

Campus Club History
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At the Campus Club Centennial Party

Our Campus Club is 100 years old this year, but I've been here only since 1960—so I dug into the University Archives to ask some questions, and to retrieve some nuggets.

I was intrigued by how the meaning of the Campus Club has changed over the years

– If I were writing a book about the Club, I'd talk about its early years as a crossroads of the University.

– I'd describe a time gone by when faculty members felt they *WERE* the University, compared with today, when many feel that they only *WORK* at the U as a platform to develop their careers.

– I'd identify not just historical milestones, but different meanings that club members attach to their membership, and their use of Club facilities.

– So I decided to review the history of the Club as a mirror reflecting several generations of University life.

But I have only a few minutes.

1911 was an interesting year. Lots happened.

Fortunately, my research assistant, John Finnegan, unearthed the fact that F. Scott Fitzgerald was graduated from St. Paul Academy in 1911, the same year the Mona Lisa was stolen from the Louvre and Howard Taft was president—although I have not heard that there was any connection.

Revolutionaries under Sun-yat Sen overthrew China's Qing Dynasty; the Mexican Revolution was underway when Pancho Villa launched an attack against government troops in Ciudad Juarez, while Roald Amundson reached the South Pole.

1911 also was the year of birth of Hubert Humphrey, Ronald Reagan, Marshall McLuhan, Gypsy Rose Lee, Ginger Rogers, George Stigler, and Clark Kerr.

We began as an Old Boys' Club, like something in a C.P. Snow novel, where men's social and professional lives were largely separated from their lives at home.

It's worth noting that the Faculty Wives Club (now the University Women's Club) also began in 1911, and will celebrate later in the spring, in March.

There's no doubt that world events and changes in American society have transformed the University—and our Campus Club—over its ten decades of life.

As I see it, that life runs to about five chapters;

Let me say a bit about each one.

CHAPTER I

In the fall of 1906, a group of **male** faculty members organized a dining club.

Four years later, a faculty committee suggested a permanent organization—with a modest clubhouse near campus, modest dues, and a lunchroom.

In early 1911, the committee advanced the idea of a Campus Club, and with President Vincent's help they leased an old frame house at 112 Church Street.

It was just south of the Northern Pacific Railway, which ran parallel to and about 300 yards north of Washington Avenue—about where the Physics building stands today.

They named it Northrop House; made 800 dollars in repairs, paid rent to the U of 600 dollars year, and incorporated the Club in September of that year.

The club opened in the Fall with an initiation fee of 25 dollars, and annual dues of 15 dollars. Two years later it had 140 members.

The clubhouse had seven bedrooms, which were kept well filled, but the house was too small from the start. Two additions were built, but soon a search began for larger quarters.

Following World War I, the club was obligated to pay a tax of \$1,000, which the board borrowed from a member, then asked him to "eat it out," which he did over the next three years.

At the time the club was forming, the U had acquired land for the New Campus south of the railroad tracks.

http://geo.lib.umn.edu/plat_books/minneapolis1903/reference/map00153.jpg

In 1922, President Coffman finally persuaded the Northern Pacific to reroute its trains north of campus over the nearby Great Northern tracks (Gray, p. 286), and campus expansion proceeded southward to—and over—Washington Avenue.

CHAPTER II

There was plenty of energy on campus after the war, and bright prospects for the U in the 1920s

In 1924 and 1925 the Regents voted to remove all houses from campus, get rid of the railroad, and move ahead to implement the Cass Gilbert plan for the New Campus around the Mall.

Those building plans forced relocation of the club in 1925. At first, there was an idea for a new Club building on the river bank between Wulling and Appleby Halls—behind where Fraser Hall (1927) now stands.

But instead the Regents agreed to build a wing onto the men's union building—Nicholson Hall (1890)—and rent it to the club for ten years ... until the space would be needed for student activities.

So that's what happened. Ten men lived there. The new digs provided more space, but some complained that it was less homelike.

Volunteer contributions were requested to furnish it—then members were assessed, \$25 for regular members; \$15 for associate members, and \$5 for non-resident members. Some resigned, but the Club got the money, and was left debt free.

But knowing they had only ten years in Nicholson, the Club set about accumulating a surplus, setting aside part of dues and initiation fees, and part of all meal revenues. They ended up staying 15 years in the Nicholson wing.

When the time came to relocate again at the end of the 1930s, the Club had 30,000 dollars in the bank, and a strong bargaining position.

The Nicholson lease expired in 1935 amid talk in the air of a new student union.

But the Club wangled a lease extension from the Union Board of Governors, with help from finance vice president Middlebrook, who was a strong Club supporter

By the time the Club left their space in Nicholson, their wing had become intolerably crowded.

Chapter III

By the late 1930s, the Club's ten-year lease at Nicolson had ended, and plans were underway for building Coffman at the south end of the Mall.

Meanwhile in 1938, a committee of women of the Chemistry Staff met to begin action toward joining the Club.

A program of the U.S. Public Works Administration would pay 45-percent of the Union cost, with the U paying 55-percent.

