

## Meet Anderson Hall

*6<sup>th</sup> in the Keepsakes series, originally published September 12, 2006*

This edition of the *Keepsakes* series is devoted to K-State's most recognizable architectural symbol, Anderson Hall. Because of financial constraints the structure as we know it was completed in three sections, the north wing in 1879, central portion (including the tower) in 1882, and the south wing in 1884. Originally referred to as the main college building, it was named Anderson Hall in 1902 after John A. Anderson, the second president of the college who served from 1873-1879. Anderson was elected to the U. S. Congress and later served as U.S. [Consul-General](#) to Egypt. He died in England, the year the building was dedicated, while on his way back to the United States from Egypt.



**Anderson Hall, 1910 or '11**

Because the building draws such attention to John Anderson, many often mistake him as the first president of the college. However, that honor goes to Joseph Denison, the only president who did not have the opportunity to occupy the building. He was selected as president when the Kansas State Agricultural College was established in 1863 and left office in 1873 long before the hall was constructed. Another common belief is that Anderson Hall is the oldest existing building on campus, but that distinction goes to the central section of the Engineering Shops completed in 1875. That structure is located just west of Hale Library and the Coffman Commons, and is now known as [Seaton Court](#).

When completed, the north wing of Anderson Hall contained classrooms, the president's office, and the [college library](#) that occupied the northeast corner on the main floor (it moved to what later became Fairchild Hall in 1894). In the spring of 1879 an article in *The Industrialist*, the college newspaper, had this to say about the new library:

On the first floor...[is] the large library room with its antiquated volumes and Congressional globes. To be sure, there are some fine books there, but they are mainly such as would suit only a Rip Van Winkle sort of a Regent or student. We did not see even so much as one late dictionary or encyclopedia; it looked as though the Regents, or some other body, were afraid to let the students know what the world was doing in the age of progression.

The central section contained a chapel with a sloping floor until it was leveled for other uses. In 1920 the area became a recreation center. In 1919 a canteen and barber shop were installed in the

basement and were in operation until 1924. An ad in the 1920 Royal Purple described the fixtures in the canteen as including a “Sixteen foot white Carrara glass soda fountain, white opalite tables, oak lunch counter, marble show cases, French bevel plate-glass mirrors. Electrically equipped.” The college bell that rang in the tower was received as a gift to the original Bluemont Central College in 1861. An electrically operated carillon was installed in 1966 and the bell remained in the tower until 1995 when it was removed and placed on permanent display along the [sidewalk west of Bluemont Hall](#).

When the south wing was completed in 1884, two porches were added on the east face of the building between the two wings and the central section. They were enclosed in 1945 and turned into offices by workers that included German prisoners of war.



**Anderson Hall, 1885**

Among the classes held in Anderson during the early years were English, drawing, mathematics, and practical agriculture. Rooms for domestic science classes included a kitchen laboratory and sewing room.

Over the years Anderson Hall has shown its adaptability and functionality by accommodating many types of offices and departments to serve the needs of the administration, faculty, and students, but

the attractiveness of the exterior has remained constant. It was placed on the [National Register of Historic Places](#) in 1980 and continues to stand as a proud symbol of Kansas State University.

More photographs and information about Anderson Hall are available on our web site created and maintained by Special Collections staff.