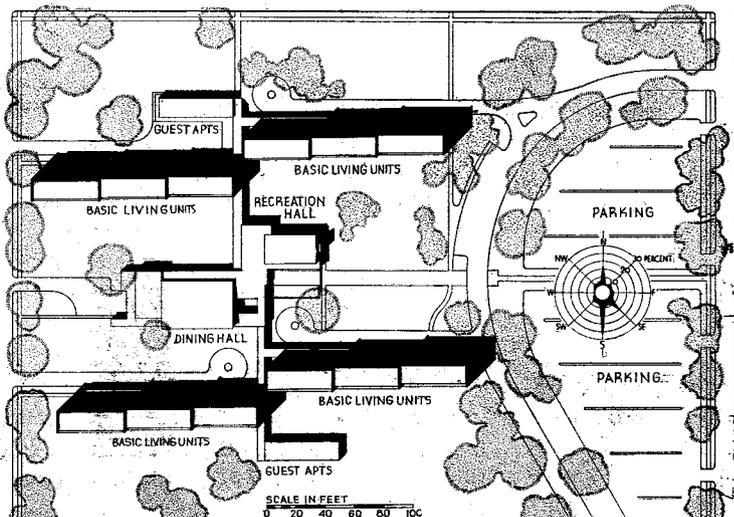


ROOMS... LIVING ROOMS TO NORTH HAVE SIMILAR WINDOWS

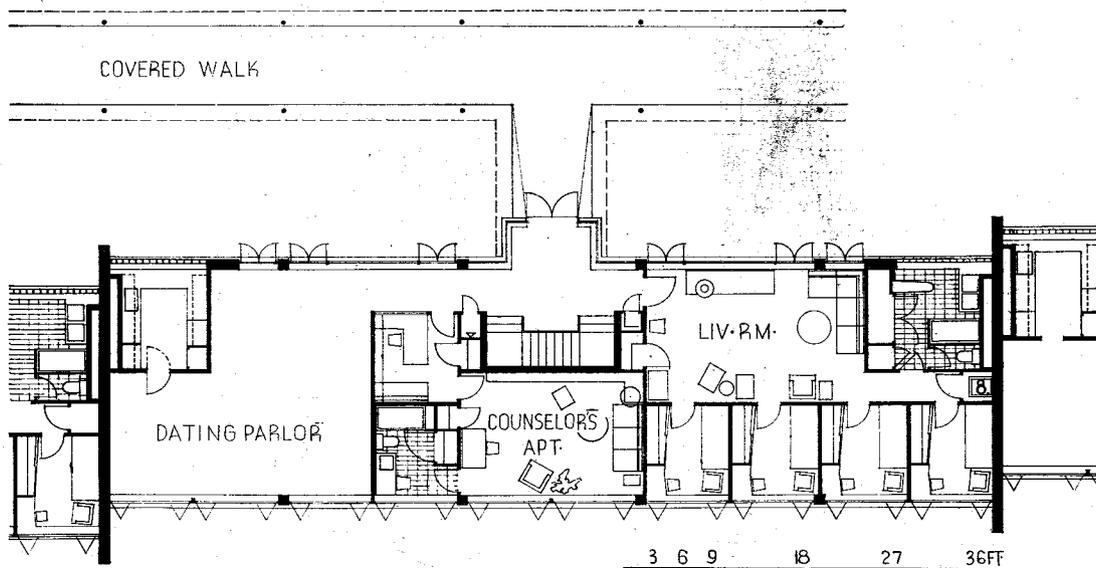
basic living units with communal facilities between.



BASIC LIVING UNITS are four floored and made up of similar suites accommodating five girls each. All minimum-size bedrooms open directly into the large suite living room, which has exposure to the sun and breeze to the south. New conveniences for each suite include cork walls for pinups, laundry and hairwashing equipment. The whole dormitory will house 408 girls and cost about \$1 million. Kermacy is the Planning Group member who designed this building.



