No Pension for Old Gym
By Frances Hunt

Long Ago Scheduled for Discard, This Ancient Frame Structure Has To Be Kept in Use for Overflowing Classes

Two years ago the University said goodbye to that old grey frame building that Sooners of twenty-five and thirty years ago called the Gym.

Its years of usefulness were finished. Its bones ached; its joints creaked. Everyone agreed it could be asked to serve no longer, and that it would have to be torn down, although there was a suggestion that it be left "just temporarily" for use as a practice hall for the band boys.

Student reporters wrote stories recalling the history of the frame structure which was erected about 1903 or 1904 and had a period of early glory as the place where such famed basketball players as Reeds, McDermott, Whisenant and the Bell brothers played. Crowds as large as three or four hundred persons used to line the walls and crowd the one balcony. At the other end of the gym the goal was placed against the wall. Sooner players developed skill in putting one foot against the wall, shooting baskets. At the other end of the gym, the goal was placed against the wall. Sooner players developed skill in putting one foot against the wall, shooting baskets.

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The new Biological Sciences building wasn't quite complete, however, when school started in the fall of 1936. Moving day was delayed several times. The bandmen wanted to practice, so they moved in. And so started another era, probably the most astonishing in the history of the old gym.

Before anyone quite realized it, the formal name of the building had been changed again in the University catalog—from "Zoology Laboratory" to "Band Practice Building."

Moving day never did arrive, and now its date remains extremely vague. For the old gym has had to stay in the harness whether it felt like it or not.

Although many students didn't know it, the building served another purpose during its year as the Band Practice Building. It housed the aquarium for the orphan fish of the zoology department.

This unusual combination lasted only one year, however. Last year the building was renamed "Elementary-School Building" and housed grades one to six of the University's practice school. A new generation of Sooners, grandchildren of those who thrilled at Oklahoma basketball triumphs in the early 1900's, walked its corridors. The band kept one room for instruments and could practice after 4 o'clock. The northeast room, down a narrow hall from the main entrance, was given over to the NYA office.

This year the University's staff of workers gave the old structure another shot in the arm and practically gave up hope of doing without it. Officials christened it again—twice. Formally, they named it "Liberal Arts Annex." Among themselves, they decided to call it "Kraettli Hall" in honor of E. R. Kraettli, veteran secretary of the University and most persistent practical joker on the campus.

"Kraettli Hall" now has an imposing list of occupants. Despite its ancient walls, its squeaking stairs, uneven floors, long dark hallways and scarcity of windows, it houses the department of speech, the speech clinic, two history professors, the WPA museum service project and a map-mounting project of the geology department. It has twelve rooms listed on its directory, including one large classroom downstairs and three small ones upstairs.

About one thousand more students are attending classes in the O. U. campus than there were two years ago, and the classes have to meet somewhere. It's easy to explain why the old gym had to be drafted back into service.

The speech department had to move out of the Union because the dean of men's office and the counselor of women's office were moved into the third floor of the Union last summer, and more space was required for the Union's expanding services. Dean Findlay had vacated space in the Ad building to allow the Faculty Exchange to be moved because the comptroller's office needed more space. Miss Stephenson moved from the first floor of the Women's building, which always has been used for the dean's office and a reception room, in order to provide more space for women's physical education.

NOW Miss Ima James' department has all of the Women's building for its classes. Miss James had been holding some classes in the long frame building between the Women's building and the Infirmary—the structure once known as "Park Row.

This now is being used by the grade school children who were transferred from the old gym. The NYA office was transferred to Dean Findlay's office in the Union. The band now practices in the Armory. The aquarium was crowded out of the dingy roof on the southeast corner of second floor of the old gym, although the Biological Sciences building had no place for it. A skylight put in to provide sunlight for the band now makes the working day more cheerful for the WPA museum staff quartered there.

The skylight is a symbol of the undignified treatment the old gym has been forced to accept. Instead of being treated with the respect due a historic campus structure, the gym has been "fixed up" every year as cheaply as possible. It's still on the outside, but its lean-tos and its south entrance have been torn away. It has had a second floor added, then (TURN TO PAGE 28, PLEASE)
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