

# READ HALL, GIRLS DORMITORY AT STATE UNIVERSITY, WILL BE INVESTIGATED BY MISSOURI LEGISLATURE

Post-Dispatch Staff Correspondent Tells What She Saw There—Some Citizens Say, "It's Nothing but a Fashionable Girls' Club"—Others, "It Has Brought to Columbia Just the Class of Girls We Want"—Matron, "It Is Desired to Make It a Social Center"—Students, "It Is Impossible for a Poor Girl to Live There and It's Made Living All Over Town Higher."

**BY RUENE MARION,**  
A Staff Correspondent of the Post-Dispatch.  
COLUMBIA, Mo., Feb. 1.—O-EDS and their troubles have the center of the stage at the state university in Columbia.  
Their fellow students are trying to raise interest in the lineup for the spring basketball games.

The "rats" are endeavoring to secure a small place on the main by giving receptions and dances.  
Musical programs of the two sets of colleges—Stevens and Christian are being given with the probable hope of turning the current of thought and changing the subject of discussion.  
All such efforts are in vain.  
The Missouri Legislature, through the resolution offered by Representative Johnson of Palestine last Monday, has taken up the cause of the young women and a committee has been appointed to make investigation of conditions.

**Getting Ready for the Mill.**  
Preparation for the visit of the investigation committee was begun the day after the resolution was adopted. Students were requested to make out an account of their society expenses that these figures might be called at the investigation committee.

The figures that the boys students have prepared will compare with those of the "society" in getting effectiveness as boys made snowballs do with those put together by girls.  
The complaint is that the girls of Missouri do not get a fair financial deal from the state as compared to that handed out to the boys.

Judges for yourself. The State of Missouri has provided dormitories for men and women at the state university. Those for the men are known as Benton Hall and Lathrop Hall. The dormitory for women is called Read Hall.  
Benton Hall, an old building that needs repair or replacement, is used exclusively as a dormitory. Lathrop Hall has sleeping rooms and a large dining hall. The dining hall has 34 tables, with 150 chairs for eight.

Mrs. Mattie Drake Williams is in charge of Benton and Lathrop Halls, but the commissary department is managed by the students themselves. They have an organization, whose officers direct the purchase of needed articles and who make all necessary arrangements. Their commissary is a student who receives pay for his work. Other students are paid for doing duty as waiters, servers, dishwashers, etc.  
The expenses of boys who live in these halls amounts to about \$2 a week. When they enter for the year they pay a fee of \$15 each to cover breakage. Their assessments per week average \$1.50, varying with the price of food. At the end of the year 15 of the \$15 entrance fee is refunded if the dishwashing machine hasn't done too much damage.  
The number of boys now belonging to the club that uses Lathrop Hall is 231. Part of these have rooms in Benton Hall, part in Lathrop and some have rooms in the neighborhood.

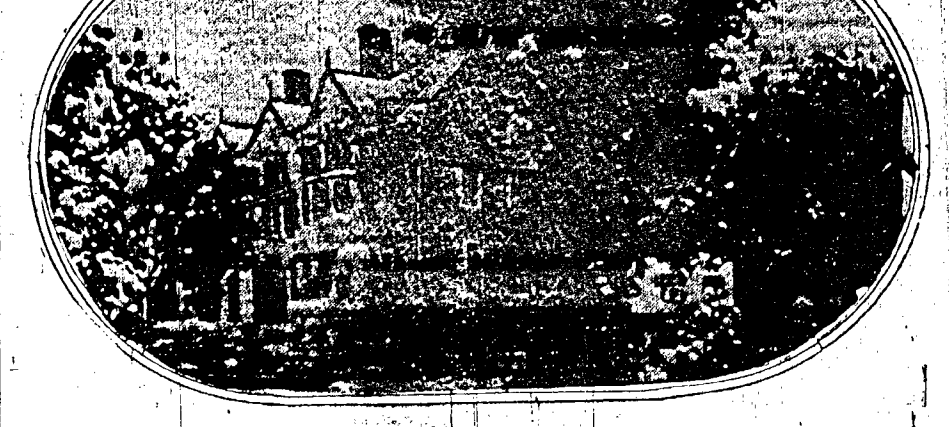
Once it was not considered the thing to be a member of this club. There was a



**DINING ROOM.**  
Tendency in some circles to look down upon the men who live in this economic way. Strong men have caused a complete change in this attitude. Many times I was assured while here that "the leading men of the university may be found in these clubs."  
The dining room is too small and there is little room to wash the dishes. Mrs. Williams, the matron, has no desk, but must place the papers, which she is compelled to keep in the hall, on the table.  
The walls of the corridors are in need of painting. Its occupants hope that some of the asked for appropriation will be used for these purposes. They thrive on the menus planned for them by Mrs. Williams. Their breakfast consists of fruit, cereal, meat, coffee and two kinds of bread; their lunch of meat, vegetables and bread, without a warm drink; their supper of meat, one vegetable, stewed fruit, sometimes cake, two kinds of bread and a warm drink. There is plenty of each food and it is apportioned equally before it is placed on the table.

