

MIZZOU MAGAZINE
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The 1920s wasn't just the decade of jazz clubs and flappers looking like the bees knees in their glad rags. At Mizzou a century ago, now-beloved buildings went up, faculty research accelerated and enrollment took flight faster than Amelia Earhart. Students crammed in ever more science-based knowledge before letting loose with giggle juice. In so many ways, the roaring '20s was the big cat's meow.

MIZZOU'S ROARING '20s



STORY BY
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American troops returning from World War I found a nation at the crossroads of tradition and innovation. For the first time, a majority of Americans lived in cities rather than on farms. Farmers sought science and technology to help them work more efficiently, and more and more people traveled roads, cow paths and railroad beds by automobile. Innovation profoundly altered higher education as well, not just in the populous East but also in the heart of the country.

“It’s really this crucible of the war that demonstrates to everyone across the world that the 20th century is going to be a century of science,” says campus historian David Lineberry, BA ’88. “And it’s going to be a century in which universities with research connections are increasingly devoted to producing goods and services for the people in the region it serves.”

As demand for scientists grew, universities expanded their offerings, research findings proliferated and professional soci-

eties grew, leading to specialization in almost every academic discipline. At the same time, enrollment in secondary schools rose dramatically, with an increasing number of graduates going on to college. “There is this pervasive sense of modernity and this infectious sense of hope and this ill-defined expectation for something more,” Lineberry says. “And man, if you’re 20 years old, that’s going to be a blast.”

College enrollment increased most at schools where research informed teaching, Lineberry says. “Institutions that had a large physical presence, that had the budget and that had the beginnings of a research-to-instruction connection — those were the ones that exploded. And that’s MU’s story.”

During the 1920s, the University of Missouri saw remarkable growth, not only in enrollment but also in facilities, student programs, academic departments, professional schools and athletics. Here’s a look at what some Mizzou students, faculty and alumni were up to during the Roaring ’20s.



Thus begins the finest decade at the university. Let's get a wiggle on!

1920s Mizzou: A Series of Fortunate Events

1920

Amid a nationwide college enrollment increase, Mizzou’s student body **increases 14%** over the previous year, with a total of **2,916 students** consisting of **1,982 men** and **934 women**.



Showme magazine debuts. The student-run humor and satire magazine publishes spoofs and parodies of campus and student life.



1921

More than **100 clubs** operate on campus, including **nine social sororities**, **17 social fraternities**, **10 honorary sororities** and women’s professional clubs, **20 honor fraternities** and men’s professional clubs and **35 miscellaneous clubs**.



Home economics department Chair **Louise Stanley** opens a meeting of the American Chemical Society with a lecture on how **pressure cooking food destroys key vitamins**. She illustrates the address by exhibiting rats fed under various experimental conditions.

ANTON J. “STAN” STANKOWSKI
Captain

Sociology Professor **A.F. Kuhlman** shows that mandatory school attendance laws help fight juvenile delinquency.



Harlow Shapley, BA 1910, MA 1911, proves by calculations that **the sun is not the center of the Milky Way Galaxy** but is some 50,000 light-years off the center. Called the “dean of American astronomers” by *The New York Times*, Shapley goes on to direct the Harvard College Observatory.



Mary Chorn outwits 15 male competitors to become the first woman to make the **debating squad**.



1922

The **Clover and Prosperity** extension demonstration program begins in response to soil erosion problems in Missouri: More than 80% of the cultivated land in the state has topsoil loss. The program evolves into annual conferences in 96 counties and eventually becomes known as the **Soils and Crops Conference**, reaching more than 28,000 farmers by 1950.



The “**farthest away**” alumni group, founded in 1920 by 18 of Mizzou’s sons and daughters living in Asia, meets at the Imperial Hotel in **Tokyo**, reports the alumni magazine.

Well before the golden age of radio, **Mizzou’s University Band** becomes an early adopter by broadcasting performances statewide over **ROTC wireless**.



1923

Attendance at **Farmer’s Fair** — where agriculture faculty describe their latest research; farmers offer feedback; and ag students host a parade and a lineup of stunts, contests and attractions — **surpasses 10,000**.



Orrick Johns, Arts 1908, writes the hit play *A Charming Conscience*. Part of the literary circle including T. S. Eliot, Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald, Johns later directs the Federal Writers Project in New York City.



Pray tell, where does one find a sterling collection of poetry in CoMo?

Daniel Boone Regional Library is just southwest of the water tower.



Homer Croy, Arts 1907, is disclosed as the author of the anonymous bestselling novel *West of the Water Tower*. Croy goes on to write several popular biographies, including books on outlaw Jesse James and humorist Will Rogers, for whom Croy wrote more films than any other and with whom he shared Thanksgiving dinner.

1924

The **Girl’s Rifle Team**, one of the first organized in the U.S., goes undefeated.



Athletic Director **Chester Brewer** preaches football over fraternizing, saying: “We need a fighting spirit at the games. This can best be effected when there are no dates, and both men and women are free to give all possible aid to the team and the spirit of the institution.” Women are asked to sit in a special section of the bleachers.

Sorry, babe. Bank’s closed on Saturdays.



Intramural athletics begin. (In 2021, intramurals comprise 11 sports, including badminton, dodgeball, eSports and Spikeball.)



In Mizzou’s first bowl game, the **Christmas Festival**, the Tigers lose to USC, 20–7.

1925

The Glee Club wins third place at Carnegie Hall, singing “**Dance of the Gnomes**” and “Come Again, Sweet Love.” Yale places first, Princeton second.



