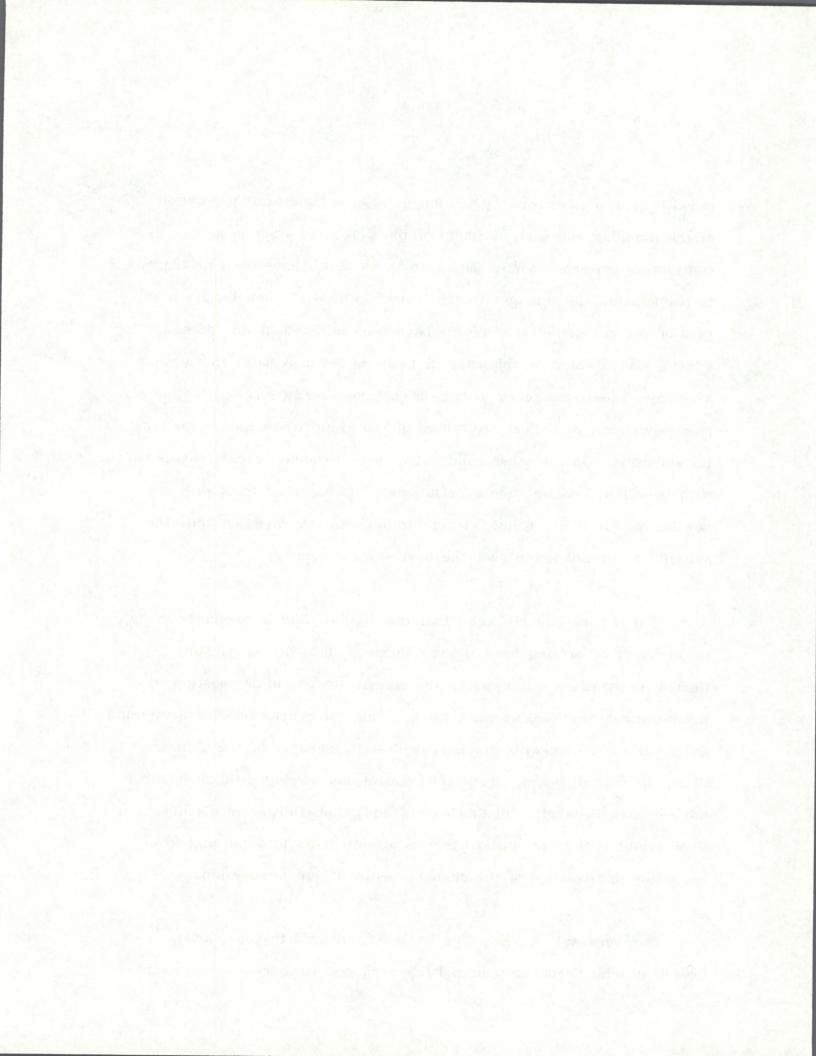
world. Also, I am struck by the longevity of a significant proportion of the founding and early members of the Club, and I see some contrasting patterns in only the seven years that I have been privileged to participate. Beginning with the "class" of 1980, 26 new freshmen (2/3 of our authorized level of 39) have been initiated in this decade, and we look forward to welcoming as many as 3-4 more later this year. Moreover, three who joined in the 1980's have already removed themselves from our midst, and there are others of the group whom we see far too infrequently. On the other hand, 22 former Presidents remain associated with the Club, and we have expectations of seeing 20 of them with some regularity. Is this a trend? I hope to address this question and other aspects of our fellowship over the next several minutes.

