



MU's first building, Academic Hall, is shown the day after the great fire.

State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia

1995 marks the Francis Quadrangle Centennial

Noble Past

STORY BY JIM KELTY

The north entrance to campus is pictured around the turn of the century. The springhouse over Chalybeate Spring was a romantic spot.

University of Missouri Archives



In the beginning there was fire. It started in the east wing of Academic Hall on the evening of Jan. 9, 1892. The flames spread quickly, and within a few hours the University of Missouri was devastated.

The great fire, probably a result of faulty wiring, destroyed the building that housed most of the University's classrooms and learning facilities. But in the three years that followed, Academic

Hall was replaced by six new buildings, establishing present-day Francis Quadrangle.

1995 marks the 100th anniversary of Jesse Hall and the Quad — a century of tremendous growth for MU, due in no small part to the man for whom the building is named.

Richard Henry Jesse was the president of the University the night Academic Hall caught fire. In the aftermath of the disaster, he guided MU in its new direction, expressed in the design of the new campus.

The open quadrangle plan with separate buildings for different departments in an orderly grouping around a lawn was based on a design first used by Thomas Jefferson at the University of Virginia. It reflected Jefferson's belief that a university should be a village not a house. It also reflected his concept of universities as communities in themselves where students and faculty could live together and be engulfed in educational opportunities.

For almost 50 years, Academic Hall had been the focal point of campus life. In addition to classrooms, it housed administrative offices, libraries, laboratories, a chapel and a natural history museum. East and west wings had been added in 1885 to accommodate the growing number of students. Switzer Hall, completed in 1872, and the president's house (now the chancellor's residence) accompanied the main building.

President Jesse was just six months into his administration on the fateful night of the fire. When the ruins of the building were cleared, only the Columns were left standing, and they were an immediate subject of controversy. During the cleanup, a fistfight broke out between an alumnus and the president of the Board of Curators when the latter ordered mule teams to be hitched to one of the Columns to pull it to the ground.

Morris Frederick Bell, the architect of the new buildings, included the Columns in the campus master plan. But when the grounds were leveled and the new buildings began to take shape, there was increasing feeling that the Columns, perched on a narrow ridge, were unsightly and spoiled the effect of the new campus. In 1893 the curators voted to dismantle them, but an outcry by alumni saved them.



In 1914, senior Eleanor Asdale was the campus May queen.

University of Missouri Archives



Engineering students raised a lot of eyebrows in 1909 when they built a 30-foot representation of St. Patrick.

College of Engineering Archives



University President Walter Williams accepted two stone lions for the School of Journalism from the Chinese government in 1931. The gift was presented by Chao-chu, minister of the Republic of China to the United States.

University of Missouri Archives



A stone visage, at right, on the engineering complex overlooks Francis Quadrangle, where happenings like this 1951 pep rally, above, have occurred for 100 years.



Thomas Jefferson's tombstone has appeared at different locations since it was unveiled at MU in 1885. During American bicentennial ceremonies in 1976, the marker was moved to its present spot in front of the chancellor's residence.

In planning the Quadrangle, Bell worked with designs developed by Jesse, Gov. David Rowland Francis and Calvin Woodward, a member of the Board of Curators. With the president's house on the east and Switzler on the west, the Quad took shape as Bell added six new buildings: Law (now Sociology); Chemical (now Pickard Hall); Biology and Geology (now Swallow); Mechanic Arts (now part of the engineering complex); Physics and Engineering (also part of the engineering complex); and new Academic Hall (later named for Jesse). Workers completed the construction in the summer of 1895.

Bell, a self-trained architect from Fulton, Mo., had designed numerous buildings throughout the state, but his work on the Quad represented his greatest accomplishment in a long and prolific architectural career, says Dr. Osmund Overby, professor of art history and archaeology. "He combined a great variety of decorative effects within a larger scheme that is strongly unified by scale, rhythm, color and materials," Overby says. "Bell's architecture on the Quad is a splendid example of the free and inventive eclecticism that is characteristic of the second half of the 19th century."