"A Lathrop Hall for girls" is the demand and hope of the young woman students instead of present Read Hall, which serves as a home for 23 young women who pay for the same an average of \$2 a week each. That covers board, laundry, telephone, books, etc., which the students must provide. Eleven other women students have rooms outside Read Hall but go there for their meals. They pay \$1.50 a break each for these.  
More students are not accommodated at Read Hall because there is no more room for those who would like to live in the hall.

**Read Hall a Mistake.**  
The University of Missouri has on its rolls 23 young women. It provides dormitory rooms for 23. It is time for the Legislature to do things, say the university officials.  
To me, however, it seems a mistake was made when Read Hall was built. It cost \$35,000 and is built in a style that requires much money for its maintenance.  
Two drawing rooms, a large entrance hall, a dining room, kitchen and an office room are on its main floor.  
The floors are waxed and partially covered with large rugs. The hangings are brocaded. The furniture of the hall and drawing rooms is of the mission style, with several sofas and chairs of padded leather. Some of the rockers are of wicker. The curtains at windows and doors are of sera bobbinette. Palms and other potted plants have places at the windows and in the halls.  
The light fixtures are of brass and frosted glass. The dining room has at its farther end a mantle and chimney place of tile. Its half dozen tables are of hard wood, as are its chairs. The latter are brass tipped. The paper is good, likewise the silver, glass and china.



**EXTERIOR VIEW.**  
The office of the university's adviser of women, Miss M. E. Lewis, is on the main floor, but its furniture is her own. The staircases are uncarpeted, and their light color, makes constant cleaning necessary. Tiled and bath rooms are on the second and third floors.  
There are 29 bedrooms in all. One of these is reserved for Miss Lewis, another for the housekeeper and the third as a guest room. Eleven of the others serve for two girls each, six are single rooms.  
In each single room is a study table, two chairs, single bedstead and mattress, washstand, chest of drawers, bureau and brass bed rug. In the rooms for two, necessary articles of furniture are duplicated.  
The furniture in this building cost the state \$300. Taken as a whole, it is marked by that simplicity of taste that always signifies cost. It is good and it will last.  
The room rent varies according to the location of the room. The highest price paid is \$5 per year. Other prices are \$2.50, \$3.00, \$3.50 and \$4. One small room rents for \$2. The occupant of that room receives her board and lodging for \$1.50 a week at Read Hall, which is considered a bargain. Room rent as well as table board must be paid in advance. Each applicant for a room in Read Hall must deposit \$5 with her application. This amount is later credited as part of her room rent.  
Miss M. E. Lewis, the adviser of women of the university and known as the head of the house at Read Hall, is a Westley College woman. She had nothing to do with the making of plans for Read Hall.

In regard to the condition of women at the university, she said to me:  
"Were things as I wish them to be there would be another hall west of this to be used solely as a woman's dormitory. Its occupants would be served in our dining room. Further west there would be a clubhouse for women with room for about 60. Putting more than that number of women in one house is dangerous."  
"There is a difference between boys and girls. The women who go out from this university will be Missouri mothers; they must have more of the home influence than club associations give."  
"We think Read Hall gives the girls ideas of home as it should be. That it cannot reach more girls is to be regretted."  
"It is claimed that rules have been adopted for the control of girls that make it impossible to enter here."  
"That is not true. We have no rules, only house customs. Here they are:  
1. To smoke pipes should be maintained in the girls' and rooms as possible, especially in the evenings.  
2. The boys are invited at 10 p. m.; they who wish to be out later than this hour, should make arrangements in advance with the head of the house.  
3. Members of the house, wishing to be away from the building should consult with the head of the house in advance.  
4. Meetings and similar evenings are considered reception evenings for callers. The house is closed to callers on Sunday afternoon.  
5. Guests cannot be entertained overnight in the students' rooms. There is a guest room for this purpose.  
6. Gentlemen do not go above the first floor except by permission of the head of the house.  
These house customs have been approved by the executive board.

Additional rules for the government of the hall were the adoption of a society headquarters. We do not mean it to be that. We do aim to make it a social center for all the young women of the university. The faculty and their wives are invited. Their dress may have nothing to do with keeping any young woman away, we make it a midwinter affair.  
"I wear a shirtwaist and so do the girls of Read Hall."  
"The running expenses of this building are large. They average \$50 monthly. We expect to have our accounts balance this year, however."  
"No donation is made in the admission of girls to Read Hall. The first girl that gets her application in receives that consideration."  
"Once a year there is a social function held here to which the public is not invited. That is the dance that took place Wednesday evening. The girls of Read Hall send the invitations to that and bear all expenses."  
"At present the girls outside Read Hall board or do light housekeeping. I know of four boarding places where the rates are \$2 weekly."  
"Also of four others where they are \$2.50. There have been no changes at the \$5 houses. With the exception of one which has modern conveniences the personnel of the \$3.50 houses has been changing constantly."  
"That looks to me as if there were few women in the university who could not afford to pay \$5 a week."

