

RIC A. DIAS

A Changing Building for Changing Times

Northern State University's Seymour Hall

For well over a century, north-central South Dakota has had a public institution of higher education. The same school has occupied the site in Aberdeen since 1901, but over the years it has had several names, all containing the word “Northern.” From its beginnings as Northern Normal and Industrial School, the institution became Northern State Teachers College in 1939, a name that gave way to Northern State College in 1964 and Northern State University in 1989.¹ For sixty-eight of those years, Northern was served by Seymour Hall, a versatile building first envisioned as a men’s dormitory. In keeping with the root of the word “dormitory,” the Latin verb *dormire*, meaning “to sleep,” Seymour at various times provided living and sleeping space for Northern students, the college’s president, and World War II glider pilots in training. The building did far more than provide a place to lay one’s head, however. Beyond its role as a “dorm,” Seymour Hall housed a bookstore, post office, infirmary, radio station, reading clinic, faculty offices, faculty lounge, and classroom space. In its first few years of service, Seymour Hall was sometimes called a “men’s union,” a name that suggests a multipurpose and flexible character that is more reflective of this unique building’s long and successful history.

For more than thirty years from its inception, the school did not provide on-campus housing for male students. That policy changed in 1934 when the first male students moved onto the Aberdeen campus to live, even though the institution had no dedicated dormitory to house them. Instead, this handful of hardy young men lived in makeshift accommodations located in a gymnasium on the second floor of what was

1. Mark C. Bartusis, ed., *Northern State University: The First Century, 1901–2000* (Aberdeen, S.Dak.: Northern State University Press, 2001), p. xv.

generally known as the Industrial Arts Building and above the campus garage. Although the two spaces included study areas and bathrooms, and the Industrial Arts Building had the added benefit of giving residents easy access to an area where they could “wrestle, box, or even run hurdle races” when the mood struck them, they were clearly not proper housing for college students.² Seeing a pressing need for adequate student housing that would probably grow over time, Northern President Carl G. Lawrence moved forcefully to make proper facilities available.³ Stopgap housing measures could no longer be lived with or overlooked.

By the mid-1930s, Northern had both the need for its first male dormitory and the institutional commitment to see it through. Space did not pose a problem, either; with some twenty-five acres of land, much of it unused, the campus could easily accommodate another building. Finding enough money to pay for the dorm, however, presented a vexing challenge, as even a modest building would overwhelm the school’s ability to pay. Northern was a small college, South Dakota was a not a rich state, and America still lived in the tenacious grip of the Great Depression in the mid-1930s. While the worst of the crisis was arguably over after 1933, recovery came slowly. In 1936, America’s gross domestic product finally returned to pre-depression levels (about \$100 billion), but the national unemployment rate stood stubbornly at about 15 percent. South Dakota was among the hardest-hit of all states. In December 1934, 39 percent of South Dakotans were on relief, the highest percentage of any state.⁴ A painful but telling qualitative evaluation of the depression’s effect on the state was given by Lorena A. Hickok, an investigator for the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, who

2. *Exponent*, 19 May 1935. See also *ibid.*, 19 Apr. 1934. Today, the Industrial Arts Building is known as Gerber Hall and is the home of the School of Education. Bartusis, *Northern State University*, pp. 274, 313.

3. Lawrence to Roderick Ross, 28 Sept. 1936, Development Assn.—Boys’ Dorm File, Northern State University Archives and Special Collections, Williams Library, Aberdeen, S.Dak. (hereafter NSU Archives).

4. Gary M. Walton and Hugh Rockoff, *History of the American Economy*, 6th ed. (San Diego, Calif.: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990), pp. 479, 481; Herbert S. Schell, *History of South Dakota*, 4th ed., rev. John E. Miller (Pierre: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2004), p. 292.

reported of South Dakota after a 1933 visit, “A more hopeless place I never saw.”⁵

Naturally, Northern Normal and Industrial School struggled greatly with the impact of the Great Depression. One measure of the serious economic pressure facing Americans was their shift in spending priorities. Attending college was an investment fewer and fewer could make, and Northern’s enrollment numbers plummeted. The school reported its highest enrollment with nearly 950 students in 1925, but in 1934 that figure had tumbled to about 575, a low point for the decade. As enrollment at Northern Normal and Industrial School fell, so did its financial support from the state government in Pierre. The legislature’s appropriations for Northern declined from \$204,500 in 1925 to just \$114,300 for each year from 1933 to 1938. Facing the twin blows of decreasing enrollment and state funding, President Lawrence pursued an aggressive belt-tightening policy, closing and consolidating programs and trimming the number of faculty and staff positions. For those lucky enough to retain their jobs, everyone from the president on down faced a salary cut. Lawrence pushed for lower fees to make the school more affordable, as well. Northern had entered the Great Depression with a rainy day fund, but it quickly evaporated as the administration drew from it to keep the institution open. If Lawrence was going to build a men’s dorm on his campus, neither state government nor the school itself could fund it.⁶

Salvation for the project came from faraway Washington, D.C., and the federal Public Works Administration (PWA). Often overshadowed by higher-profile agencies with similar names and modus operandi, especially the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the PWA funded thousands of projects tiny and gargantuan, from municipal sewage projects for small towns like Aberdeen to large multipurpose dams like Grand Coulee on the Columbia River. Longtime Washington insider Harold L. Ickes led the PWA and also served as secretary of the in-

5. Hickok to Harry L. Hopkins, 9 Nov. 1933, in Lorena A. Hickok, *One Third of a Nation: Lorena Hickok Reports on the Great Depression*, ed. Richard Lowitt and Maurine Beasley (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), p. 83.

6. Bartusis, *Northern State University*, pp. 146, 412; John L. Murphy, “The History and Development of Northern State Teacher’s College,” 1940, p. 40, NSU Archives.

terior (1933–1946) and as advisor/confidant to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. A fervent believer in the positive outcomes that could be realized from harnessing the power of government, the idealistic Ickes dispensed money in the way he believed it would achieve the most good. In his 1935 defense of Roosevelt’s “New Deal” programs entitled *Back to Work*, Ickes declared that the PWA’s goal “was to get honest work at honest wages on honest projects.” He preferred projects that were “economically justified,” and not just means to spend government money, with “the best projects of all” being “schools, sewers, water works, light plants and hospitals.”⁷ Because the policy of the PWA was to build permanent improvements that would benefit the community for years to come, Northern’s new dormitory was an entirely appropriate project for the agency to support.

The PWA did not simply write a check to pay for a project, nor did it bring its own workers to the job site. Instead, it funded projects through grants or loans that required local monetary support. Concerning this policy of shared local/federal funding Ickes wrote, “Thus we were, in effect, helping local governmental agencies to help themselves. This loan-and-grant method also resulted in bringing more money into circulation than the Federal Treasury itself could afford.”⁸ The PWA’s process for the dormitory construction project followed the shared-cost model Ickes preferred. The federal government through the PWA paid for 45 percent of the project’s cost, and the sale of bonds (to be paid off with rent revenues from future students) covered the balance.⁹ Thus, Northern Normal and Industrial School and the State of South Dakota essentially would end up paying nothing for the building.

7. Ickes, *Back to Work: The Story of PWA* (New York: Macmillan, 1935), pp. 216–17. See also Brad Tennant and Art Buntin, *Relief and Recovery: The New Deal in Brown County: The Human, Architectural and Artistic Legacy* (Aberdeen, S.Dak.: Aberdeen/Brown County Landmarks Commission, 2005), p. 9.

