

The Faculty Club of the University of Alberta

The First One Hundred Years



ON THE EVENING OF SATURDAY, APRIL 29, 1911 six faculty members of the University of Alberta met in the home of Dr. W. A. R. Kerr, Professor of Modern Languages, with a view of forming a Faculty Club. In addition to Dr. Kerr there were the following: Dr. E. K. Broadus, Professor of English; Mr. Muir Edwards, Assistant Professor of Mathematics and Lecturer in Engineering; Dr. Barker Fairlie, Lecturer in Modern Languages; Mr. Cecil Race, Librarian and Registrar; and Dr. E. W. Sheldon, Assistant Professor of Mathematics.

By the end of the evening a Constitution and some Bylaws had been drafted. The first article in the Constitution gave the name "University Club" to the organization, and the second gave its purpose as the promotion of "social and intellectual intercourse among its members by the reading and discussion of original papers or otherwise". The Constitution and Bylaws were adopted at the September meeting, and the name was changed to the "Faculty Club" at the November meeting, (In 1919 the name was changed to the "Men's Faculty Club". It was not until 1959 that the name "Faculty Club" was again adopted.)

The following papers were read during the first year: "The legacy of Hellas to Hesperia" by Dr. Alexander, "The Georgian Bay canal" by Mr. Edwards, "Some points of contact between

medicine and English literature" by Dr. Broadus, "Spiritualism" by Dr. J. M. MacEachran who was Professor of Philosophy, and "The fourth dimension" by Dr. Sheldon. Papers were often followed by what was termed "lively discussions" lasting on occasion until after midnight. The last meeting of the 1911/1912 academic year was a dinner at the King Edward Hotel with a maximum price of \$2.00.

The minutes of the Club from its formation until the late 1940s have been preserved in two 300-page ledger-size books with imitation leather covers. They give an interesting picture not only of the Club's role in the intellectual and social life of its members but also of the growing University during this period. Not all of the Club's activities were serious though, and, for example, we read that on March 17, 1923 there was a debate on the relative merits of single and married life, and on April 28, 1928 there was a report of a commission which had investigated the "manner of fall of buttered bread".

Meetings were held about once a month on Saturday evenings, usually at some campus location. When the Students' Union Building, now University Hall, was opened in September 1950, space was provided for a Faculty Common Room at the west end of the top floor. Mid-morning and mid-afternoon snacks and occasional lunches were available during the week. However most social functions were held off-campus, especially those for which a liquor license was required.

Discussions were begun in 1960 regarding the feasibility of a Faculty Club building on campus. Sod-turning for the new building was held early in 1964, and the building was officially opened on the afternoon of Friday, November 13, 1964. Those attending the ceremony included the Lieutenant-Governor of Alberta, representatives of the Province of Alberta, and the Chancellor of the University.

Since 1977 the Faculty Club has been under the very capable management of Peter Graf. However grateful we may be to the present staff, we should not forget all those who have preceded them, especially the six persons who formed the first meeting of the Club 100 years ago.