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Jeff Adams photo

Light the way

By BRENDA PIKE

Fireworks, top, signal the lighting of Jesse dome.

Dressed in black and gold, Eleanor Frasier, president of the Alumni Association, and her family join the walk down Eighth Street toward Francis Quadrangle.



Larry Boehm photo



Neil Hubbard photo

Choruses of "Shennendoah" wafted into the brisk autumn night as the Jesse Hall dome was lit for the first time in its 92-year history Oct. 1. Pure white beams signaled the beginning of events marking the 150th anniversary of the University's founding.

Boone County residents, friends, students, faculty and alumni gathered at the foot of the Columns on Francis Quadrangle for the ceremony.

"If there is a single spot for higher education in Missouri, surely you and I are standing on that spot," said Chancellor Haskell Monroe to a crowd of more than 2,500. "The University of Missouri is destined to take its place, not only as the fine institution it is today, but as one of the finest universities in the world."

The ceremony, which began under the Boone County Courthouse columns on Eighth Street, called Avenue of the Columns; demonstrated ties

formed 150 years ago when Boone County settlers gave more than they could afford to see a university built in Columbia. Presenting resolutions were Democratic legislators from Columbia: Rep. Ken Jacob, BS Ed '71, M Ed '76, MPA '86, and Sen. Roger Wilson, M Ed '86. Others on the podium downtown were Columbia Mayor Rodney Smith; presiding commissioner of the Boone County Commission, Frank Graham, BS Agr '42, MS '54; Rep. Chris Kelly, D-Columbia; and master of ceremonies David Rogers, BS Ed '63, JD '68.

Julie James Oswald, BS Ed '81, of New Franklin, Mo., is the great-great-granddaughter of an original subscriber. Montgomery Lientz, who had four children and lived on the family farm four miles southeast of Rocheport, gave \$125. Oswald, who teaches gifted students, is the first Lientz descendant to graduate from Mizzou. Because of her

The 102-foot Jesse Hall dome is lit with a dozen 1,000-watt metal halide lights. The lights turn gold after Mizzou football and basketball victories and other Campus achievements.

forefather's interest in education, "I'm much more apt to become part of the Alumni Association and to give donations. It's created a lot of pride."

The crowd followed Marching Mizzou and the ROTC Flag Corps on a walk from the courthouse to Francis Quadrangle. Bedecked in black and gold, people talked and laughed with

old friends and schoolmates. White lights strung on trees illuminated the path, adding to the festive mood.

Under the Columns the crowd listened to greetings from Monroe; University President C. Peter Magrath; Dr. Arvath Strickland, professor of history; and Eleanor Frasier, BS Ed '61, M Ed '65, of Florissant, Mo., president of the Alumni Association. They stood behind a lectern believed to have been used by Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain) during his 1902 speech at the University when he received an honorary doctorate.

Strickland gave a brief history of the buildings on the Quadrangle, including Switzer Hall, the oldest building on Campus. And to the audience's delight, the bell in Switzer's belfry that once rang for classes tolled for the special occasion.

"The University's sesquicentennial is a time to look back and to honor the public-spirited men and women of courage who had a vision that continues to live and grow today," Magrath said. "The theme for the next 150 years will be 'Cross the wide Missouri' on behalf of learning, liberty and light."

"I saw some tears and I felt the same feeling in my heart, too," Monroe said as W.H. "Bert" Bates, AB '49, of Kansas City, president of the Board of Curators, dabbed his eyes. As the chancellor signaled for the Jesse Hall dome lights, a frenzy of fireworks began. After the smoke cleared, the number 150 sparkled over the Jesse doors and the 102-foot dome began to shine.

"It's almost as bright as the White House," said Dr. Oscar H. Calvert, professor of plant pathology. His wife, Frankie Calvert, agreed. "It will be fun to watch the dome from various parts of town," she said.

The lighting ceremony made for high spirits and a good family occasion, said Wayne Behymer, BS Agr '60, of Columbia. Behymer said he didn't believe early Boone Countians had any idea of the University's potential, "but they might feel at home in the midst of these old buildings." After the ceremony, the crowd nibbled on pumpkin cake, sipped apple cider and viewed two exhibits in Jesse Hall, "Why Tigers?" and "History of Architecture and Design of Francis Quadrangle." The Tiger mascot is traced to the Civil War when federal militia formed a Columbia unit to defend the town from Confederate bushwhackers. The original "Tigers" were made up of local townspeople and University students.

The lighting, which is symbolic of the University's commitment to reach out to all Missourians, is the first in a series of sesquicentennial events being planned. Such events might include lectures, exhibits, a costume ball and a Founder's Day celebration in Jefferson City. The anniversary will officially be observed in calendar year 1989.

"Alumni have to be especially aware of the challenge this Campus faces in Jefferson City and across the state," said Kelly about funding challenges facing the University. "If they hope not to see those lights dimmed in the future, they need to play an active role in keeping them shining brightly." □

Boone Countians dug deep for Ol' Mizzou

In 1987 dollars, Boone Countians gave \$121 million to found the University of Missouri in Columbia. "My calculations are quick and dirty," says Dr. Walter Johnson, associate professor of economics, "but I bet you I'm right, plus or minus 10 percent." In 1839, with a population of 13,361, the county raised \$117,921.75 in a subscription contest and began building Mizzou.

Columbia and Boone County were thriving. New businesses were bursting onto the scene by the late 1830s. Columbia had two wagon makers, three tailors and a resident portrait painter. The county provided half the state's tobacco crop and ranked first in maple-sugar production. And Boone's Lick Trail to California and Oregon cut directly through Columbia.

"Never within our recollection has there been such an influx of emigrants as now," said a local newspaper editor. But Boone County had more on its mind than population increases and soaring revenues. It was concerned with the community and educating the people.

The Missouri General Assembly enacted the Geyer Act Feb. 11, 1839, which began the University. The next issue was location. A subscription contest to raise property and money was devised to decide which mid-Missouri county would be home to Mizzou.

"The principal part of the preceding week we were all busily engaged in closing our subscriptions for the University," wrote a Boone County farmer to a friend in Kentucky. "I still think Boone draws the prize and dearly will she pay for it." And Boone Countians did pay.

A number of Boone County sub-

scribers mortgaged their farms and homes to meet their pledges, and more than one mortgage was foreclosed. A rail-splitter working for \$1 per 100 rails pledged \$100. One saddler who came to Columbia the year before with \$1 to his name pledged \$100. A county clerk, Warren Woodson, who made

\$1,200 annually, pledged his entire annual salary for the University. And a widow, Ann Gentry, gave \$100, using money she made by taking in boarders and as postmaster.

The subscription committee members rode to every farm and cabin in the area. When the contest ended, more than 900 Boone County residents had contributed.

"James S. Rollins seems to have been responsible for the master stroke that won the contest for Boone," wrote Jonas Viles, author of a centennial history of Missouri. Just before submitting bids to the assembly, Rollins learned Howard County had more subscriptions than Boone. He quickly returned to Columbia to sell 222 acres he owned adjacent to the proposed University site. The subscription committee bought the land at \$25 an acre, then inflated the value to \$75 an acre.

Boone Countians can be proud of the part their ancestors played in founding the university 150 years ago. All told, only \$500 of the \$117,921.75 pledged was not paid. "In their zeal to secure the location of the university in Boone County, many subscribed for more than their ability," said an 1848 Board of Curators memo. "Notwithstanding, most subscriptions were met so promptly, although at a heavy sacrifice, there are perhaps few parallels of such prompt and faithful payment."