8. T. H. Watkins, *Righteous Pilgrim: The Life and Times of Harold L. Ickes, 1874–1952* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1990), p. 372.

9. “Statement of facts regarding the sale of the Boys Dormitory Bonds of the Northern State Teachers College,” 25 Oct. 1940, C. G. Lawrence Note File, NSU Archives. See also “Northern State Teachers College Building Survey 1949–1959,” unpublished report, NSU Archives.

In 1936, President Lawrence began an aggressive, high-profile campaign to build a men's dormitory on the Northern campus. He assembled a working committee of civic, business, and education leaders from the Aberdeen area on 1 October 1936. At its initial meeting, the ten-man committee adopted the name Northern State Teachers College Development Association for the purpose of submitting an application for assistance to the PWA. At this point, Lawrence relinquished leadership of the association to J. E. Kelly, who was elected president of the new organization. The South Dakota Board of Regents moved to seek federal assistance for the new dormitory on 31 October.¹⁰

Completing the requisite paperwork took until 1938, and the project then seemed poised for takeoff. An unforeseen impediment appeared when the Minneapolis-based Allison Williams Company, which had agreed to sell the bonds, presented a bill of \$2,746 for its commission to the board of regents. The board refused to pay, however, saying that it could not legally do so. Without the bond sale, the project would be short 55 percent of its funding, likely killing it. President Lawrence leaped into action, making telephone calls, knocking on doors, and racking up miles in his car to restart the project, but to no avail. Seeing no alternative, he drew the needed money from his own savings, with uncertain hopes for future reimbursement. He also convinced a Watertown bank to buy the bonds. Lawrence's emergency loan to Northern represented about 78 percent of his yearly salary. This rare act of unselfishness publicly demonstrated the president's deep dedication to the school and the project he had shepherded from its earliest stages. Unfortunately, Lawrence would have to wait until 1951 to be repaid in full.¹¹

10. Lawrence to Ross, 28 Sept. 1936; Minutes, Northern State Teachers College Development Association organizational meeting, 1 Oct. 1936; Resolution of the South Dakota Board of Regents authorizing application for federal grant to fund a "Boys Dormitory," 31 Oct. 1936, all in NSU Archives.

11. Tennant and Buntin, *Relief and Recovery*, p. 25; "Salary Data," ca. 1945, NSU Archives. The C. G. Lawrence Note File, NSU Archives, contains records associated with President Lawrence's loan to the institution. A 1939 fund drive involving Northern staff, students, and community members repaid only a portion of the outstanding amount. In 1942, Lawrence was reportedly still owed \$1,073. When the South Dakota Legislature finally authorized payment of the remaining balance owed Lawrence in 1951, it also cre-



Northern President Carl G. Lawrence wields a shovelful of dirt in this photograph labeled "Seymour Hall," which likely depicts the groundbreaking ceremony for the dormitory.

With the funding problem worked out, the project finally pressed forward. When the development association released its first sketchy plans to the public in the fall of 1936, it proposed a dormitory that would have housed 100 students in 50 rooms. The Sioux Falls architectural firm Perkins & McWayne finished its design for the building on 1 May 1939. The Perkins & McWayne design projected housing 108 students in 36 rooms, or three in each room (which measured in width between nine feet, five inches and ten feet, one inch and in length from fifteen feet, eight inches to eighteen feet, six inches.) The architects gave the building three wings. The two east-facing wings were

ated a student loan fund in his name as a gesture of thanks (and perhaps apology). An elderly Lawrence, now in poor health and bearing expensive medical bills, contributed seventy-five dollars to this fund himself.

connected to each other, but the western wing remained essentially separate, with only a flat archway connecting the two halves on the structure's north side. In subsequent decades, the entire complex was linked on the second and third floors with an enclosed hallway.¹²

Students named each wing after a South Dakota county. Grant was the west wing, while the east wings were Douglas to the south and Marshall to the north. The building presented a unique shape when viewed from above—not quite a full “O,” but a bit more enclosed than an open “C,” with a courtyard in the middle. Interior space totaled 23,047 square feet, although one source provides a “usable area” figure of 18,397 square feet.¹³ With its fireproof brick construction, use of natural light in stairwells, study areas, lounges (with games and a piano), showers and toilets, an infirmary, a bookstore, and a post office, the building was called “up-to-date”¹⁴ and even “ultra-modern.”¹⁵

One more change came on Lawrence's watch when the 1938 state legislature gave Northern Normal and Industrial School a new name: Northern State Teachers College. Although the name change officially took effect in 1939, the school had already been unofficially called Northern State Teachers College for a few years. With these two accomplishments under his belt, President Carl Lawrence retired to California in 1939, closing out a career of more than forty-five years in South Dakota education.¹⁶

Construction on Northern's new dormitory began in late 1939 and proceeded steadily. Local contractor S. W. Jonason and Company, the firm responsible for Aberdeen's municipal building, erected the structure. By December, the campus newspaper, the *Exponent*, carried the

12. *Aberdeen Morning American*, 24 Oct. 1936; Seymour Hall blueprints, Physical Plant Office, Northern State University, Aberdeen, S.Dak.; Sarah Willgohe, “Seymour: The Man and the Building,” History 480, Northern State University, 30 Apr. 1998, p. 8 (copy in author's possession).

13. Bartusis, *Northern State University*, p. 144; Tennant and Buntin, *Relief and Recovery*, p. 25. A building survey found 18,397 square feet of “usable area” in Seymour Hall, but the figure of 23,047 square feet is more commonly reported. See “Northern State Teachers College Building Survey 1949–1959,” NSU Archives.

14. Murphy, *History and Development of Northern State Teacher's College*, p. 38.

15. *Exponent*, 15 Mar. 1940.

16. “A Brief History of Northern State Teachers College,” ca. 1950, p. 4, NSU Archives.

headline “Men’s Union Building Nears Completion” and reported that workmen were installing plumbing and electrical fixtures.¹⁷ Open house for the new building in March 1940 drew about twenty-five hundred people. One impressed visitor described the dormitory as “a palatial edifice,” suggesting a pleasing and impressive appearance.¹⁸ That attribute was certainly desirable, but more important was the building’s structural integrity, which became one of its enduring characteristics. In 2014, Wayne Fischer, former supervisor of facilities management for Northern State University, characterized the structure as “very solid[ly] built.”¹⁹

But what to call this solid new building? Sadly, a campus tragedy in the late 1930s, the death of beloved Northern professor Arthur Hallock Seymour (1868–1936), provided the inspiration for naming the dormitory. Born in Ohio, Seymour studied at Ohio Normal University (which later granted him an honorary degree of Doctor of Pedagogy) and at Oberlin College before working as a teacher and a minister. A position as a clergyman brought him to Carthage, South Dakota. He later served as a minister and a school principal in Arlington and as superintendent of schools in Volga. The South Dakota Board of Regents hired him to teach social science at Northern Normal and Industrial School in 1913, although he did not begin his duties there until the following year due to contractual obligations in Volga. Seymour moved north to Aberdeen and quickly became a leading figure on campus. There seemed to be no job he could not do, and over the years he took on administrative responsibilities in addition to his faculty position in history, ultimately serving as acting president from 1927 to 1928.²⁰ Seymour may have served reluctantly as interim president, however. According to one source, he “was not extremely interested in the presidency or in administration” and even “turned down the presidency when it was offered [to] him.” Taking the temporary job was apparent-

17. *Exponent*, 8 Dec. 1939. See also Tennant and Buntin, *Relief and Recovery*, p. 25.