Nobody does Gnomecoming like Mizzou. M-I-Z!



BUILDING BOOM

In the decade following the Great War, demand swells to apply science to industry. “So, you have a need for new facilities,” says campus historian David Lineberry, BA ’88. “These buildings — they kind of spring up as the physical embodiment of the need for more science in everything and the ability to teach more students about science.”

1 1920: **Neff Hall** opens as the first building in the world to house completely and exclusively a journalism school and printing plant and the first building donated to the university by an individual, Jay Neff’s son, Ward, BJ ’13.

2 1921: Known today as **Gwynn Hall**, the Home Economics Building opens, becoming the first building ever erected by the state of Missouri for the exclusive purpose of women’s education.

3 1921: West Campus is renamed **Francis Quadrangle**.

4 1922: Academic Hall is named Richard Henry **Jesse Hall**.

5 1922: The Horticultural Building, known today as **Whitten Hall** in honor of agriculture Professor J.C. Whitten, opens.

6 1922: The **Beef Barn** is constructed for \$8,315.

7 1922: The original Chemistry Laboratory and Building, now named **Schlundt Hall** for chemistry Professor Herman Schlundt, opens.

8 1923: Now known as Mumford Hall, the **Agriculture Building** opens with 1 acre of floor space for the departments of soils, rural life and poultry husbandry.

9 1923: The Women’s Gymnasium, now **McKee Gymnasium**, opens, ushering in “a new era for women” at the university, reports the alumni magazine.

10 1923: Noyes Hospital, aka the soon-to-be-demolished **Noyes Hall**, opens, giving the School of Medicine a complete medical rating and allowing it to offer a full medical course and doctor’s degree to graduates.

11 1923: The **university power plant** begins operating.

12 1925: Hendrix Hall, the Methodist women’s dormitory, opens. Known today as the **Columbia Professional Building**, it’s set to be demolished as part of the university’s effort to reduce maintenance costs and use space more efficiently.

13 1926: Construction of the **Memorial Union** tower is complete. Read more about the union and its \$3.5 million makeover on Page 6.

14 1926: **Memorial Stadium** opens on time to host its first game, despite construction delays due to the heaviest September rainfall in 35 years.

15 1927: **Lee H. Tate Hall** opens as the School of Law’s new home.

16 1929: **Brewer Fieldhouse**, named for Athletic Director Chester Brewer, opens to expand the 500-seat Rothwell Gymnasium.

1926

▶ **Thomas T. Railey**, Arts 1907, who works in the legal department of the Missouri Pacific Railway Co., writes lyrics for a new **alma mater** song: “Dear Alma Mater / Ev’ry son and daughter / With one accord to thee / Turns with pride, old Varsity / Missouri, great and grand / Loyalty and helping hand / We pledge anew to you.”



1927

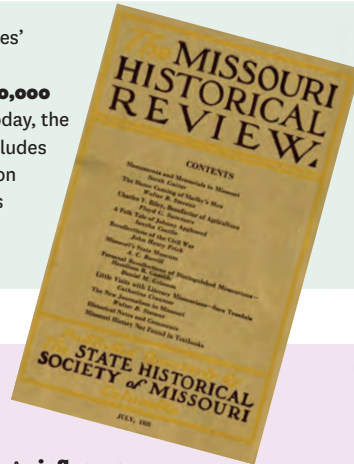
▶ MU geneticist **Lewis J. Stadler** co-discovers that radiation multiplies mutations in plants, a breakthrough that speeds development of new varieties. Under his leadership, MU’s genetics laboratory becomes a world-renowned center.



▶ **M.M. Ellis**, associate professor of physiology in the School of Medicine, discovers how to artificially propagate mussels, ensuring a steady supply of raw material for buttons, knife handles and other ornamental articles.



▶ The libraries’ collection surpasses **250,000 volumes**. (Today, the collection includes over 3.5 million print volumes and 1 million e-books.)



1928

▶ Mizzou, Iowa State, Kansas, Kansas State, Nebraska and Oklahoma break away from the smaller Missouri Valley schools to form the **Big Six Conference**.



1929

▶ An **influenza epidemic** forces the early dismissal of school.

▶ **Tennessee Williams**, Arts '31, arrives at Mizzou from St. Louis as Thomas Lanier. He goes on to become one of the foremost dramatic playwrights of the 20th century, his body of work featuring at least 26 characters, locations and situations from Mizzou and Columbia.



▶ More than **4,000 students** register: **2,649 men** and **1,388 women**. It would be 21 years before the first Black students are admitted.



1920s TUNES, FLICKS AND FASHION

Chart-toppers

Louis Armstrong - West End Blues (1928)

Al Jolson - April Showers (1921)

Gene Austin - My Blue Heaven (1927)



Scan and listen.



Picture Shows

Date night might include a viewing of *The Sheik* (1921), starring Rudolph Valentino; *The Kid* (1921), starring Charlie Chaplin; or director King Vidor's *The Big Parade* (1925).



Project Runway



Flapper-era gems in the Missouri Historic Costume and Textile Collection (mhctc.missouri.edu) include two below, from right, that belonged to Loreen Mohler Dorsey, BS Ed '30; and a turquoise silk gown worn by Mabel-Ruth Bandy Anheuser, BA, BA '25. Left, Beatrice Schmidt graced the pages of the 1928 *Savitar*.



"Button up your overcoat when the wind is free ..." Students gather in Jesse Hall's lobby between classes in 1924.



In 1926, (some) students likely celebrated the St. Louis Cardinals' first World Series Championship, beating Babe Ruth's New York Yankees in seven games.