

# The Battalion

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## Ross' letters donated to TAMU

Letters of Lawrence Sullivan Ross, TAMU president from 1891 to 1898, have been given to the university.

They are among a very few items of memorabilia of TAMU's seventh president held in University Archives, according to Dr. Charles Schultz, archivist.

The letters reflect many facets of Ross, whose statue stands in front of the Academic Building at TAMU.

Mrs. Charles E. Coombes Jr. and Mrs. Irl Larrimore Sr., sisters residing in San Angelo, made the gift to TAMU on the brink of its centennial. They are daughters of a Maj. Holmes to whom Ross wrote the letters.

Holmes was private secretary to Ross during his service as brigadier general in the Confederate army.

Containing almost 1,900 words, the letters are dated April 22, 1886; July 23, 1887; Feb. 13, 1891, and Dec. 20, 1891. An undated letter was apparently written between the last two.

The messages were posted from Waco prior to Ross' election as governor of Texas. Some are from Austin on Executive Office letterhead and three are from College Station. The latter three have Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas letter heads.

The last two include "L. S. Ross, President. W. L. Bringham, Vice-President" and "A. J. Rose, President Board of Directors, Salado, Texas" in the design.

Dr. Henry Alms, associate director of TAMU Libraries, called the letters "an excellent and especially meaningful gift to TAMU as its centennial approaches." TAMU will celebrate its 100th year in 1976 as Texas' first public institution of higher learning.

Another Ross letter, written on his first day in the presidency, was previously acquired. It was delivered by recently retired English professor Staley Creswell, a close friend of the Holmes sisters and Margaret Bierschwale. Her father and Holmes were real-estate partners in Mason.

dent noted "a fever (probably influenza) broke out among the boys in November and brought upon us 19 cases in all, two proving fatal after the boys were carried home."

Schultz said contents of the Ross letters will be of value in scholarly research. They can cast light on TAMU history, Texas politics and education.

Gov. Ross' handwriting was boldest in the second of the letters. It was written while he was governor. It averaged 61 words per page. The others averaged 140.

Dr. Schultz said the letters make regular reference to politics, especially to Gov. J. S. Hogg, Ross' successor in Austin.

Ross served two terms as governor. He was first elected in 1886 by 73 per cent of a 313,300 vote. His opponents were Republican A. M.

Cochran and Prohibition candidate E. L. Dohoney. As the Democratic incumbent against Marion Martin in 1888, he polled 72 per cent of almost 349,000 ballots.

Gov. Ross was elected president of TAMU July 1, 1890, "to take effect at the end of his present term of office as governor" Jan. 20, 1891, according to data assembled by former TAMU Archivist Ernest Langford. President Ross died in office here Jan. 3, 1898, at age 60.

His presidency marked a period of rebirth for TAMU. Enrollments climbed as Texas sent their sons "not to Texas A&M, but to Gov. Ross," George Sessions Perry's book on TAMU relates.

He is still honored at TAMU. The Cadet Corps' elite honor unit of seniors and juniors, the Ross Volunteers, bears his name. A campus street was named for him. Ross Hall, razed in 1955, stood across Military Walk from the YMCA more than 60 years.

"The Cadets are my friends," Pres. Ross wrote Holmes in the

Feb. 13 letter, "and the Board who have just concluded their meeting were much pleased with this fact."

Ross wrote briefly on the beginning of his administration: "No prancing or flourishes, but a complete acceptance of the situation, and a determination to make the most of it."

In the undated next letter, marked "confidential," Ross relates "I have had the Legislative Visiting Committee here for several days" and problems in connection with it.

The previous letter included "We have not yet been hounded with the Committee."

Sickness ran wild on campus in his first year. One of Ross' own children was ill, at one point to "a very dangerous" extent.

The sickness, he described, "continues very great, but not serious. From 30 to 60 in the hospital every day. The measles took quite a run, and is holding the fort with unabated force yet."

The letters are sprinkled with military metaphors, a reflection of Ross' Confederate States of America service and tour as a Texas cavalry officer and Indian fighter.

In the Dec. 20 letter, the presi-

"It was doubtless caused," he went on, "by the overcrowded conditions, and low seige of cistern water in consequence thereof."

Assessing the difficulties, President Ross informed Holmes that "the college has a poor reputation for health . . . and this will likely prove detrimental for a time to its prosperity."

