

S.A.T.C. KANSAS AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE,
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K-STATE IN WORLD WAR I

Remembering the Students' Army Training Corps 100 Years Later

World War I raged in Europe during the summer of 1918, and U.S. leaders were unsure how long it would continue. In preparation for a long-term conflict, they created the Students' Army Training Corps (SATC) at over 500 educational institutions across the U.S., including K-State. Ceremonial inductions occurred nationally on October 1, but since the armistice occurred on November 11, the SATC lasted for less than three months. Despite its short life, the SATC helped K-State strengthen its relationship with the military and recover enrollment losses from earlier enlistments.

For decades, K-State provided "military tactics" instruction as dictated by the Morrill Act of 1862, which established land-grant institutions. In fact, the familiar campus program known as the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) formally began at K-State in January 1918.

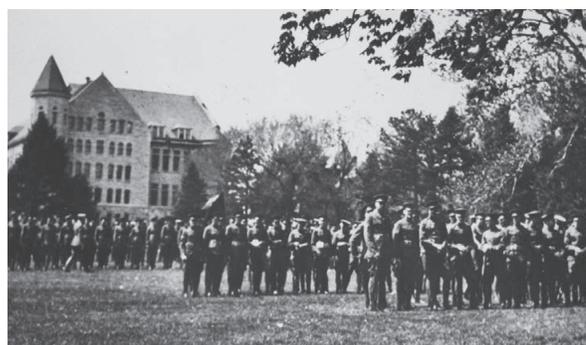
Then, in August 1918, the Committee on Education and Special Training in the War Department wrote President

William M. Jardine that the SATC "is intended, as an emergency measure, greatly to increase the scope of military instruction at colleges and so to provide a larger number of educated and trained men for the Army's needs." The committee noted that any existing ROTC cadets could transition directly to the SATC while the ROTC was inactive during the war.

At K-State, the SATC induction ceremony for the 1,118 men featured three speakers: President Jardine, Major General Leonard Wood (responsible for training at Camp Funston) and Captain George Sturges (K-State SATC commander). In the roughly 10 weeks that the SATC operated, more than 2,000 soldiers came through campus to prepare for military service. In fact, men's enrollment had decreased one-third from fall 1916

Above: The SATC stands in formation on the grounds east of the Auditorium, November 1918.

Below: The SATC under review on the grounds east of the Auditorium with Fairchild Hall in the background.



to fall 1917, yet recovered 10% by fall 1918.

K-State's academic courses for these soldiers helped prepare them to serve as blacksmiths, carpenters, electricians, farriers, foundrymen, machinists, mechanics, radio operators, vehicle drivers and welders. Divided into two main groups of multiple companies,

Section A had over 700 who were academically qualified as college students, and Section B had over 500 who received vocational training.

SATC members earned \$30 each month plus free education, health care, uniforms, housing and food. Each week they had eleven hours of military training, two hours of theoretical instruction and fourteen credit hours of classes. For housing, some slept on cots in Nichols Gymnasium, others bunked in hastily constructed barracks (one of which K-State Facilities uses today) and still

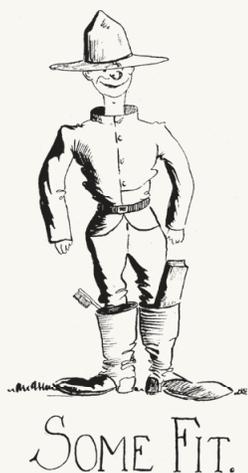
more stayed in the YMCA or one of nine fraternity houses.

The soldiers faced a significant challenge from the influenza pandemic. It was severe enough that their work stopped twice for a total of five weeks—almost half of the SATC's existence. While nearly all recovered—thanks to excellent local care—there were eleven soldiers who died. Because of their status as soldier-students, they have not been included in K-State's memorial to World War I veterans.

At 3:00 a.m. on November 11, 1918, bells and whistles in Manhattan announced the signing of the armistice to end the war. After stores closed and classes were canceled that afternoon, the SATC band led its men, civilian cars and schoolchildren in a parade from the courthouse to

City Park. There attendees enjoyed an SATC military review to celebrate the conclusion of the Great War.

