

Kansas State University Libraries

Volume 9


Article 5

8-1-2019

K-State Keepsakes: The history of K-State rowing

Cliff Hight

Follow this and additional works at: <https://newprairiepress.org/ksulibraries>

 Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

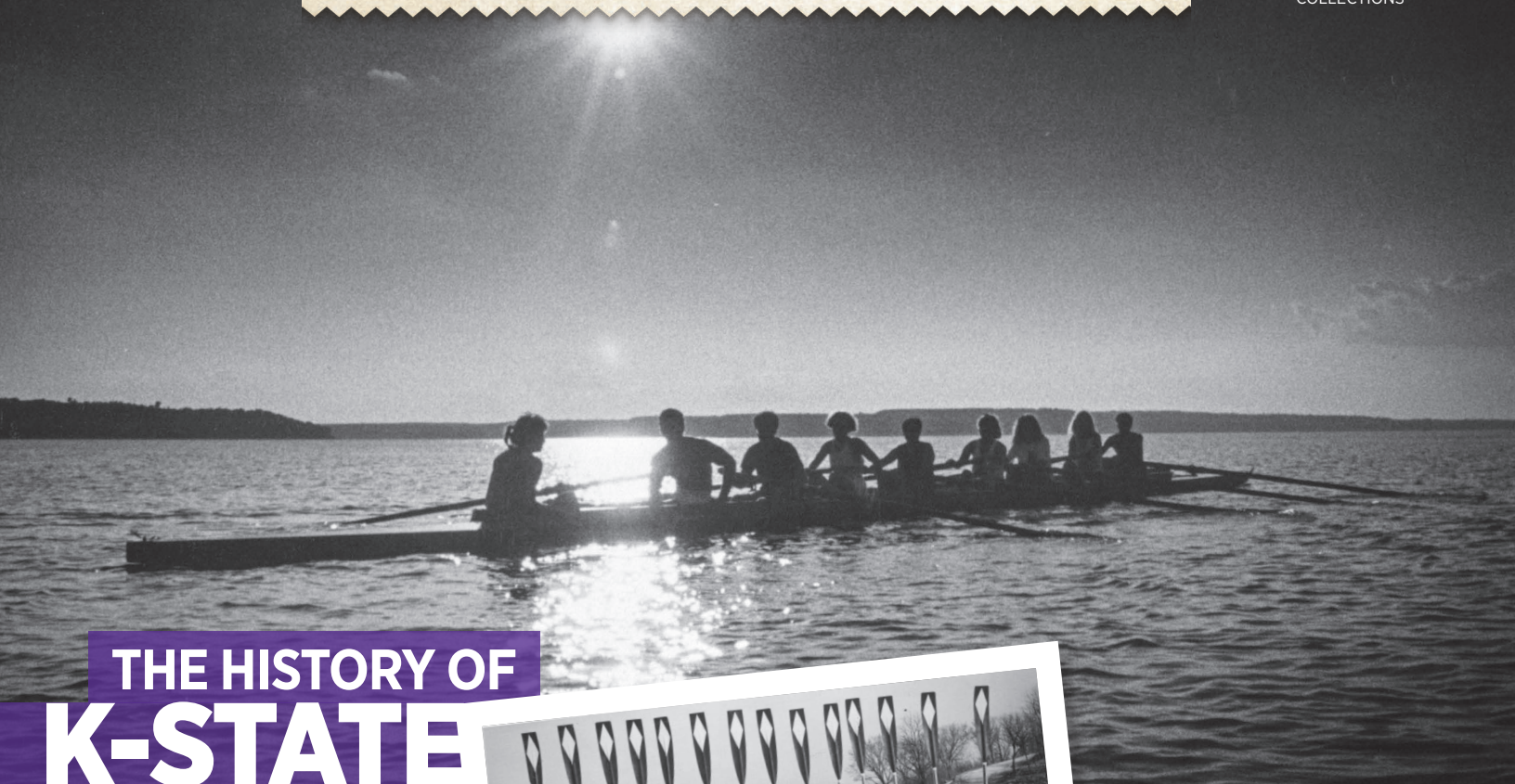


This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 4.0 License](#).