"Six per cent of the women of the university each pay for all of their way. One is a resident of Read Hall. Nothing is provided for her expenses except the money she earns herself. She does stenographic work at the rate of \$5 cents an hour. Others do work for families or copy."  
"Women at the University of Missouri are ambitious. One of our students taught school five years before she came here. Among the girls themselves the feeling in regard to the dormitory provided by the state is strong."  
"No poor girl can come to the University of Missouri," said one of a number of girls who discussed the question with me, "and Read Hall is responsible for that fact."  
"Before that building was placed here it was possible for a girl to get board at a reasonable rate, say \$1.50 a week. But Read Hall's price is \$5 a week and the other boarding houses have raised their rates accordingly."  
"Besides that there is laundry and other expenses. It's a struggle to even think of a wardrobe."  
**One Girl's Experience.**  
"I stayed away from the university one year because it was advertised that rates would be cheaper after the completion of Read Hall. When that was done rates went up instead of decreasing."  
"At a meeting of boarding house keepers held last fall a representative of the university, not now connected with it, was present and told the women that they must keep their rates high in order that Read Hall might be filled."  
"That's what the state's money does for the girls of our university. There is talk of the possibility of sending part of one's way. I know one young woman in the university who does that, but only one."  
"She does work for President Jesse and Mrs. Lewis. For the rest, there is the little copying that the Y. W. C. A. finds for some to do."  
"Nothing else except housework, washing dishes and mending the babies of the faculty. University women can't do either very well and ought not to get out of their work."  
"At a recent convocation, President Jesse spoke of the wrong attitude that exists in regard to housework and said it lay with us to change it."  
"We seem powerless. Personally, and putting all other reasons aside, I know that I had enough for me to keep my clothing in condition now. What I do if I minded babies or washed dishes, I don't know."  
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young woman, but she had no solution except "Give the girls of Missouri a Lathrop Hall."  
"Another said: "We should be glad, perhaps, that we have Read Hall for a social center, even if living there is not possible because of our purses. There are monthly receptions there for us, but it's usually hard for us to go and they're no fun. Feel like an intruder. Members of the faculty give you a high-handed hand and that's all."  
"They're shirtwaist affairs, but you can scarcely go in ordinary school dress. Straps, waist, you know, may be made to closely resemble fancy waists."  
"Wives of the faculty don't bother about the shirtwaist rule. Miss Lewis does, what she can for us, but she's handicapped."  
"The receptions are in the afternoon from 3 to 6 and many of us have classes until after 4."  
"That means you must go to class wearing the additional toggery you have donated for the reception and everybody looks and wonders what's up. There are many girls at the university who have never looked upon one of these receptions. We attend the ones that are given in the parlors of assembly hall."  
"The old catalogue printed before the building of Read Hall promised much when that building would be finished."  
"It has taken a great deal from the university women of Missouri and has given nothing in return. Once we had the society clique, now we have a Read Hall clique. Some young women who live there think that fact establishes their social standing. It does for themselves."  
"One, who had no hand in this conversation, said: "But Read Hall has brought to the state university just exactly the class of girls we have wanted so long."  
Columbia's women's dormitory question. Most of the citizens talk not least, at least not loud enough for publication, and the university makes the town, you know, out of a job."  
"That Read Hall is a fashionable girls' club. There was a time when the university girls and their colleges here."  
"Read Hall has changed this. The state has paid the bill, and because those girls can pay high board they live there. The very well and ought not to get out of their work."  
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**THE RESOLUTION FOR PROBING READ HALL.**  
Whereas, It is currently reported that a large amount of money heretofore appropriated by the State to aid in the support and maintenance of the State University at Columbia has not been used for the purpose for which it was appropriated, that it is so that in 1901 there was appropriated for the benefit of the State University the sum of \$25,000, to build a girls' dormitory, and in 1902 there was appropriated the sum of \$200,000 to finish the same, it being intended that this dormitory be used to furnish a cheap boarding place for girls attending the university who were unable to pay board at regulated boarding places.  
And whereas, It is currently reported that said dormitory, known as Read Hall, has been luxuriously furnished, and instead of being used as a home for poor girls who desire to attend the said university, it has been and is now used as a society headquarters for the entertainment and home of girls of wealthy parents, and those having the management of said hall have adopted rules for the control of same that prohibit the poor girl from making her home therein.  
Therefore, be it resolved by this House, That the speaker appoint a committee of three to investigate whether said report be true or not, and to make appropriate suggestions to the state in order that said dormitory be managed, and in view of the fact that said university is now making an appropriation of new \$1,000,000.