18. *Exponent*, 15 Mar. 1940.

19. Interview with Fischer, Aberdeen, S.Dak., 20 June 2014.

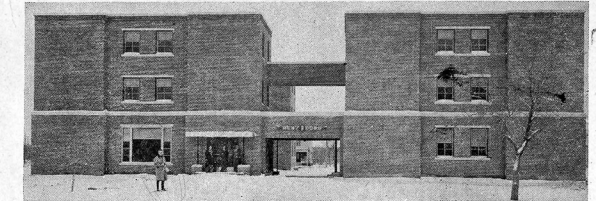
20. *Northern Normal and Industrial School Alumni Bulletin* 30 (Oct. 1936): 3; *Exponent*, 8 Oct. 1936; Bartusis, *Northern State University*, pp. 125–26.

Dance With
Pat and Mike
Tonight

Vol. XXXVIII, No. 20

Northern State Teachers College, Aberdeen, South Dakota

2500 ATTEND SEYMOUR'S OPEN HOUSE



Debate Squad To Leave March 20 To Compete In Knoxville Tournament

Northern's debate squad will leave for Knoxville, Tennessee, on March 20. They will compete in the National Pi Kappa Delta Speech Tournament to be held March 24-25.

Seven hundred students representing one hundred colleges and universities in nearly every state in the union will attend.

Phil Banks and Glenn Kelley, Lucille Gross and Faythe Mantel, compose the men's and women's teams respectively. Mr. Banks and Miss Mantel will also compete in extemporaneous speech, while Mr. Kelley and Miss Gross will enter in men's and women's oratory.

Professor F. J. Harkness, Northern speech coach, is chairman of the Committee on Men's Debate. The tournament is held biennially. The last contest was held in 1938 in Tokyo, Kansas.

Officials Inspect New Men's Dorm For Last Time

Mr. Robert Perkins of the firm of architects, Perkins and McWayne of Sioux Falls, S. Dak., the state engineer, Dean W. Loucks, of Pierre, S. Dak., the Honorable Frank Condit, vice president of the board of regents, of Firstfield, S. Dak., and the general contractors for the boys dormitory, Seymour Hall, were in Aberdeen on Wednesday, March 13, 1940, for the final inspection of the building in preparation for closing the project.

Covington To Broadcast On Faculty Forum Program March 19 At 7:00 P. M.



Miss Ruth Covington will discuss the physical education set up as it is at Northern, over the local radio station, Tuesday night, March 19, at seven P. M. She will explain how the courses of physical education offered at Northern fit in with the modern trends of physical education. The relationship of physical education to the rest of the curriculum will be brought out in her speech.

Merle Trickey, professor of Commercial Education at Northern will be interviewed Tuesday, March 26, on the Northern Faculty Forum. The subject of the discussion will be "The Commercial Department at N. S. T. C."

The Exponent

Don't Miss
Rural Schools
Pageant Monday

March 15, 1940

Paddy Dear Didya Hear The News?

Princess Pat, Prince Mike To Be Crowned Today

Princess Pat and Prince Mike's identity will be divulged at the big dance which will be held Friday, March 15, in the Spafford gym. The dance will start at 9:00 o'clock.

This year the dance is not a formal as it has been in the previous years. The Beaux Arts Club has sponsored the Princess Pat dance during the past few years, but this year the W. S. A. Club has agreed to sponsor it.

Because of the fact that everyone was asked to dress formal, before, and the admission was higher, fewer students could afford to come. This year the admission is only ten cents and the only restriction is that everyone must wear something which is green and white to commemorate Saint Patrick's day.

A committee headed by Joyce Arthur was appointed by Elsen Kegan, president of W. S. G. A., to make plans for the forthcoming event.

April 24 Set For Annual Northern Day

P. K. Condit, Northern State Teachers College personnel director, announced recently that April 24 has been set as the date for the college's third annual Northern Day. Letters of invitation have been sent to seniors in every South Dakota high school.

Dr. Condit said that tentative plans for the day upon which Northern is host include athletic contests, tours of the college, and a social evening and dance. Department exhibits of progress will be shown.

The purpose of the day, according to Dr. Condit, is to show students graduating from high schools this spring that Northern is the ideal institution in which to finish their secondary education.

N.E.A. Journal Features Guhin's Auto Driving Course For Children



The March issue of the National Educational Association Journal featured an article on the children's auto driving course of which M. E. Guhin of Northern is in charge. It included two pictures of the children driving the practice car.

The March issue of the South Dakota Educational Association Journal also carried an article with pictures of the children.

Articles written by the children commenting on the course are included in Commissioner R. S. Wallace's annual report to the National Safety Council.

Now Showing! "The Four Feathers," Featuring Port

Dore Kido.

The top numbers at the dorm are complaining about sore feet. No ladders as yet. Going to the ridiculous I should like to describe an original play for you. A suitable name could be "The Shirk in the Night" or "Films Hits Port's Pass."

Time: Two thirty A. M.

Place: Seymour Hall, 301.

Action: Frankie Port stealthily enters room hoping he will not disturb his other five room-mates (if they are in). Having spent a rugged night at Marion O's he was quite tired, so he retires to the top bunk.

Five Minutes Later.

Frankie is now deep in the arms of Morpheus. Five villainous shapes creep closer. WHAM! (Mr. Port awakens with that horrible profane silence) The pillow had found its mark.

Proverb: He who gets hit with pillow gets "dove" in mouth.

Overhead—Desk fee, Union fee, door key fee, breakfast fee, post office fee, and fee for fire. It seems that the latter is the only item not found in the registration sheets.

And then there is the one about—What did the river say when the elephant sat in it? Well I'll be damned. Think it over!

Have you seen Card K's new diamond? It's on the left hand nail Nice girl! Don H.

Art Abate didn't wish us this quarter; and just as that Gallett deal was going strong too.

Dr. Williams says: Never use a proposition to end a sentence with.

It is rumored that Dean Love absolutely will not allow her girls to be over at the Men's dorm. (Remember, the book store is no longer going to be in the Ad. Building.)

The other day who should blow into the publications office and blow. Gloydvay S. (of the famous Travels). It seems someone didn't take much stock in his "latest."

Sincerely yours,
Anonymous

Say It With A Lily. Remind Les And Floyd

"Roses are red and violets are blue but if you want her to really love you try lilies, American style!" so say Floyd Nelson and Les Dethlefsen, who are in keeping the lanterns supplied with a variety of luxury flowers.

Both Les and Floyd are authorities on "this here thing called love" and they recommend lilies highly as the panacea for all the ills of cupid, especially at Easter time.

If you have someone you think is worth a dozen lilies (50c) drop at the greenhouse and talk it over with the boys.

All's Quiet Along The Dorm Front

Seymour Hall, Northern's new \$125,000 Men's Union building, was officially opened to the public Sunday, March 10.

More than 2500 visitors streamed through the fire proof structure and left with words of praise for Northern's male population.

Monday, March 11, saw the hordes of students move into their new homes with no other fanfare than the popping of the male occupants eyeballs as they viewed the regal splendor of the palatial edifice.