The ornamental design of the buildings was richer than it appears today, Overby points out. Jesse Hall's roof originally included a balustrade and statues of lions and goddesses. The gold ball atop the dome originally had wings, which came off during World War I when someone fastened the staff of a large American flag to one of the wings. The balustrade and statuary were probably blown down by storms, such as the one in 1931 that knocked two corner towers off Swallow Hall. Much of the ornamental design of the Mechanic Arts building was lost in 1911 when the roof and cornice of the building were destroyed by fire.

As new buildings were added to the Quad, the use of red brick and the general rhythm and scale of the original group were continued, Overby says. The Journalism School formed the Quadrangle's northeast corner, beginning with Neff Hall in 1920. "When Walter Williams Hall was added, they were joined with an archway that formed a particularly effective entrance to the Quad," he notes.

By the end of Jesse's 17-year tenure as

president, the University encompassed 14 buildings and more than 3,000 students, which represented a six-fold increase in the student enrollment during his administration. Jesse died in 1921, and the University's main building was renamed in his honor the following year.

Today, Jesse Hall houses residential life, admissions and the Graduate School as well as offices for the chancellor and provost. Though the building always has served administrative functions, some former students may recall when the second floor was a gymnasium, with part of the floor set aside for the "ladies' parlors" where students spent time between classes. Jesse Auditorium has been the scene of many plays, concerts and speeches. Among the earliest notables to appear there were William Jennings Bryan and Mark Twain.

The Board of Curators named the Quad in honor of former Gov. Francis in recognition of his support for and close involvement with the rebuilding of the University after the great fire.

Throughout its existence, Francis Quadrangle has been the focal point of campus ceremonies, traditions, pranks, demonstrations and rituals. Student cadets and bands marched and drilled there for many years. Until 1950, graduating classes marched around the Columns *en route* to commencement. Tap Day exercises for campus honoraries are still held there.

In 1914, the men's glee club was quarantined in a tent on the Quad after some members came down with small pox on a trip to California. At one time, only seniors were supposed to walk up to the Columns. The lower terrace around the sacred pillars was reserved for juniors. Freshmen were not supposed to come anywhere near and were not to be found using the sidewalk north of the Columns.

Engineering students were traditionally the guardians of the Quad. They kept a sharp eye out for students cutting across the lawn on the way to class, and formed paddle lines to punish any such offender. The engineers learned the use of compass and theodolite by measuring the Columns and they held extravagant ceremonies in front of them every March. In 1958 the Columns had to be sandblasted to remove a coat of green paint applied during St. Pat's week.

Twice in the 1950s, students climbed to the top of the Columns for publicity



Demonstrations from different eras: In the 1970s, students gathered on the Quad to protest the Vietnam War.

The following decade, anti-apartheid activists were arrested for trespassing after they set up shanties in front of Jesse Hall.

Columbia Missourian



The six buildings constructed on the Quad in the 1890s were designed in a freely interpreted Victorian style that includes Beaux-Arts Classicism and Romanesque details.

