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UNIVERSITY PURCHASES RESIDENTIAL HALL

By Karen Dillon

Columbia, MO -- In a scramble to beat the New Year, University of Missouri-Columbia officials New Year's Eve afternoon completed the \$2.7 million purchase of Mark Twain Residential Hall.

The hurry to close the deal came from the owners, Columbia Associates, who wanted to beat changes in the federal income tax law that went into effect at midnight Dec. 31, 1986, said Kee Groshong, director of business services. Closing tax loopholes will make private ownership less lucrative, he said.

The University will take possession immediately and begin operation Jan. 19, 1987 the beginning of winter semester. The hall will operate under the existing agreement for the semester, Mr. Groshong said. Any changes will come next fall, he said.

In the past, the University has made several attempts to purchase the hall. This time the price was right -- about one-half million dollars less than the owners' initial asking. The price also is below the average of two previous appraisals.



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The tax-exempt interest rate of 7.5 percent is competitive with the going rate, Mr. Groshong said.

Mark Twain Hall has some unique features when compared to other University residential quarters. Topping the list is a swimming pool, air conditioning and semi-private bathrooms. Its centralized location, 515 S. Fifth St., is an added advantage.

"We'll be able to offer something to students we've not been able to offer before," said Roger Fisher, director of residential life.

Another reason the owners decided to sell was because of lack of occupancy, Mr. Groshong said. The building is capable of housing 408 students, but residency has dropped to 170.

Groshong and Fisher believe that because of the air conditioning, the University can increase residency in the summer. Only about 150 students live on campus during summer probably because of hot seasonal temperatures, Fisher said. The University has bed space for 6,200 students. Mark Twain Hall also could be used by parents visiting in the summer and people attending campus-sponsored events.

Terms of the sale require the University to put a down payment of \$550,000 cash with Columbia Associates carrying the remaining balance.

Built about the same time as the Lewis and Clark Halls and by the same owners, the Mark Twain facility opened in the fall of 1964. The University purchased the Lewis and Clark buildings more than 10 years ago.