The end of war meant demobilizing the SATC. Soldiers began mustering out early in December and concluded on December 17. Some soldiers remained as students while others decided to return home. Shortly thereafter, plans were formalized to keep military training on campus by bringing back the ROTC. Notwithstanding the SATC's brief existence, it provided an adaptable framework to sustain the development of the ROTC on campus and continued a tradition of military service for K-State students.

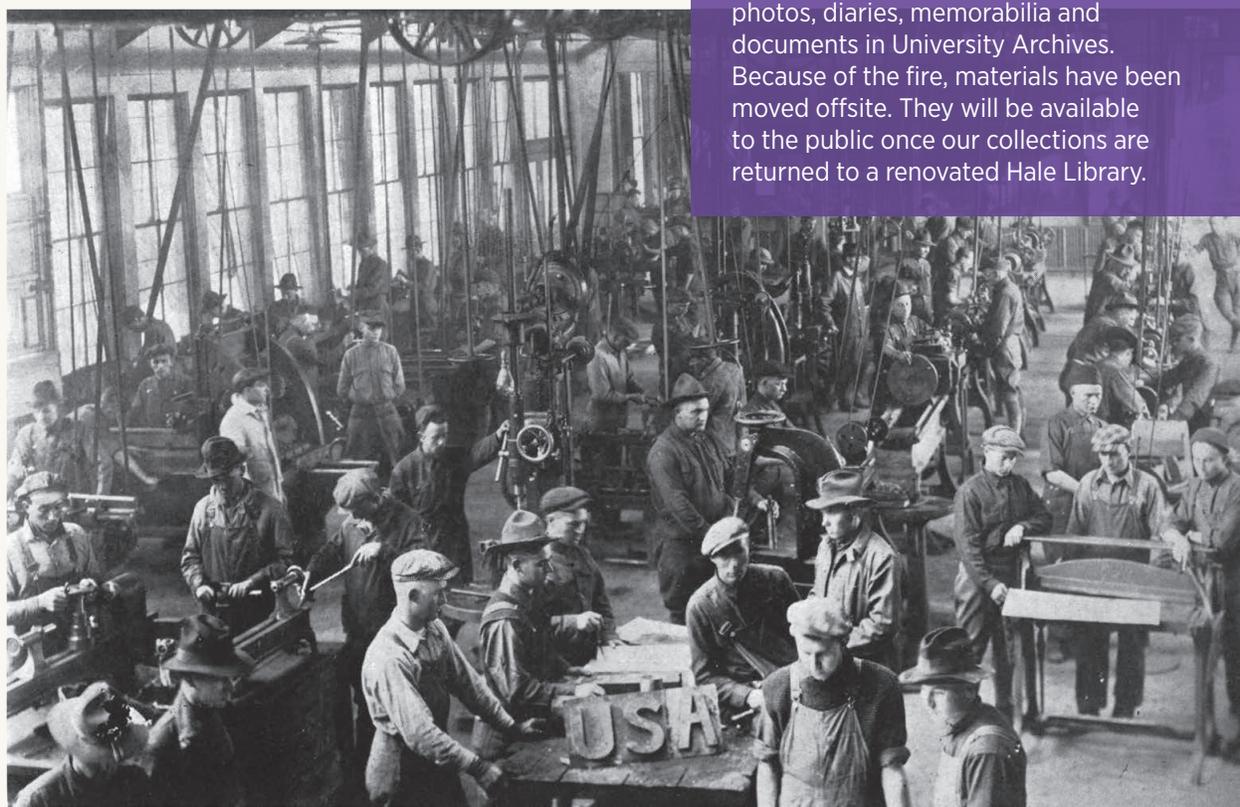


Above: This unsigned illustration humorously depicted in the 1919 Royal Purple the ill-fitting uniforms for SATC men.

Right: Some of the auto mechanics in the SATC posed for this photograph in the 1919 Royal Purple.



Left: SATC men used willows from the Blue River to make these dummies for bayonet practice on their training grounds where the parking garage is today. These women found them unoccupied and enjoyed a mock training session.



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