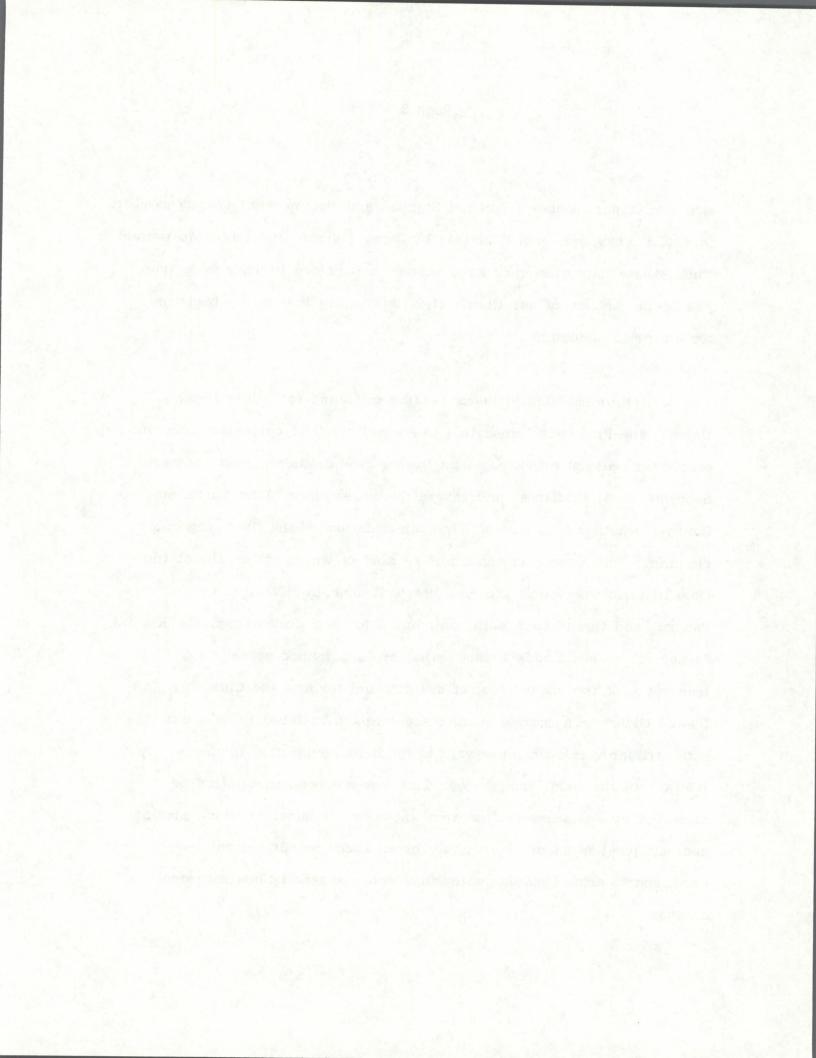
You may or may not know that the Kit Kat Club is presently in its fiftieth year of meeting here at the Columbus Club; officially, our Golden Anniversary will occur on the occasion of our initial meeting in the Autumn. Further, we mark this evening the conclusion of a happy and congenial association with Mr. Harvey Rosetti, manager of the Columbus Club; for several years, Mr. Rosetti has worked closely with Christopher Kat -- Clark Pritchell, Bill Chadeayne, and, thankfully, yours truly. Much credit is due Mr. Rosetti for his attentiveness to detail and for his astute appreciation of the culinary tastes of our membership.

Our venerable Kit Kat Club is, itself, in its 77th year, and President John Carnahan appropriately reminded us a few meetings ago



that two of our number (Herschel Stephan and Don Weaver) became members in 1946. They were joined in 1948 by Jerry Folkman and David Westwater. Thus, these four colleagues have enjoyed and helped to make more than half of the history of our Club. It is this legacy that is the backdrop for my remarks tonight.

At our memorable business meeting last June (at OSU's Drake Union), the President transmitted to me two boxes of correspondence and associated material previously held by our friend, Ralph Lund, former Secretary. At that time, and several instances since, John Carnahan inquired whether "... anyone has ever made use of the files, papers, clippings, and records of the Club" -- most of which are on file at the Ohio Historical Society. Clearly, Mssr's Hooper, Stephan, Crane, Pollard, and Owens have both contributed to, and drawn from, the Kit Kat "archives" as has Chuck Lazarus who carefully helped arrange the transmittal of the largest bloc of material and favored the Club with "A Golden Oldie" -- a reprise of an essay originally offered in 1932 but with strikingly relevant observations for higher education in the 1980's. In the main, though, our Club has not been scrutinized or dissected by researchers other than those in our midst -- which prompts another question as to whether any broad social or educational good is perceived to arise from our gatherings and our associations with one another.