Contrary to all opinion the first night was marked by no pillow fights, hazing, or courting but only sleepless amazement as dazed eyes looked upon the new dormitory and waited for a sleep that did not come until late Tuesday morning.

By Tuesday afternoon, the lodgers were slaked of their bewilderment and the ultra-modern lounging room was beginning to take on the atmosphere of a Y. M. C. A. lobby.

Janitorial work is being handled by student helpers which include Willis Sackreiter, Lloyd Sundheim, Harold Merkel, and Kevin Wahl.

Campus Calendar

Friday, March 15.—Princess Pat dance sponsored by W. S. G. A.

Friday, March 16.—A. A. U. P. luncheon — Dutch Coffee Shop, Arthur Coe and Merle Trickey to speak on "Credit Evaluation in Colleges."

Monday, March 18.—Rural pupils pageant "God Bless America" in Northern auditorium at 10 a. m.

Monday—Wednesday, March 18—28.—State High School Debate Tournament

Tuesday, March 19.—Northern Faculty Forum, KARB.—7:00-7:15. Ruth Covington.

Thursday, March 21.—Easter vacation begins at 5 p. m. Northern Musical Program, KARB.—7:15-7:45

Tuesday, March 26.—Easter vacation ends at 8 a. m.

Tuesday, March 26.—Northern Faculty Forum over KARB, 7:00-7:15.—Merle Trickey.

Wednesday, March 27.—Commercial Club Annual Dinner Dance, 8:15. Dutch Coffee Shop.

Friday, March 29.—Phil Banks, Northern Reporter of the air, over KARB.

Prof. Lukken Directs Aberdeen Elks Chorus

John Lukken was the able director of the Aberdeen Elks Chorus in the Elks Americanization program at the high school auditorium arena on March 11.

Dorm Dwellers Ponder Their New Residence

"Sweet Potatoes" ink Joe.

With many of the out-of-town boys installed in the new Men's Dorm, it seems only proper that some of their comments be aired.

The following are a few of the comments heard about the campus in regard to life in Seymour Hall.

Mark Nelson—"Nothing happened yet. Just give it a nice place."

Herbert Williams—"That looks just swell."

Shervood Cooley—"Ja, it's all right."

Tim Heffernan—"It's O. K. but Hagen woke us all up Sunday morning and kept us up by playing 'Reville' on his bagpipes."

Bill Kuehner—"They even pulled me out of bed at twelve last night to play bridge."

Speed Hilland—"The star ping-pong players, Sackreiter and Bueche can't stand to be beat."

Joe Backman—"Hurt Williams playing the sweet potato really grates us. If he doesn't quit playing it I'll never get my incompletes made up."

Arnold Busche—"Everyone's afraid of falling out of the top bunks."

Anonymous—"There's quite a rogues gallery of girls' pictures around."

Eleven Students Listed In Blue Book For U. Men

The Blue Book of American Universities, Men, a Publication containing brief biographies of outstanding students in American Universities and Colleges, has chosen eleven of Northern's men to be represented in its 1940 edition.

The Northern students receiving the honor of being listed are: Norman Robert of Osage, Wisconsin, Robert Schmidt of Tripp, James Smith of Watertown, Franklin Port of Marvin, Henry Schoels and Ralph Kemnitz of Aberdeen, Homer Moran of Mission, Phil Banks of Clark, John Ziegler of Aberdeen, Ralph Halverson of Friction, N. D., and Beryl Betts of Big Stone. These students were chosen according to their ability and achievement. Along with this honor, they are the first to represent Northern State Teachers College in the Blue Book.

Large Enrollment Expected At N.S.T.C. For Summer Term

The prospects for a large enrollment in the summer session at Northern are good. The first semester beginning June 3, and closing July 15, will run with a complete faculty and all courses being offered. The second session beginning July 15, and closing August 15, will offer the same courses as the first, but with a sixty minute basis for each class. The Biological Station at Beany swim will operate during the second session also.

Northern's campus newspaper, the *Exponent*, gave front-page coverage to the opening of Seymour Hall in the spring of 1940. For many years, residents called themselves "Seymourites."

ly Seymour's way to tide the school over until a suitable (and willing) replacement could be found.²¹

Although the interim presidency was the most visible position he held at Northern, Seymour arguably made his biggest impact in the classroom, where he earned more than his share of accolades and awards for popularity and superior teaching. After a 1916 summer session, some students published a thank-you message in the *Exponent*, writing, "We, the students attending the second summer term, deem ourselves very fortunate in having had as director A. H. Seymour . . . Three cheers for Mr. Seymour."²² Early in his career at Northern, he began holding regular discussions on issues of broad importance. As the First World War posed a growing threat to American interests, Seymour shifted his talks to cover that all-consuming conflict. The campus newspaper quoted Seymour in 1916 as saying, "And whether this war lasts three months or three years—or ten, it will leave us a sober, refined and uplifted nation in many ways. No nation entering the war thoughtfully, prayerfully, and purposefully will fail to come out of it exalted, purified, prepared for large nationality."²³ A campus history written around 1940 added that "few educators ever command[ed] the universal love and respect that was accorded Dr. Seymour by a whole generation of school people."²⁴ He was widely admired as a father figure. In fact, he was often referred to by students as "Dad Seymour" or "Daddy Seymour."²⁵

Seymour made his presence felt off-campus, as well. He became an active member and leader of the South Dakota Education Association, serving as its secretary for nine years and as its president in 1924.²⁶ While heading Northern's social science department, he published *The Pupils' Workbook in the Geography of South Dakota* (1922), "a companion

21. "Presidents at Northern State College," ca. 1950, p. 5, NSU Archives.

22. *Exponent*, 30 Aug. 1916.

23. *Ibid.*, 31 Apr. 1917.

24. "The History and Development of Northern State Teacher's College 1902–1939," ca. 1940, p. 14, NSU Archives.

25. *Northern Normal and Industrial School Alumni Bulletin* 30 (Oct. 1936): 6–7; "Presidents at Northern State College," p. 4.

26. *Northern Normal and Industrial School Alumni Bulletin* 30 (Oct. 1936): 3; *Exponent*, 8 Oct. 1936.

Arthur Seymour, a respected professor at Northern from 1914 to 1936, provided the inspiration for the naming of the new dormitory.



guide to Ginn and Company's textbook *New Geography*.²⁷ Seymour achieved a rare level of influence both on and off campus.

Professor Seymour died suddenly and unexpectedly on 29 September 1936. The city of Aberdeen and the Northern campus genuinely grieved his passing. A writer for the *Aberdeen Morning American* called him the "grand old man" of the city,²⁸ while Northern's President Lawrence called for Seymour to be named Aberdeen's "Most Useful Citizen" for 1936.²⁹ In honor of the late professor's untiring commitment to students, the Seymour Memorial Loan Fund was established to help students pay for their education at Northern. The *Exponent* dedicated an entire page to Seymour's passing capped with the headline, "Dr.

27. Bartusis, *Northern State University*, p. 126.

28. *Northern Normal and Industrial School Alumni Bulletin* 30 (Oct. 1936): 8. See also *ibid.*, pp. 2, 5.