Recommended Citation

Cliff Hight (2019) "K-State Keepsakes: The history of K-State rowing," *Kansas State University Libraries*: Vol. 9.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by New Prairie Press. It has been accepted for inclusion in Kansas State University Libraries by an authorized administrator of New Prairie Press. For more information, please contact cads@k-state.edu.



THE HISTORY OF K-STATE ROWING

When people think of the rolling prairies of Kansas, they rarely consider the viability of competitive rowing in the same location. Yet, the story of rowing at Kansas State University shows how these seemingly disconnected elements can combine.

Rowing has been an NCAA sport at K-State since 1996. K-State students, though, have been rowing boats for pleasure or competition for over a century. Examples include YMCA conferences in Wisconsin as early as 1904, juniors versus seniors on the Kansas River in 1908, numerous social outings on nearby rivers and creeks during the early 20th century, and the K-State chapter of Alpha Phi Omega annually challenging the University



Above: Women and men on K-State Crew during an evening practice on Tuttle Creek Reservoir on June 23, 1987. Photo by Greg Vogel.

Left: K-State Crew in the early 1970s.

of Kansas chapter to canoe races starting in the 1950s.

The roots of K-State's rowing program began as three items converged. In 1962, Tuttle Creek Dam became operational and created a large body of water near campus. That same year, Don Rose started as night manager at the K-State Student Union. He previously was coxswain on the rowing crew at the University of Wisconsin and coached at Columbia University and Princeton University. Finally, students started a

water sports club in 1963. Rose was the group's advisor, and he heavily influenced the growth of rowing as a sport at the university and in the state for the next 40 years.

By the end of 1963, the club had received second-hand racing oars from colleges in Florida and Ohio. Group members also traveled to Purdue University to retrieve a donated 1932 racing shell. Their main challenge was figuring out how to transport the 61-foot craft over 600 miles to Manhattan. They purchased a used school bus, and the crew's first

captain, John Wundrock, outfitted it with framing to hold the shell, which was at least 10 feet longer than the bus. After dealing with engine problems and other obstacles, they placed the boat in the Student Union basement to get it operational. Knowing that one nickname they gave it was "Sieve" should give an idea of the challenges they faced in the few years they used that shell.

These humble beginnings led to competitions with crews at other institutions, including their first in Minnesota against St. Thomas College and the University of Minnesota in April 1964. Aggieville merchants even supplied the crew with purple and white uniforms for the inaugural competition, which K-State won. Since then, Kansas State University Crew has existed for more than 50 years as a student organization and club sport that welcomes interested students to participate in local and regional regattas.

The first women's crew, which included Marcia Almond, Jo Ann Davis, B.J. McCrae, Jane Withee, and



Above: K-State Rowing team competing in the 2018 Jayhawk Jamboree. Courtesy of K-State Athletics.



Left: Don Rose coaching the crew with a megaphone during an evening practice on Tuttle Creek Reservoir in 1984. Photo by Andy Schrock.

Pam Orloff, competed in August 1974. They competed as a club sport until a petition elevated it to become an NCAA sport, which also helped K-State comply with Title IX requirements. The first official NCAA competition for K-State Rowing happened in October 1996, and the first time they won a race was March

1997. Over the years, they have participated in 212 competitions, nearly all featuring multiple races. In 122 of them, they have finished first in at least one race.

In this unlikely location, both men's and women's rowing teams have shown that even landlocked locations can support successful competitors.

Right: Varsity rowers in 1973 included (L to R) Rory O. Turner (first African American man on the K-State Crew), Ronald L. Dyke, Phillip C. Robinson, Jack G. Byers, and Jonathan Q. Hyde.

Below: Yvette Guislain and Cala Selby rowing hard during a women's crew regatta in 1986.



The Richard L. D. and Marjorie J. Morse Department of Special Collections at K-State Libraries preserves and collects the history of Kansas State University. K-State Keepsakes are compiled from photos, diaries, memorabilia and documents in University Archives.