While the beginnings of our Club have been an "oft told tale," we should be reminded that we are the heirs of ancestors who deeply valued reading, writing, speaking, and -- most of all -- listening. Perhaps, Jay Crane said it best when he noted, "I like to think that we have a club of good fellowship, good companionship, good writership, good readership, good 'heedership,' good 'feedership,' and good leadership."⁽²⁾ For his part, Herschel Stephan quoted the 19th century English essayist, Leigh Hunt, to the effect that, "The refinement consists in the company, and in whatever they choose to throw a grace over, whether venison or beef. The great thing is not the bill of fare but, as Swift calls it, 'the bill of company.' " (3) Certainly, such remarks should elicit much pride and no small amount of humility from us And, I believe I speak for all members when I note that only our all. own personal enrichment exceeds the joy we derive from introducing valued friends to this "bill of company."

The foregoing remarks are, of course, intended as a tribute to the quality and the compatability of the membership over the years; the words are not intended to give "short shrift" to the variety and attractiveness of the menus which, themselves, have occasioned much comment and enjoyment. At the Club's earliest meetings, light refreshments and cigars apparently followed the principal address; later, at the Chittenden Hotel, the meals were a pleasant but generally unremarkable part of the evening. Certain patterns, which later became traditions of sorts, characterized the dining. In deference to the

original Christopher Katt, mutton pies would appear at least annually, generally at the first meeting of the Club year. While not officially designated as C. Katt, charter member Maurice Hague looked after the meal planning and designed them among English tastes -- unfortunately, I suspect, when one considers both the relative limits of English crusine and the longevity of Hague's tenure -- roughly 30 years. Hague disdained rude accompaniments, notably ice cream, and would serve nothing stronger than coffee -- before or after Prohibition. It is reported that LeRoy Johnson set the tone for the future by beginning his presidential year in 1949 with the serving of wine with dinner. In that sense, it appears that 1949-1950, 38 years after the Club was founded and 38 years ago, represents a real watershed in our culinary history; before Johnson's introduction in wine, the meals were principally pleasant but necessary nourishment and the catalyst for fellowship. Since that time, more attention has been devoted to making the meal an integral part of the evening; in this regard, the stewardship of Clark Pritchett has been singled out for special recollection and mention in the histories of Kit Kat. An original 18th century Kit Katter, Joseph Addison, had observed that " ... clubs are founded on eating and drinking, which are points on which most men agree." $^{(4)}$ But both O.C. Hooper and Jay Crane had come to observe that preoccupation with food and drink, especially to excess, was incompatible with good listening and lucid discussion. While their memories may have been highly selective and understandably protective, Hooper and Crane could only recall infrequent instances of dozing and excessive lubrication, and all

reported occurrences were perpetrated by guests, including one unfortunate speaker. I urge the membership to discuss whether our meals have continued to advance our fellowship and the quality of our time together by insuring that all five of our senses are invigorated in the course of our evenings together.

From the first days of the Club, attendance has been an expectation and a concern. The tone of communications has both encouraged the faithful and exhorted the wayward. Consider the statement promulgated by the Club in 1926: "Complexities of modern life, generally speaking, serve to make more or less burdensome any fixed series of social engagements. This does not, or should not, apply to members of the Kit Kat Club. The Club's membership is limited to a very small number of kindred spirits. The chief pleasure and profit of its meetings is in the association of friends who gather at its dinner tables. Its cultural side is obviously desirable. When a member absents himself from a meeting, he breaks the charmed circle. Not only does he suffer the loss of all that the Kit Kat Club means, but he also deprives his fellow members of the pleasure and benefit of association with him. Furthermore, failure to attend cannot be other than discouraging to the speaker of the evening "⁽⁵⁾ Jay Crane, in 1961, took a slightly higher road in the same direction: "I regard Kit Kat attendance as a privilege, never as a duty. It is clear that there is very little disagreement with this attitude. Even so, I mention that half-hearted effort for attendance, occasionally though rarely

encountered, is out of step with the spirit of our Club of limited membership. With so many very busy men I think we can forgive anything but indifference. Eagerness is so much better." ⁽⁶⁾ More recently yet, David Owens assumed one of the burdens of the Secretary's post by advising "I need not remind you that events this year have caused you to be quite irregular at Kit Kat. We do understand that our members are busy men with demands on their time, yet a club with a membership as small as ours depends for its life on faithful attendance. The problem is yours. I do believe you should take a good look at your continuing responsibilities and then decide whether or not you are going to be able to attend Kit Kat with some degree of regularity."⁽⁷⁾ All three writers (Hooper, Crane, and Owens) were dedicated, indeed passionate, protectors of the Club, and their messages were but variations on a theme, a vital theme.

