«Huc' cum what they say and wear»

BY C. ROSS HUME, '98

One of the first two graduates of the university tells how the university's yell and the colors were chosen

Bill Jones was a long, lank Freshie from the Kiamichi mountains. His dad, Sam Jones, had come from McCurtain county to be present at Dad's day celebration. In a seat on the west side of the stadium he was watching the crowd gathering for the football game, and the many yells and colors were a puzzle to him. The writer was sitting close by and after awhile Sam turned and burst out, “Huc' cum what they say and wear?”

How many others have been puzzled by the same question, why they yell “Hi-rick-ety” and wear Cream and Crimson.

The story goes back thirty-five years to the fall of 1895, and the beginning of football and other activities at O. U. The 1895-6 catalog in my hand shows five sophomores, five freshmen, a total enrollment of 148 in the university, and a faculty of six professors and one librarian.

One of these special students was John A. Harts of Wichita, Kansas, who had been a student the previous year at Winfield college, and who organized and coached the first football team. Other students started the oratorical association and it became necessary to have a yell and colors so the vast student body would be able to recognize a friend and discover a foe.

The football team practiced until early December before it had its first and only game of the season being defeated by Oklahoma City high 34 to 0. The oratorical association had its contest during the holidays, when Maude DeCou won the first intercollegiate contest.

President Boyd selected a committee consisting of Miss May Overstreet, an instructor, Ruth House, L. W. Cole and Ray Hume, students to choose colors, and the committee chose cream and crimson as college colors. Of course special shades were chosen but when we went to get colors all shades of red and from white to yellow could be seen. The colors have never been changed.

L. W. Cole had been a Sigma Nu at Winfield college, and others were from there, and the first yell suggested was a variation of a fraternity yell,

“Hi-rick-e-ty-whoop-to-do,
Terra-ga-hoo, hell-a-ba-loo,
Uni-Uni-Uni-U.”

The last line alone was changed from “What's the matter with Sigma Nu.”
This yell was accepted and I recall trying to yell it at games and other contests, until I could hardly speak.

We realized that it was too long, and did not express the spirit of the school, and during the year 1897-98, a number of members of the glee club, which at that time was practicing for a tour, suggested retaining the first line of the old yell, and adding a new line, and at chapel service the new yell was given as follows,

“Hi-rick-e-ty-whoop-to-do,
Boomer, Sooner, O. K. U.”

In the files of the historical society I examined the files of the People's Voice of date of December 26, 1897, and found that “University correspondent” stated that on November 22, there was a grand piano recital, and that the new yell given was as stated above. The only change is “Okla. U.”

I was of the impression that it was about three months later but accept the above contemporaneous evidence as correct.

No one individual is entitled to the credit for either the colors chosen in 1895 nor for the yell adopted in 1897, but the following besides Cole who chose the first line had a part in the second line. C. C. Roberts, Roscoe Helvie, now deceased, Harry Ford and myself.

There was agitation and dispute in 1915 as to each, and at that time the testimony of several members of the faculty and student body was taken and is published in the 1916 annual.

It has been suggested that every syllable is significant of the history of Oklahoma, and I prepared the following legend to show how we have retained this for all time to come.

LEGEND
HI noon of the opening day for the race came; along the border the RICK-E-TY creaking rigs rushed across the plains; where before only the war WHOOP of the wild Indian and the howl of the lone coyote had been heard. The purpose of those sturdy pioneers was TO DO, or die if they failed to get a claim. Whether the BOOMER, who had sought the opening long and earnestly; or the SOONER, who had slipped in before the crack of the gun; or the later settler, who came to this “Land of the Fair God;” all had visions of churches, schools, and homes: and in time they hoped that their children could go to dear old OKLA U, whose name and yell are heard around the world.