The Club would occupy the top three floors, comprising 10 percent of the total Union space, so the Club was obligated to pay 10 percent of the University's share—or \$80,850.

In February 1939, professor Edward W. Davis of Taconic fame chaired a faculty fund-raising drive; by June, he had 62,000 dollars pledged, so the Club treasury with its bank account plus the pledges had a balance exceeding what was needed for its share of construction costs.

••The new Club featured: a main dining room with table service on the 4th floor; it was converted to a cafeteria during WWII. The Women's Room was where the Dale Shephard room is today.

••The 5th floor included a reading room and library; a quiet room for men; game rooms; a card room; a pool room; and snooker tables (for those with misspent youths).

••The 6th floor featured bachelors' quarters with thirteen rooms.

1949 House rules stated:

"On the 6th floor are the dormitory rooms, which can be used by resident members and their men guests only. (Club members are requested not to intrude except when they have business with the occupants of the rooms.)"

Once settled into the new Club spaces in the Union, gripes were raised about the food.

Board minutes reported—"in the old club house (in Nicholson), members had the run of the kitchen, usually at a (financial) loss. In the new quarters in the Union we agreed to get our food from the Union cafeteria kitchens and serve it to our members. This arrangement was highly desirable financially, but gastronomically sad."

“The Club’s board of directors was a little worried, but secretly pleased when it appeared that the same arrangement could not be continued in our new quarters and up to date the results of our new attempt to feed ourselves have been highly pleasing.”

As late as 1957, women still were not permitted as members, but could eat there, and use the Women’s Lounge and the Powder Room, where today’s men’s room is located.

Women were welcome in the main dining room, but a row of planters separated the women’s section from the men’s.

Like much of society at the time, membership categories in the Club were precise, and hierarchical up into the 1950s.

The 1955 “Rules and By-Laws” state that:

- “Regular” membership was open to tenured professors and associate professors;
- Senior officers of the armed forces may be regular members;
- “Associate” membership is open to assistant professors;
- A captain or 1st lieutenant, or the equivalent, may become an associate member;
- 2nd lieutenants, or the equivalent, may become junior members;
- Instructors, TAs, and teaching fellows may become junior members.”

The By-laws also stated that members who failed to pay their bills on time would have their names posted.

By 1947, the Club needed still more room for lunch and other activities

Membership had expanded from about 500 in 1940, to a thousand in 1948.

So the East and West Wings were eventually added in the late 1950s above the Union’s 3rd floor, [1957-58; West: + 170 seats; \$76,000. Terrace, \$43,000; pd for with dues and assewssments] and the terrace was remodeled.

But the student union needed more space as well, and in the mid-1960s, vice president Stan Wenberg and vice president for student affairs Paul Cashman discussed whether the Union Board of Governors should buy out the Club to make room for expanded student activities and functions, including offices for the *Minnesota Daily*.

From the late 1960s onward, the Club looked like this:

(1st) a 4th floor food line in the main dining room, with salad, soup, pies, sandwiches, juice, and desserts;

A few members—possibly more eccentric than criminal—rather than buying a dessert, would grab a baking powder biscuit, cover it with strawberry ice cream topping (without ordering the ice cream), and walk out with a free dessert.

Others instead of taking a cup and saucer and paying for coffee, would grab a glass for water, but then go to the West Wing and fill it with free coffee.

(2nd) the West Wing had a limited food-service line;

(3rd) the Terrace had seating in good weather, and

(4th) the East Wing provided overflow lunch seating and table reservations.

What may be most memorable about the old 5th floor was its use by Professor Izaak Kolthoff, regarded as the Father of Analytical Chemistry, and famous for inventing synthetic rubber during World War II.

Kolthoff joined the Club when he came to the U in 1927, renting and living in Room 626 on the 6th floor. He retired in 1962.

The 6th floor rooms were converted to meeting rooms in 1970, except for Kolthoff's, who lived on there for a while.

He was the last resident on the 6th floor, but used the 5th floor library and lounge as his study.

He was often seen in his pajamas and robe in the reading room.

At one point his papers overflowed into the lounge, and when the room was rented for weddings, workers had to put up dividers to hide his papers.

He ate most of his meals at the Club, and in his final years young staff members would carry a tray with his lunch up the stairs from the 4th-floor food line to the 5th floor, where he continued working.

Kolthoff died in 1993 at age of 99.

CHAPTER IV

In the early 1950s, the Club was thriving with over a thousand members.

When I was here in the early 1960s as a grad student, and was occasionally taken to lunch at the Club, most faculty members still came to the office or lab every day.

At noontime, they often walked in groups to the Club.

- the White coats from Mayo;
- Economists at one table; chemists at another.
- Political science here; history over there.
- Geographers looking lost;
- Psychologists looking bewildered.

One table at the center of the main dining room was set aside for members who came to lunch alone; it allowed them to meet and get to know colleagues from across the campus.

When I returned to campus and joined in 1970, life at the Club seemed to be drifting into the doldrums.