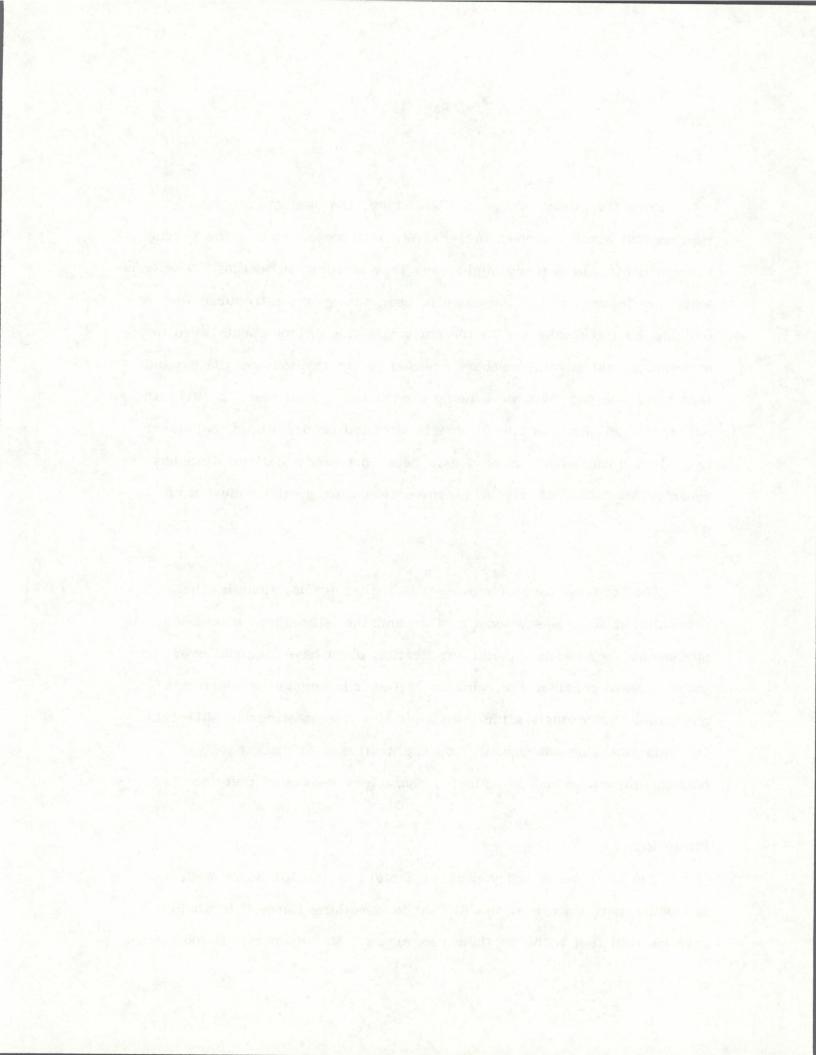
Related to the perennial issue of attendance was membership and the recruitment/selection of new members. This element has caused the most stressful circumstances within the Club's history, but the vitality and longevity of the organization testifies to the generally successful quest for a mix of personalities and a common love of knowledge. Again, Jay Crane captured both the burden and the promise of selective membership when he extended Thomas More's lines: "Humility, that low, sweet root,/ Leads one to wonder as he votes/ How he missed landing with the goats."⁽⁸⁾

From the outset of the Club's history, the membership has represented a set of known ingredients, as it were, even if the precise measurements and potency might vary from meeting to meeting. The chief leavening ingredient has consistently been the guests introduced for the evening by the members. In the early years, so many guests were in attendance that several members pressed for restrictions on the grounds that the basic purposes were being obstructed. Note that, in 1917, an average of 26 members and 21 guests attended each meeting. Whatever caused that imbalance has obviously been corrected, and the Club has recently invoked a variety of measures to encourage the inclusion of guests.