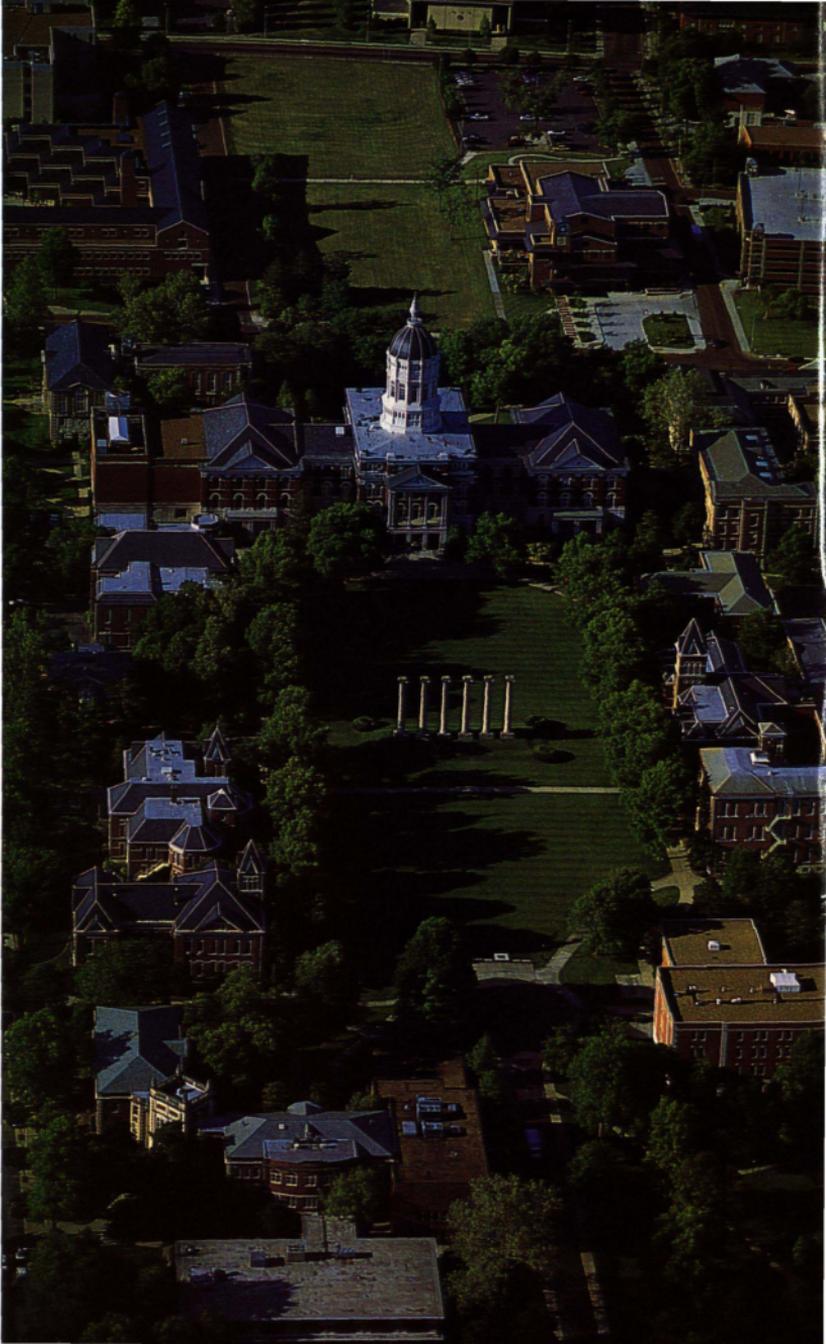
Old Missouri,
fair Missouri!
Dear Old
Varsity,
Ours are hearts
that fondly
love thee.
Here's a health
to thee!

Every student,
man
and maiden,
Swells
the glad
refrain,
'Till the
breezes,
music laden,
Waft it back
again.

Proud art thou
in classic
beauty
Of thy
noble past.
With thy watch
words,
honor, duty,
Thy high fame
shall last.

—*alma mater*

Robert Llewellyn photo, 5/94



stunts. One student drew attention to himself by wearing a long flowing cape with red lining. The other incident involved a student trying to publicize a campus theatrical production. After making it to the top of one of the Columns, he spent several uncomfortable hours in the cold weather waiting for firefighters to rescue him.

In 1948, a roaming mob of students demonstrated in front of the president's house, demanding an extension of the University's holiday vacation. The crowd set fire to a Christmas tree dragged from the lobby of Jesse Hall. President Frederick Middlebush's appearance on the balcony of Jesse Hall to explain the University schedule ended the demonstration.