29. Bartusis, *Northern State University*, p. 146.

Seymour, Northern's Most Popular Teacher Dies.”³⁰ Perhaps the most conspicuous honor bestowed on Seymour was the naming of Northern's newest dormitory, approved by the South Dakota Board of Regents in January 1940.³¹

With construction finished and a fitting name chosen, the ceremonial opening was all that remained to complete the process. On 28 May 1940, officials formally dedicated Seymour Hall. In recognition of the building's popular namesake, a brass dedication plaque along with a smaller plaque recognizing the PWA's role in erecting the building were hung on an inside wall.³²

The new dormitory opened just in time to help America gear up to fight World War II. Although it is often overlooked today, the federal government had begun military preparations before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, most notably by instituting a peacetime draft in 1940. South Dakotans were no different than other Americans in their desire to avoid becoming entangled in the growing world crisis. In fact, there had been a “Peace Assembly” on the Northern campus in the 1930s, which was described decades later as resembling “a modern peace march or demonstration.” The school's drama department presented an anti-war play entitled *The Journey's End*, and “strong anti-war sentiment continued until the bombing of Pearl Harbor.”³³

Perceiving a growing Axis threat, however, many Americans went along with defense preparations with varying degrees of dread, apprehension, and support. In 1940, the Civil Aeronautics Authority set up a pilot training program at Northern State Teachers College. Mathematics professor and private pilot Nathaniel Mewaldt taught many of the classes.³⁴ Other defense programs at Northern included the Army

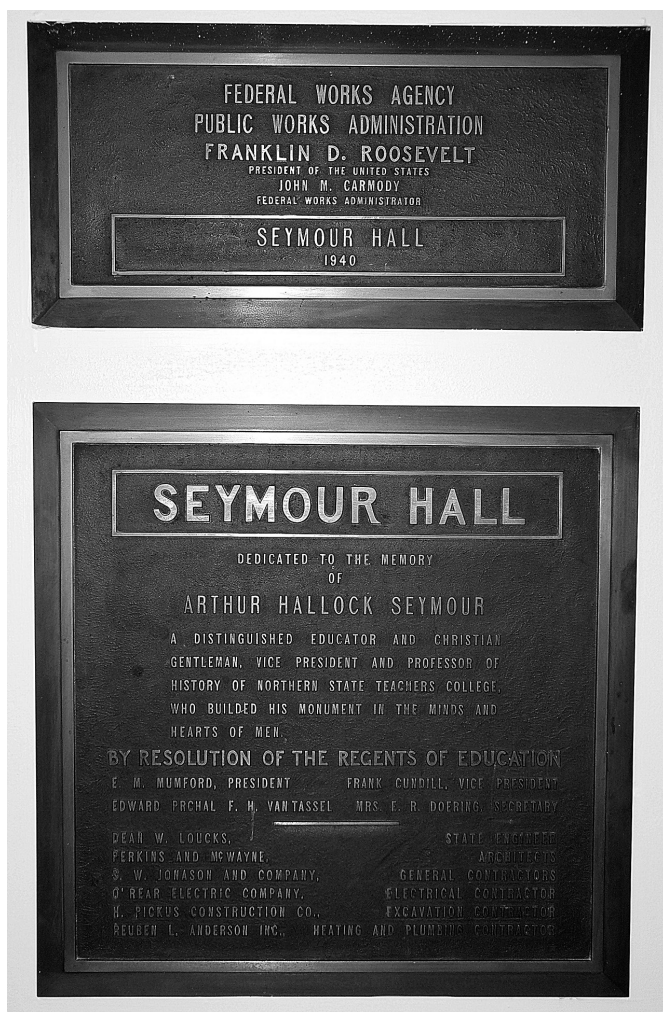
30. *Exponent*, 8 Oct. 1936.

31. Murphy, “History and Development of Northern State Teacher's College,” p. 37; *Exponent*, 26 Jan. 1940.

32. Bartusis, *Northern State University*, p. 152. The plaques are now mounted on a brick wall marking the Seymour Hall site.

33. Gordon Verne Goodsell, “A History of Northern State College from 1902 to 1968” (master's thesis, Northern State College, 1970), p. 62, NSU Archives.

34. In 1962, Northern recognized Mewaldt for his thirty-eight years of service by



These brass plaques marking the dedication of Seymour Hall in 1940 were situated on the wall inside the dormitory's Douglas wing.

Specialized Training program and the National Defense School. Seymour Hall participated in the war effort in a unique way by providing living quarters for men enrolled in the Army Air Corps Glider Pilot School. Powered aircraft were well established by World War II and were no longer the novel and futuristic technology they had been in World War I, but there was still a small place for unpowered aircraft in the 1940s. The United States military used gliders to carry men and materiel behind enemy lines, as the gliders were quiet, even if their range, capacity, and maneuverability were limited. American factories produced over fourteen thousand gliders used across the globe by Allied forces over the course of the war, making pilot training important to the war effort.³⁵

co-naming a building after him, also recognizing the fifty years of service of chemistry professor John Jensen, calling it Mewaldt-Jensen Hall. Bartusis, *Northern State University*, pp. 206, 210.

35. Goodsell, *History of Northern State College*, p. 67; Bartusis, *Northern State University*, pp. 151, 164; Gerard M. Devlin, *Silent Wings: The Saga of the U.S. Army and Marine Combat Glider Pilots during World War II* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), p. xiii.



A serviceman associated with the glider-pilot training program poses in front of Seymour Hall in 1942.

Seymour's first glider cadets arrived in late May 1942. The Army Air Corps leased farmland north and east of Aberdeen for training, which, ironically, used small powered aircraft to execute so-called "dead stick landings" after the engines had been shut down. The glider pilot training program seemed to take off smoothly but suffered two tragedies shortly after it commenced—a training accident that took the lives of a student and an instructor, and the off-campus death of a local woman, twenty-one-year-old Dorothy Blair, at the hands of a cadet who lived in Seymour Hall. These two events cast a pall over the program. Seymour Hall housed the last of its glider pilot cadets in August 1942. Army officials denied that Blair's death was a factor in the decision to end the program at Northern. Her killer was later convicted of first-degree manslaughter and sentenced to twenty-five years in prison.³⁶

As increasing numbers of men and women put on military uniforms or took jobs in defense plants, American universities saw a drop in enrollment. Northern's enrollment tumbled to perilous lows, bottoming out at just 169 students in 1942. Such a tiny number of students meant that campus resources were not being used, and student fee revenues declined sharply. To offset some costs, President Noah Steele moved onto campus in 1944, taking over what had been the infirmary on the first floor of Seymour Hall's Grant wing and turning it into an apartment. The president's apartment evolved from a cost-cutting measure to a Northern tradition of sorts, with the school's presidents and their families living there through most of the 1960s. Even though the apartment received an update and expansion (a sunroom and entryway that pushed out the building's northwest corner) in 1959, it could not be called an opulent residence. With so many men serving in the military and defense work, demand for men's housing at Northern all but disappeared, leading to a change in policy. For a brief time beginning in 1943, Seymour Hall became a women's dorm. Shuffling resources and trying to attract government money and programs, the wartime ad-

36. Bartusis, *Northern State University*, pp. 164–67; *Aberdeen News*, clippings, 23, 31 May, 29 Aug. 1942, and *Aberdeen American News*, clipping, 31 July 2006, Glider School File, Archives and Special Collections, Alexander Mitchell Public Library, Aberdeen, S.Dak.