The focus of each of our regular gatherings is, though, the presentation of an essay by a member and the subsequent discussion. If our menus, our members, and our meeting place have changed over the years, please consider the contents of the following letter which was circulated anonymously after the Club's first few meetings in 1911-1912. In evaluating this assessment, you might attempt to place some contemporary personalities into the characters mentioned therein:

"Dear Bob:

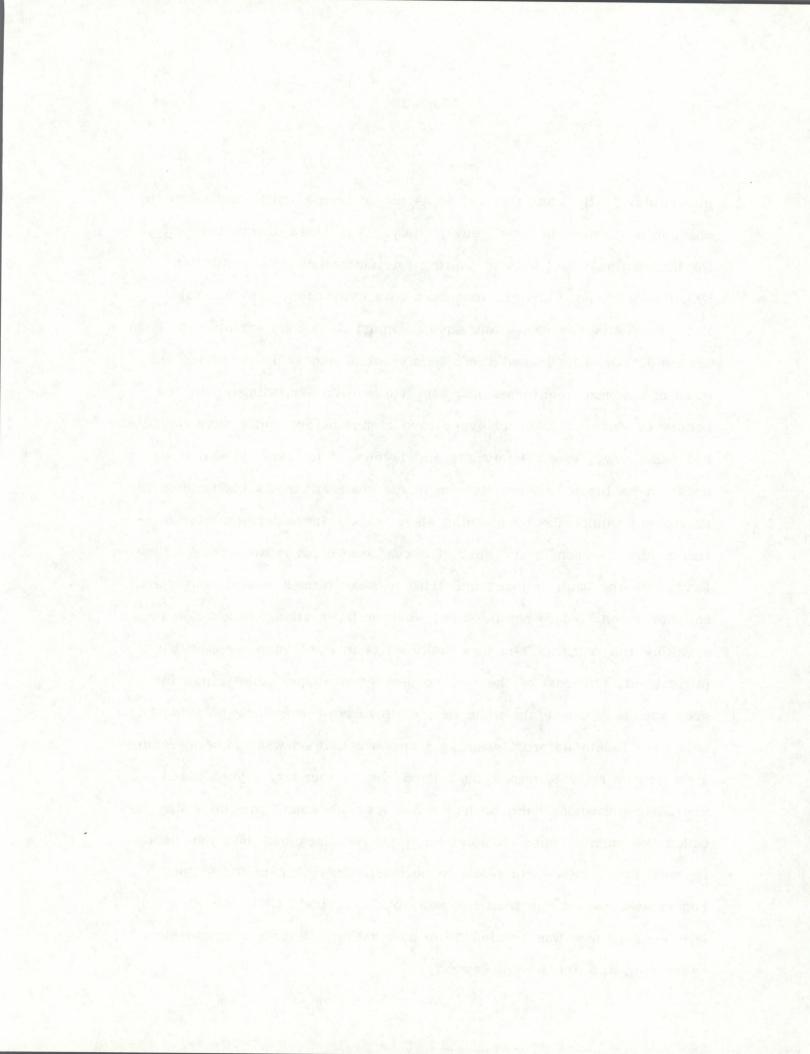
You want me to tell you about a night at the Kit-Kat. Well, I tell you a performance at the Kit-Kat is something fierce. It would give me cold feet to be on their programme. Mr. Hooper is a good genial



soul, but he introduces every speaker with such a flambouyant speech that it would give me stage fright. He means alright, and I suppose they forgive him. Then while they are speaking he looks at them with such a beneficent smile, that they all like him very much. He smiles just the same whether the paper is punk or real good. They give their speaker the same hearty applause before as well as after, but while a fellow is speaking their faces are a study.

James Boyle lays back in his chair, and, no matter what it is, he gives it the same rapt attention, and every little bit he haw-haws, and claps his hands, and says "Good! Bravo!" then all the others laugh and clap feebly. He has been in public life, you learn to do that thing to perfection in public life, and he has got it right. Prof. Knight sets his jaws and stands everything in dumb endurance. Sometimes I think he will simply riddle it, when the speaker gets through - he looks so fierce - but I guess he thinks it not worth his while. Genial Billy Graves divides everybody into two classes - sulphides and bromides. A sulphide is a live sort of a fellow, original in thought and expression. A bromide is a stupid cuss, who labors hard and copies most everything from some book. The most are bromides. Maurice Hague sits erect and impenetrable as Sir Edward Coke in the pictures of the High Court of Chancery. I can see him saying to himself all the time "that does not appeal to me," but he is civil and sociable withal. Then there is Dr. Rogers who made a hit one night by calling himself the "ubiquitous