During the Vietnam War, student protesters demonstrated on the Quad, interfering with the practice drills of the ROTC students. In 1974, more than 400 nude students flashed across the lawn, setting a world record for streaking. Protesters in 1986 constructed a "shanty town" in front of Jesse Hall to express their anger about the University investing in firms operating in South Africa.

One of the turning points in the history of the Quad came in 1974 when the federal government declared it a National Historic District.

"When that happened it drew attention to the buildings and began a new appreciation for them," says Overby. "In the 1960s, the long-range plan for the campus called for most of the buildings on the Quad to come down. Some people assumed that all the red brick buildings were old and used up. But that attitude changed when we made the National Register of Historic Places."

Another historical and sometimes overlooked treasure of the Quad is the original tombstone from the grave of Thomas Jefferson. The tombstone, located in front of the chancellor's residence, was a gift to the University from Jefferson's descendants more than a century ago when a new, larger monument was erected over Jefferson's grave at Monticello.

The granite marker arrived at MU several years before Academic Hall burned down. Today, if Jefferson's ghost were to visit the tombstone, he would surely approve of the architectural setting in which it is found. ☐

A village with global impact

In the early 19th century, Thomas Jefferson pioneered a new type of American university when he founded the University of Virginia. In his design of the institution, Jefferson envisioned an "academical village" with buildings arranged around an open square of grass and trees, a place where a secular sense of community between faculty and students could flourish.

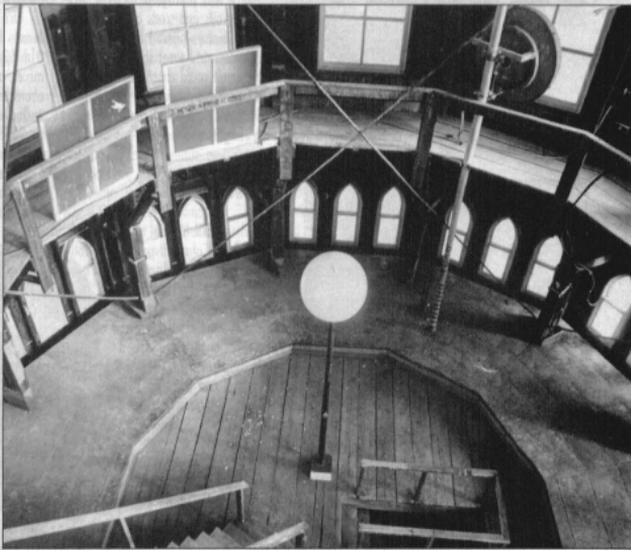
This ideal was carried forth at MU with the construction of the Quadrangle in the 1890s. Since that time, the people who have worked and played on the Quad have built MU's reputation in the global village. Their accomplishments are immeasurable.

Every spring the University sponsors a Tap Day ceremony in front of the Columns to recognize outstanding members of the campus community. During the ceremony, the new initiates of several campus honoraries are announced. Membership to these groups is based on scholarship and service to the University and the community.

One of the groups — The Rollins Society — was established this year. The other five honoraries — QEBH, Mortar Board, Omicron Delta Kappa, LSV and Mystical 7 — were founded more than 70 years ago, and one of them has roots that go back to the university Thomas Jefferson founded.

Mystical 7 is an offshoot of the Secret 7, an honorary organization established at the University of Virginia. The Secret 7 selected the seven most outstanding men on campus; members were known by their good works throughout the community, rather than by their names.

At Mizzou, Mystical 7 broke with this tradition of secrecy in 1907. Since that time, Mystical 7 has publicly recognized the finest senior men who have passed through the University. Another tradition was broken in 1976 when women were admitted to the organization. Today Mystical 7 honors those men and women who have displayed outstanding and unselfish leadership ability.



Scrawled on the inside of the Jesse Hall dome are names of members of Tap Day honoraries who visited the dome nocturnally as a rite of initiation.

Jeff Adams photo