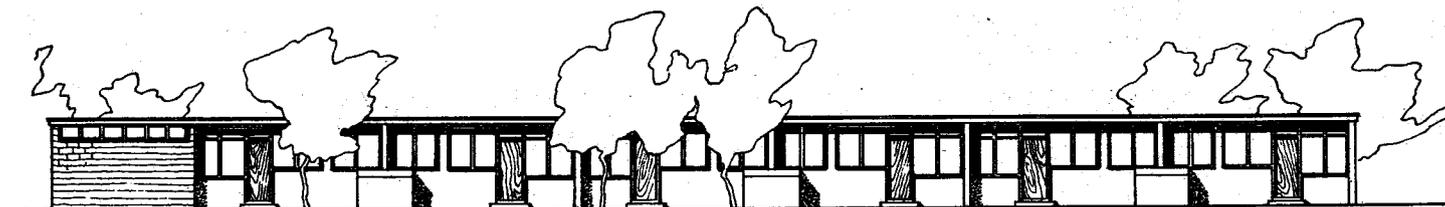
STUDENT ROOM LAYOUT IS RESULT OF CAREFUL ANALYSIS



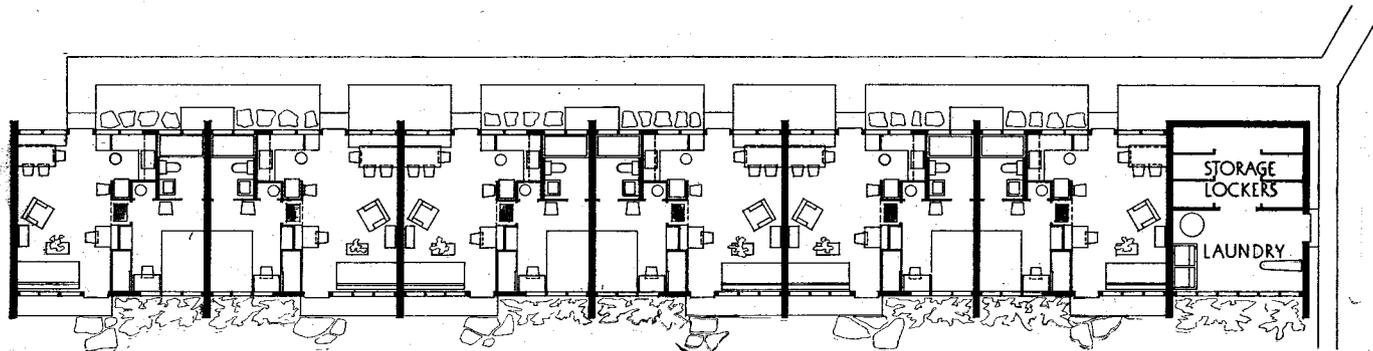
GROUND FLOOR OF EACH UNIT PROVIDES DATING PARLOR AND COUNSELOR'S SUITE



SOUTH FACADE OF EACH UNIT IS SHADED BY WIDE ROOF OVERHANG AND PROJECTING APARTMENT DIVIDING WALLS

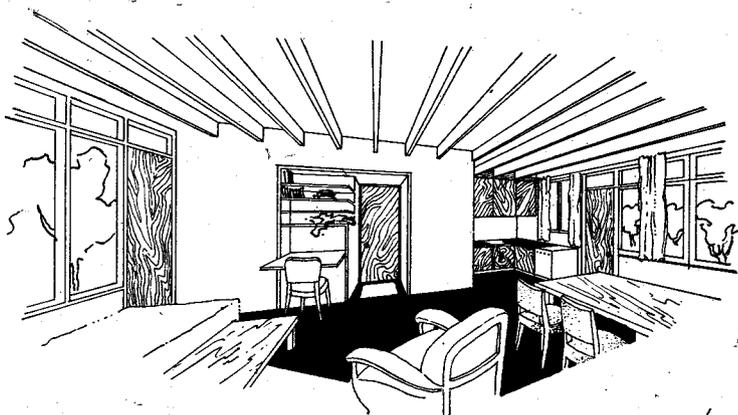


NORTH ELEVATION CONTAINS APARTMENT SERVICE ENTRANCES. COMMUNITY LAUNDRY AND LOCKERS ARE AT LEFT

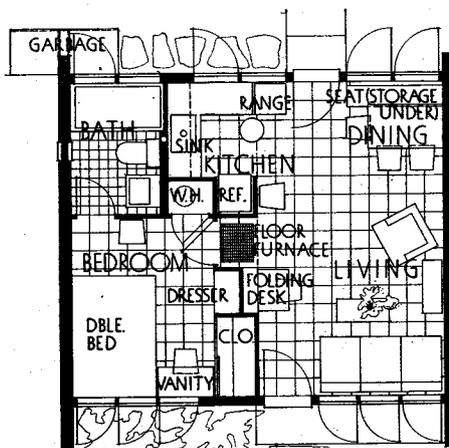


VETERANS' HOUSING

The entire team collaborated on these fifteen one-story, row-type apartment units to house 96 returning married veterans and their families. Economy, utility and comfort have been combined with great skill in the \$275,000 project, especially commended by the War Production Board. The units have been oriented to the sun and breeze and placed in groups of five on three dead-end circulation and parking driveways—an arrangement assuring traffic speed control. Each unit contains six identical apartments and a community laundry room with adjacent locker space for each of the six tenants. By the use of built-in equipment such as a desk, vanity, dining table and storage locker seat, much space is saved and a minimum of movable furniture need be provided by the University. When the veterans' housing problems have been settled, the apartments will be used for married students, proper provision for whom has been long overlooked on most campuses.



APARTMENT INTERIOR SEEN FROM VIEW A BELOW



ORGANIZATION GETS MUCH INTO SMALL INTERIOR SPACE