interrupter." He leans forward so as not to miss a word, and when the speaker is through he says very politely, "May I ask a question simply for information?" and without waiting for permission puts a question, which plainly shows that he disagrees with everything that was said. D.C. Sapp sits and smiles and says nothing, so nobody knows what is in his mind. Once he helped Prof. Denny out of a hole by supplying the name of a woman, centuries old, who had written something about the beauty of slavery. Nobody ever heard of her before and I have forgotten her name now. Prof. Denny sits and listens, if he likes it, and if he does not he turns half way around in his chair and rests his head in his hands and thinks about something else. Col. Curry tells war stories -mostly about women in the war. I guess some of them were true. Charles Pavey has the Club at heart and tries to make himself useful, but you can never tell, from what he says, whether he is stringing a fellow or speaking the truth. Then he usually rings in some yarn - sometimes fairly good, but most of the time bordering on unspeakable things in good society. One night when he got up to read something he said the title was "Relata Refero", meaning I suppose that he was going to relate a referro or refer to something related, but it was just a yarn about a Southern girl whose hand he held when his wife wasn't around. Why he called the yarn a referro I don't know. A.W. Mackenzie is a new man. He says little. His forte seems to be dead men's book-plates. The book-plates are deader than the men, but everybody Oh's and Ah's and lets on like there was nothing quite so exciting. Warner Simpson likes everything and applauds everybody.



He and his partner Sears are getting a good job of printing out of the Club. They know which side of their bread is buttered and they keep the buttered side up.

When a speaker is through and the applause dies down Mr. Hughes usually arises, fumbling with his watch chain, and with senatorial courtesy addresses the chair, "Mr. President, permit me first to compliment our friend, who has just spoken, upon the clear, lucid and masterful paper he has just read" - this makes the friend who has just spoken swell up - "Permit me also to congratulate the Club upon having so able and eloquent a speaker as the gentleman who has just spoken," this makes the gentleman who has just spoken swell more, - and then he continues, "but allow me to make a suggestion." Then he makes a suggestion couched in the most flattering terms, but one which sprays a cold douche over the whole thing, and the last speaker wishes he had not spoken. This speech always brings Dr. Kornfeld to his feet, who spreads soap and salve all over the discomfited speaker, takes vigorous issue with Mr. Hughes, and combats all that Mr. Hughes has said, and makes the speaker feel good again. If he would only stop there he would be alright, but before he is through he shows how the speaker is radically and pivotally wrong in everything he has said, and suggests that he had better leave out all that he has written and try it over again along his (Kornfeld's) lines. Then he will have it right.

I look to see the thing break up in a row some night. It will when my turn comes, but take them all in all they are a nice bunch. They all go away shaking hands and saying they have had a splendid evening, - the best ever. Next time I will tell you about the others.

Your friend,

Jack."⁽⁹⁾

My purposes in preparing this paper have been, once again, to remind and to reinforce. I earnestly hope that I have not bored any of our guests by focusing, in too parochial a way, on the Club. Indeed, my intention has been to give our guests a better glimpse of their host through the lens of Kit Kat; I wish our guests to know that their invitations are both respected and appreciated and that they are but the latest of a long and distinguished group of friends who share in such success as the Club has enjoyed. Kit Kat is a club for the hungry; across the decades, we and those before us have indulged our appetites for food well-prepared, for words well-crafted, for ideas wellconceived. The vitality which is derived from each has invigorated us individually and collectively. That our Club has endured is interesting but probably not significant in itself; what is noteworthy is the enrichment our members and guests have given one another and implications of that enrichment for the community at large. What was uttered nearly 44 years ago as part of a eulogy for a member of

Kit Kat might also be read as a testimony to the Club: "Time of itself, like an unheard sound in the wilderness, means nothing; but when time is coupled with human activity, we have history." $^{(10)}$

> Gary C. Ness 2/16/88

NOTES

- The Kit Kat Club, Mss 200, The Ohio Historical Society, Box 1 (hereafter cites as MSS 200).
- (2) MSS 200, Box 2.
- (3) MSS 200, Box 2.
- (4) MSS 200, Box 2.
- (5) MSS 200, Box 1.
- (6) MSS 200, Box 2.
- (7) Secretary's Files (1977-78) in possession of Gary C. Ness.
- (8) MSS 200, Box 2.
- (9) MSS 200, Box 1.
- (10) MSS 200, Box 2.