ministration led by President Steele had to remain nimble to keep the college open, and Seymour Hall could accommodate.³⁷

When World War II ended in 1945, fighting men and defense workers, not surprisingly, yearned for normal lives. Families, careers, and educations had all been put on hold by a deep and long depression, followed by an all-consuming war. As a result, American universities witnessed a flood of students in the postwar period. Northern's enrollment numbers swelled fivefold from the pent-up demand, from 169 students in 1942 to 868 in 1954. The burgeoning student population applied significant pressure on the college's facilities, and while the problem was one administrators were happy to have, it nonetheless demanded action. To meet the need even in the short term, some structures would have to be razed, some would have to be built, some would have to be altered, and some would have to be repurposed. The school hastily erected a dozen easy-to-build Quonset huts and opened temporary living spaces in several buildings, such as the attic of Lincoln Hall and the basement of Seymour Hall.³⁸ Gordon V. Goodsell's 1970 master's thesis on the history of Northern described these areas as "insufficiently lighted and lack[ing] adequate ventilation," an entirely credible assessment. Nevertheless, Seymour Hall addressed the changing needs of the campus once again.³⁹

The postwar years witnessed great growth at Northern State Teachers College in terms of programs, enrollment, and construction, so Seymour Hall did not have to pack extra students into its basement for long. In fact, as the college continued to add new dormitories, Seymour could offer students slightly more comfort. In 1963, the administration reduced the number of students in each room from three to two, no doubt to the approval of residents. Although Northern's leadership recognized that Seymour's population density was not ideal, administrators remained sensitive to cost-effectiveness. While the number of students in each room decreased, the amount each student paid for

37. Bartusis, *Northern State University*, p. 413; Tennant and Buntin, *Relief and Recovery*, p. 26; Seymour Hall blueprints; *Exponent*, 17 June 1943.

38. Bartusis, *Northern State University*, pp. 412–13.

39. Goodsell, "History of Northern State College," pp. 69–70.



Seymour Hall can be seen at lower left in this 1960 view of the Northern campus looking northwest. The dormitory is surrounded by the temporary buildings constructed after World War II.

housing increased enough to offset the revenue loss. Seymour Hall had to pay its way.⁴⁰

In the late 1960s, fundamental change came to Seymour Hall. After housing students for over a quarter century, the building had its role redefined; it would now host classrooms, labs, and offices. Northern had several new dormitories in development at that time, most notably

40. Tennant and Buntin, *Relief and Recovery*, p. 27; Willgoos, "Seymour," p. 12. Tennant and Buntin use figures for "suites." Seymour Hall had two rooms to a suite, for a total of thirty-six rooms in eighteen suites in 1963.

Jerde Hall, which opened in 1968 and could accommodate about four hundred students. It boasted a large cafeteria, small kitchens on each floor, spacious bathrooms, laundry facilities, and social areas. Seymour had always been cramped, and even after the 1963 reduction in residents, quarters were still tight. In comparison to Northern's newer living spaces, Seymour was beginning to look out-of-date. The building's secondary mission, housing the school's president, ended in November 1968. Norbert Baumgart was the last Northern president to live on campus. The former presidential apartment became a faculty lounge and then the honors program office, among other uses in the years that



Although modest, Seymour Hall had a bit of flair, with decorative brickwork beneath the windows on the west walls of the Marshall and Grant wings, concrete block between the first and second floors, and a capstone that topped the building. The addition for the president's apartment can be seen at right.

followed. The Northeast Council on Government (NECOG) used the space for several years. In 1967, college officials requested just fifty thousand dollars from the South Dakota Board of Regents to remodel Seymour Hall into offices, suggesting that changes to the configuration of the old building would be minor. Seymour Hall's design had allowed it to serve as adequate living quarters for several decades, but it could not adapt to the changing student-housing needs of the 1960s. Now the building would have to respond to a new set of demands.⁴¹

The late-1960s changes for Seymour did not end with the termination of its service as a dormitory. A sufficient number of students wanted Northern to establish its own radio station for the issue to be placed on the ballot in campus elections. The student body voted in favor of building a station in 1967, and the third floor of Seymour Hall's Marshall wing became the unlikely site of the new radio station. Demonstrating commitment to an enterprise that was powered largely by optimism, Northern students voted to add seventy-five cents to their tuition and fees each semester to fund the start-up. Colleges throughout the United States were opening FM radio stations during the period, so Northern was not unusual in this regard. In 1969, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) granted the station a license to broadcast at ten watts of power at 90.1 megahertz (MHz) on the FM band, with the call letters KNSC. The FCC gave Northern's station this frequency because most noncommercial radio stations, including college broadcasters, operate between 88 and 91 MHz. With just ten watts of broadcasting power, KNSC's signal could travel only a few miles, making it little competition for the commercial radio stations in Aberdeen. The low power output and limited range were typical of college radio stations at the time. In 1970, the station began broadcasting from Seymour Hall with the new call letters KASD. True to American college radio culture, KASD offered a varied programming schedule. The station broadcast Northern theatrical performances under the name

41. Tennant and Buntin, *Relief and Recovery*, p. 27; Art Buntin, "A New Era Dawns," unpublished manuscript, 1987, p. 4, and "Recommendations to the South Dakota Board of Regents for Capital Outlay—Building Repair and Deferred Maintenance," 1 July 1967, both in NSU Archives.

NSC Playhouse as well as athletic events, big-city opera performances, and a variety of music played by student disc jockeys.⁴²

Although KASD succeeded in getting on the air, problems plagued the Seymour Hall-based station right from the start, and it never became a robust operation. Northern did not have a broadcasting or media studies program to support the enterprise, so KASD drew heavily from interested volunteer students—not the most stable staffing source. The station did not enjoy generous funding, and its tiny yearly budget made it a shoestring operation. Effective, long-lasting leadership never took hold. Technical problems vexed the upstart station, and a new 250-watt stereo transmitter could not be fully exploited. The broadcasting schedule remained highly irregular, with programming on the air for only part of the day. With some time slots having no broadcasts at all, the station could never really establish a listener base.⁴³

Perhaps predictably, student support waned, leading Northern's Student Activities Committee to pull the plug on KASD in 1979. The campus newspaper speculated that the move might have amounted to "mercy killing."⁴⁴ The equipment and music inventory were scrapped, moved, or stored, and within a few years most Northern students were unaware that a radio station had existed at their school. There remained but one vestige of the short-lived KASD in Seymour Hall—a large glass window that separated the former broadcasting room from the hallway. With no reference to its origins, the big window, which seemed out of place among the classrooms and offices, became an oddity of the building.⁴⁵

To much of the campus community, Seymour Hall itself seemed a bit odd (a 2008 newspaper article called it "one of oddest buildings on the campus"), or quaint, perhaps, to those who were fond of it.⁴⁶ Nearing its fiftieth year of use, the structure had acquired a reputation

42. *Exponent*, 9 Oct. 1969; Samuel J. Sauls, *The Culture of American College Radio* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 2000), pp. 3, 12, 20–22; Bartusis, *Northern State University*, p. 601.

43. *Exponent*, 3 May 1979.

44. *Ibid.*

45. Bartusis, *Northern State University*, p. 596.

46. *Aberdeen American News*, 5 Mar. 2008.