Probably reflecting the general mood of the late '60s and early '70s, which were rough times on many fronts.

Some wondered if it was Club leadership—or management. But it was many things. And people were grumpy.

Speaking of grumpy—Woods Halley (physics) complained in 1974 (quote) “that the cost of running the Club had held resources unnecessarily high not due to carelessness or other ineptitude. Rather the management and board have valued wide variety and elegance above economy of operation. While I believe that good services should be maintained, expenses can be reduced by emphasizing different priorities. It is more important to have the Club accessible to all faculty than that bus boys have uniforms. (unquote)”

The Club's first manager, Don Hale, was succeeded by Dale Shephard who was the face of the Club for 40 years, until he died abruptly in 1972.

Bent (YORT-HOLT)Hjortholt (Copenhagen, Wayzata Country Club), followed along with Eric Nielsen, Peggy Herald, Don Stoll and Dan Fossum until the Club closed in November 1999 for the Union remodeling.

Before the West Bank expansion, most faculty offices on the East Bank were within comfortable walking distance to Coffman much of the year.

But the West Bank expansion meant walking across the bridge.

Some didn't mind, especially those who hung onto their heated parking spaces in the Coffman Garage.

But new hires settled in on the West Bank, and older members retired.

For senior colleagues, lunch used to be a necessity; but now for many junior colleagues, lunch must be a *destination* and a *memorable experience*, with careful attention to what is eaten, what's its pedigree, where did it come from, and what's its carbon footprint.

In time, the West Bankers increasingly stayed on the West Bank, preferring to grab something in the Bistro, or from what John Borchert used to call the Bay of Pigs in the basement of Blegen Hall.

Although Physics & Astronomy didn't move to the West Bank, by 1998 Mort Hamermesh was still sitting at his Physics table on the Terrace at noon with 12 chairs, but the table was seldom full.

As time passed there were bright spots—and some downers.

•••The Club got a liquor license in October 1977. That was a bright spot.

•••But the IRS raised questions about sources of income from non-members, and questioned whether a department or non-person could belong—this was before John Roberts became Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

••• In 1989, the chef introduced a “heart healthy” menu, which was good for us—but then the pies seemed to disappear.

••• In 1979, a member raised a flap over the practice of free lunches for Club Board Members. This was news to me.

He wrote, (quote) “Things have gotten out of hand at the Campus Club—our Board of Directors are feeding themselves at our expense. ... with free steak and wine at all regular meetings and committee meetings and an annual gala free banquet.” (Louis Toth, 21 May 1979)

Well! Sorry to say (for us board members) those perks ended shortly thereafter. Now we get coffee and ice water.

- In 1989-90 a math professor spoke out against the Club, stating that there was a need for student study space to relieve the crowding of students into the basement of Coffman.

- That was followed by a challenge to the use of public money (namely the U's) to subsidize a private corporation (i.e., the Club)

It was also claimed that the spaces on the 4th, 5th and 6th floors were underused.

- And after 1990, membership slipped below 1,500

Most young faculty and staff were reluctant to join, although the Chemical Engineering and Materials Science gang never got the word. They were still whooping it up in the West Wing.

- Revenues fell below expenses

- And there was a proposal to sell or lease the 5th and 6th floors to the U or the Union.

So toward the end of the 1990s, the future of the Club had become uncertain. Regardless, the board decided to push forward.

At the end of 1999, Coffman renovation began, and the Club closed for remodeling.

While the Club was closed, discounts were offered to Club members at several nearby restaurants.

Meanwhile a Club committee headed by Michael Hancher, with Dianna Gardner, Lyndel King, Mary Vogel, Robert Holt, and Sally Kohlstedt, worked with the architects to design and supervise the Club remodeling, which brought us to the present.

The Club was closed for three years, 2000-2003

And a spectacular new space opened in July 2003

So here we are in Chapter Five,

Chapter V

In exchange for forgiving much of the \$4.1 million tab for Club renovation, we handed over the 5th and 6th floors to the Union.

The refurbished Club has been open now for almost eight years with Ann Holt as Executive Director—and we're healthy.

Membership now includes a spectrum of the U community.

It's open to faculty, staff, students, alumni, parents, donors, depts, organizations, and companies

The key requirement is a connection with the U.

Trends that continue working against the Club include:

- Working couples, short of time;
- A disdain for belonging to traditional clubs;
- People "Bowling Alone" as Robert Putnam puts it.
- More colleagues working from home—so they claim—and coming to campus only when required.
- More of our faculty colleagues saying that "they work **For** or work **at** the U;
- Fewer of them feeling that they **are** the U."

It's a different world from 1911, but with Ann Holt, Phil Platt and the rest of the staff doing a splendid job, we seem to be making a healthy transition into Chapter Six.

I hope that we can get Eric Kaler to join the Chem Engineering crowd, whooping it up in the West Wing.

Thanks.

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Taught at The Pennsylvania State University, 1966-70.
Joined CLA (Geography) faculty in 1970. Joined the Campus Club, fall 1970. Retired 2010.
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