

# 150Candles

BY M. PARISE

Happy 150th birthday, Kansas City! During the year 2000, Jazztown celebrates its sesquicentennial. Take a look at K.C. then and now.

Kansas City, once a prairie town and little else, has come a long way in 150 years! Looking back, there have been many events and people that have been responsible for shaping the town.

With the completion of the Hannibal Bridge in 1869, mail could then be carried (via the railway) to all areas of the town. This resulted in an increase in Kansas City's reputation as a natural

to be overcome. And as a direct result, today Kaycee is able to boast a strong state government, public school system and police department. But it doesn't end there. It's *people* that have a profound influence and strive to make a city great.

People such as: Count Basie and Charlie "Bird" Parker, jazz greats with a style all their own; Esther Brown, who



hub for business, industry and transportation. And in 1895, the first boulevard was designated, which is known as "Independence Avenue."

The city's first convention hall opened in 1899. At that time the Democratic National Convention was scheduled to be held at the convention hall on July 4, 1900. And although a fire burned the Hall to the ground just three months prior to the Convention, residents worked around the clock to rebuild the Hall. This was accomplished, and the Convention was held as scheduled.

In the past, many social obstacles had

helped desegregate public schools in Kansas City; Ada and Chester Franklin, publishers of *The Call*; Joyce Hall, founder of Hallmark Cards, Inc.; William Rockhill Nelson, co-founder of *The Kansas City Star*; ex-President Harry S. Truman, who was responsible for improved roadways, among many other accomplishments; William Volker, who contributed millions of dollars for Kansas City schools; John Bisceglia, who helped generations of Italian immigrants; and Clara and Russell Stover, co-founders of a candy company, just to name a few.



Today, Kansas City is a booming town of business, industry and the arts. Indeed, Kansas City's foreign trade zone is the country's largest inland. Kansas City is among the highest in combined car and truck production. And the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art is ranked among the nation's half-dozen top museums. Happy Birthday, Kaycee! There is much to celebrate.

Some special sesquicentennial events include the following:

- **Aviation Expo 2000** on August 12 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Kansas City Downtown Airport
- **The Kansas City Renaissance Festival** on weekends from September 2–October 15 from 10 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. at 628 N. 126th St.
- Salute the **Century Haunted House Tour** where you can hear the stories of local Kansas City hauntings on October 12 at 50 Plus Olathe Office, 420 E. Santa Fe, Olathe, KS
- **Harvest Ball** on November 4 at 2345 McGee
- **KC Walk 150** on December 2 from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. at the Lakewood Greenway area

*For these and other sesquicentennial events, contact the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce at (913) 491-3600.*