A 1970s-era disc jockey for KASD cues a record in the Seymour Hall-based radio station.

for being different from other buildings on the Northern campus, and not always in a positive way. For example, a one-way mirror installed in a first-floor room used by students studying counseling and pedagogy contributed to the building's perceived "creepiness." Seymour had a number of doors in unexpected places: in a cramped bathroom, at the end of a hallway, in a narrow corner or alcove. While such claims are easy to dismiss, students, faculty, and staff would sometimes describe Seymour Hall as being haunted. These rumors made it into print with some frequency. For example, a 2001 article in the *Exponent* featured interviews about ghostly encounters in which one faculty member recalled hearing about a spirit, allegedly that of the young woman murdered by a World War II glider pilot trainee, who roamed the halls of Seymour "still looking for the guilty man."⁴⁷ The following year, the *Exponent* ran another article on strange things that had been seen and

47. *Exponent*, 31 Oct. 2001.

heard in Seymour Hall, including “Bumps. Creaks. Mysterious phone calls. Footsteps without feet. Doors which open without hands to open them.” The reporter recalled the story of a former *Exponent* editor who said she “followed the figure of a man down the hall.”⁴⁸ Yet another article, this one appearing right after Halloween in 2005, asked readers if they had “heard about the ghost of a little girl who runs around Seymour Hall.”⁴⁹

Being a reputed site for paranormal activity is one thing, but being the place where a person lost his life in a horrific manner is quite another. The darkest and saddest chapter in the history of Seymour Hall occurred when it became a possible crime scene in 2004. On 1 November of that year, speech professor Morgan Lewis, who was already popular on campus in his first year at Northern, died of a gunshot wound before classes had begun for the day. His body was found outside the entrance to Seymour’s Marshall wing. Lewis had his office and taught classes in Seymour Hall, and his death stunned the campus community. “Why such a gentle man died so violently, so soon, is doubly shocking,” said Herb Cohen, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.⁵⁰ With no clear understanding of the events leading up to his death at first, the Aberdeen Police Department kept “extra patrolmen on campus to protect students from a possible murder suspect . . . sending a chill through the student body.”⁵¹ Although the investigating authorities ultimately ruled Lewis’s death a suicide, many believed instead that he was the victim of a homicide. The controversy endured in spite of the police department’s repeated statements that it was certain of its findings, and the incident would be revisited in newspaper articles, websites, and conversations for years to come.⁵²

In spite of Seymour Hall’s long record of flexibility in serving the manifold and changing demands of the campus, its future was by no

48. *Ibid.*, 3 Apr. 2002.

49. *Ibid.*, 2 Nov. 2005.

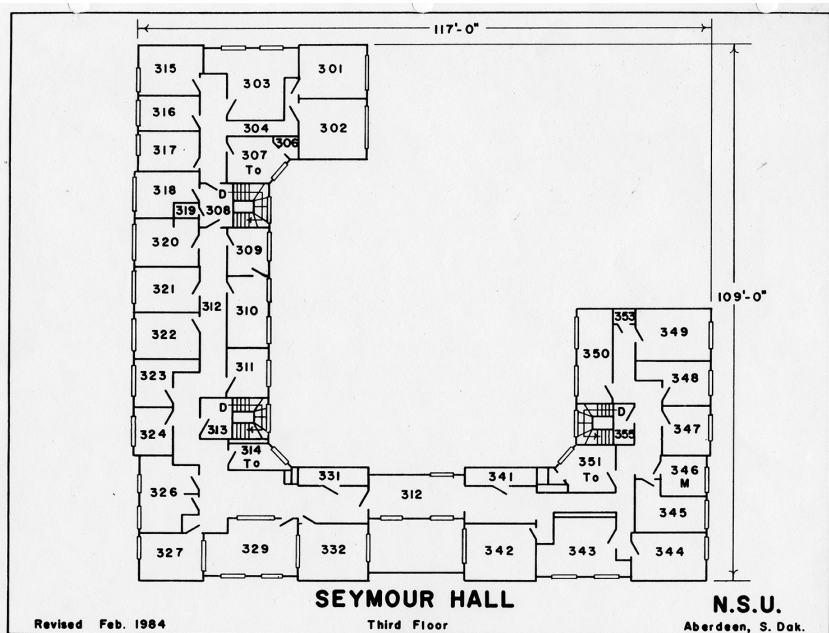
50. Quoted *ibid.*, 10 Nov. 2004.

51. “Police Investigating Death of Northern State Professor,” 1 Nov. 2004, <http://www.keloland.com/newsdetail.cfm>.

52. For the Aberdeen Police Department’s ultimate findings in the Lewis case and the continued controversy, see *Exponent*, 8 Feb., 1 Mar. 2006. See also <http://www.eqsd.org/news/30-state/306-morgan-lewis-findings-reveal-possible-murder>.

means certain in the closing years of the twentieth century. The old building was appreciated for its sturdiness, but its shortcomings were becoming more evident. Seymour's hallways and stairwells were quite narrow, with sharp turns. The stairwells had natural light from glass blocks in the exterior walls, but at three feet, eight inches across, they were difficult places for people to meet and pass one another, often requiring one person to stop or back up to a landing to allow passage. All of Seymour's doors were less than four feet wide. More than just an inconvenience, these dimensions were possibly hazardous. At least one senior administrator worried whether all of the building's occupants could evacuate quickly enough in case of emergency, especially the youngsters in the basement reading clinic.⁵³

53. Seymour Hall blueprints; interview with Don Erlenbusch, Aberdeen, S.Dak., 27 June 2014. Erlenbusch served first as NSU's controller, then as vice-president for finance and administration from 1987 to 2011.



The narrow halls and maze-like quality of Seymour Hall are evident in this floor plan for the third level of the building.

Of less import, but no less noticeable, was that not all the offices were air conditioned, leading maintenance personnel to install a couple of dozen window-mounted air conditioners every spring and remove them in the fall—a labor-intensive process. Similarly, the heating system needed attention. By the close of the twentieth century, people walking into Seymour Hall occasionally found the windows completely fogged over and the hallways filled with moist, hot air, indicating that the building’s steam-heat piping required repairs more and more often.⁵⁴ According to former facilities management supervisor Wayne Fischer, “Seymour Hall was not expensive and/or difficult to maintain”; rather, it had certain systems that needed time and money, such as heating and cooling.⁵⁵ No one believed Seymour Hall had become a dilapidated heap. “Solid” Seymour was in no danger of falling down, but it was showing its age.

Was Seymour nearing the reasonable end of its useful life as a school building? According to architect and educator R. Thomas Hille, the “renewed cycle of school construction” in the 1990s was driven by a host of factors, including “integration of technology,” “environmental concerns,” and “more stringent building codes and regulation,” which presented real challenges to “aging facilities from the 1940s and 1950s . . . now in need of renovation and replacement.” New school buildings in North America and Europe often had expansive, open interior areas, broad hallways, wide doors, and exterior walls made entirely of glass and managed to consume far less energy for heating and cooling than earlier structures.⁵⁶ None of these modern attributes could be found in Northern’s Seymour Hall.

As rumors about Seymour’s future began to swirl, one issue driving the talk was the building’s challenge in meeting new federal regulations. In a 1998 paper on Seymour Hall, Northern history student Sarah Willgohs suggested an uncertain future for the structure for this very reason, pointing out that the building did not comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This legislation, signed into law in

54. Interview with Erlenbusch.

55. Interview with Fischer.

56. R. Thomas Hille, *Modern Schools: A Century of Design for Education* (Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), p. 203.

1990 by President George H. W. Bush, sought to end discrimination against people with disabilities and to ensure their access to public buildings, both new and existing. The South Dakota Board of Regents had moved to bring the state's college campuses into compliance, and Northern contracted with local architects Herges, Kirchgasler, Geisler & Associates to assess how well its buildings met the new standards.⁵⁷

The firm's 1993 report identified a lengthy list of expensive ADA compliance problems at Seymour Hall. Recommendations included lowering all fire alarm pulls and fire extinguishers and adding visual fire alarms. All water fountains were to be replaced with models usable by disabled persons. None of Seymour's restrooms could accommodate the disabled, and making the facilities ADA compliant would be a major undertaking. Every doorway in the building was less than four feet wide and would have to be substantially widened. Even the existing ramps leading to the exterior doors would have to be replaced to accommodate new, wider doors. The narrow, twisting hallways were far out of compliance, and making them meet standards would not be easy. The building's lack of an elevator was a significant problem, as the basement, second, and third floors were not handicapped accessible without one. The report highlighted the fact that Seymour's design made access daunting or even impossible for those with disabilities. Because schools and businesses not in compliance can be sued, the threat of a lawsuit against Northern State University was real.⁵⁸

The question of what to do with Seymour Hall soaked up a considerable amount of time for Northern's leadership in these years. The South Dakota Board of Regents installed John Hilpert as interim president of Northern State University in 1997 and as the institution's fourteenth regular president in 1998. Hilpert and his administrative team oversaw the integration of technology in instruction in numerous ways. During

57. Willgohs, "Seymour," p. 14; Terry J. Geisler to Wayne Fischer, 12 Jan. 1993, Office of Disabled Services Files, Northern State University, Aberdeen, S.Dak. (hereafter NSU Office of Disabled Services).

58. "ADA Survey, Seymour Hall, Northern State University, Aberdeen, South Dakota," enclosure with Geisler to Fischer, 12 Jan. 1993, NSU Office of Disabled Services; U.S., Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, "The Americans with Disabilities Act: Questions and Answers," 1992, pp. 17-19, copy courtesy NSU Office of Disabled Services.

Hilpert's tenure, Northern acquired electronic classrooms that broadcast instruction to area schools, launched a cable television station, and introduced new academic programs such as desktop publishing and multimedia graphic design. As part of this larger effort, campus leaders began to ponder the possibility that Seymour Hall might assume yet another new role as the campus technology center. Northern hired consultants and considered the possibility of transforming a building that predated the Second World War into the campus focal point for twenty-first-century technology.⁵⁹ An analysis of Seymour's structure, however, revealed the difficulty of such an undertaking. Don Erlenbusch, vice-president for finance and administration at the time, remembered that "the supporting walls were all tied together and their removal could cause the upper floors and ceiling to come down" and that the cost of propping up these floors would be "prohibitive."⁶⁰

It appeared that Seymour Hall could not be made into a viable twenty-first-century school building, either with its current purpose or a new one, at a cost that could be borne by the university. With challenges mounting to its continued operation, Seymour Hall was doomed. Faced with this untenable situation, President Hilpert moved to have Seymour Hall torn down. Years passed, the building's fate certain, as school officials waited only for various entities to sign off on its destruction and for authorities in Pierre to release money for the demolition. Many people had fond feelings or memories in regard to Seymour Hall, and many expressed sadness at its passing, but there were no protests to keep it open and no campaign to save it.⁶¹ "I understand the reasons, but it's still a shame," observed history professor Mark Bartusis, long-time Seymour resident and editor of Northern's centennial history, in a 2008 newspaper interview.⁶² In December 2007, Northern State University's campus preservation committee had expressed support for a faculty senate motion recommending the building's demolition to the board of regents. The committee could find "few art histor-

59. Bartusis, *Northern State University*, pp. 310, 312–13.

60. Interview with Erlenbusch.

61. Interview with Fischer; interview with Erlenbusch.

62. *Aberdeen American News*, 5 Mar. 2008.

ical features” to warrant saving Seymour and further commented that the building’s “utility expenses, renovation costs, and general building deterioration make the continued existence of the structure prohibitive.”⁶³ The committee could have asked for a last-chance stay of execution for Seymour Hall, but that request did not transpire.

Seymour Hall was finally demolished in July 2008, terminating sixty-eight years of service.⁶⁴ Earlier that year, the South Dakota Legislature had allocated \$115,000 to raze the building and remove asbestos, another sign of its dated construction. A small crew using heavy equipment sufficed to accomplish the job in just a handful of days. The structure’s former occupants, mostly faculty in the social sciences and languages, had been moved to newer facilities in Northern’s newest building. The Technology Center, grafted onto the north face of the existing Mewaldt-Jensen Hall in 2007, was the new focal point for twenty-first-century technology on campus and absorbed Seymour’s tenants. Modernity is implied in the name “Tech Center,” and it certainly looks modern, featuring a convex, three-story north wall covered with glass windows; broad hallways and stairwells; and elevator service to all floors. State funding for the Tech Center was contingent on Northern State University not gaining additional floor space, because the school’s flat enrollment picture did not warrant more room. Something at Northern had to go in order for the campus to obtain the new Technology Center, and that something turned out to be Seymour Hall. Once the demolition crew trucked out the rubble that had been Seymour Hall, they trucked in sand and laid down an open-air volleyball court over the site. The transition took surprisingly little time.⁶⁵

Not quite every bit of Seymour Hall disappeared in 2008, however. At the north end of the sand pit, workers fashioned a brick-and-paver

63. Northern State University Campus Preservation Committee, “Recommendations and Findings Related to the Proposed Razing of Seymour Hall,” 5 Dec. 2007, NSU Archives.

64. *Aberdeen American News*, 5 Mar., 10 July 2008. It is a poignant irony that Arthur Seymour died and Seymour Hall was razed when each was sixty-eight years old.

65. Interview with Erlenbusch. The link between NSU obtaining state funding for the Technology Center and closing Seymour is also noted by Tennant and Buntin, *Relief and Recovery*, p. 27.



The demolition of Seymour Hall began with the Douglas wing. Above the arch at left in this view looking north are two enclosed hallways built in 1983 to link the second and third floors of the Grant and Marshall wings.



Next to fall to the excavator was the Marshall wing. This view looking south shows the wooden ramp that provided limited handicapped access to the first floor. The large window on the first floor opened to Seymour's only classroom, for years used for speech classes.

wall and bench and installed the two brass plaques that had been hung on a southeast corner wall of Seymour Hall when the building opened in 1940. These plaques serve as a lasting tribute to a professor and a building, both dedicated to service. Arthur Seymour and the building named in his honor capably took on a wide variety of responsibilities over many decades and were able to serve Northern's manifold and changing needs because of their great adaptability.



Today, a volleyball sand pit occupies the space where Seymour Hall once stood. The low masonry wall and bench with the two brass dedication plaques appears at right, while Mewaldt-Jensen Hall is in the background.

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On the covers: In this issue, Richard Cerasani gives a glimpse into the creation of Mount Rushmore National Memorial (front) through the eyes of his father, who worked on the monumental sculpture in 1940. Ric A. Dias recounts the history of Seymour Hall (back), which played a variety of roles in the life of Northern State University for sixty-eight years.

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