The president through TAMU's 16th to 22nd years of existence started the letter with a cheery outlook. "We are now in our new house," he wrote, "which is in every way more comfortable and convenient than the (Governor's) Mansion."

Further along, Gov. Ross wrote, "My affairs here are moving so very harmonizingly and in such perfect accord that we begin to feel much attached to all hands."

"At times I have some petty annoyances with the boys. But they have conducted themselves splendidly with very few exceptions."

Later, he notes with apparent pride, that an individual of unindicated relation "has been at work for quite a time, getting \$2.25 a day . . ."

The letters also reveal something of Ross' personal life even at casual glance. He informed Maj. Holmes, for instance, that "your kind letter was like the invigoration of good wine."

## TAMU conducts shuttle research

After the current Apollo flight, there will be no more Americans in space until 1979. Then the next phase, the shuttle, will begin and is intended to turn space travel into almost a routine flight.

The solution to a new technological problem will make the shuttle possible. TAMU researchers are contributing to the effort of getting the craft into space.

Until now, men and instruments inside a space capsule had to be protected by a heat shield. The shuttle will be a larger spacecraft that must withstand temperatures ranging above 2,300 degrees Fahrenheit, more than 100 times.

NASA's solution is to cover the shuttle with silica tiles, six to eight inches square. Dr. David J. Norton and the Aerospace Engineering Department at TAMU are wind tunnel testing the flight characteristics of the tile.

"The space shuttle orbiter is roughly the size of a Boeing 707 and is to be reusable after a short turnaround period," Norton said. "For the difficult phase of the re-entry, large areas of the orbiter are covered with tiles."

"Since the tiles are flat and the vehicle surfaces are curved, there are height mismatches between tiles," he said. "NASA is concerned over the drag from the tile mismatches and how it penalizes the maneuverability of the shuttle as it returns to earth."

"The craft, because it lands unpowered, is already operating near the minimum possible lift-to-drag ratio needed for good performance," Norton said. "We've tested out combinations of height mismatch of the tile and angles of laying the tile. We give them estimates of the penalties in drag that five different configurations of the tiles will produce."

"The tile will increase the skin drag by about 50 per cent but this only represents a small amount of the total drag on the craft," Norton said. "Meanwhile the pilots will be spreading out the peak heat load with a leisurely glide path using airplane-like controls to land on a conventional runway. Although the tiles will have to dissipate the same amount of energy, it will have more time to do so."

## Campus briefs

### Grove to present 'Fail Safe'

Tonight's movie in the Grove will be "Fail Safe" with Henry Fonda. "Way Out West" will be Thursday night's feature, and "Paint Your Wagon" will be shown Friday. Saturday night will bring "The Greatest Show on Earth," with "Double Trouble" being shown Sunday. All of the movies will be shown outdoors unless there is a heavy downpour immediately prior to showtime. In the case of inclement weather, the movie will be moved to 701 of the Rudder Tower.

### Board to meet Friday

The Board of Directors of the TAMU System will meet Friday at 9:00 a.m. in the Board of Directors Wing of the MSC. The Board will consider approving the 1975-76 operating budget and the athletic council budgets. They will also consider establishment of a proposed Department of Anthropology. Board members will discuss giving the authorization for a Master of Science Degree in Ecology, a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Ecology, and a Master of Science Degree in Journalism.

### Hartford, Lang to perform

Town Hall will present a summer concert with John Hartford and Peter Lang on Monday, August 4 at 8: p.m. in the Rudder Center Auditorium. Hartford was the originator of the hit, "Gentle on My Mind," while twelve-string guitarist Lang should astound even the most sophisticated guitar buffs. A&M students will be admitted free, while non-student dates will cost \$1 and the general public will be charged \$2. Tickets are on sale in the Rudder Center Box Office.

### You're a good man

An average day in the life of Charlie Brown will be presented by the Aggie Players when the second MSC Dinner Theatre production gets under way on July 31, August 1, 7 and 8. The play "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown" will be staged in the MCS Ballroom in cooperation with the MSC Summer Directorate and Food Services Department. It will be accompanied by a pre-show act consisting of music and dancing from "Pippin" and "The Magic Show." Tickets, at \$4 per student and \$7 for non-students, are on sale in the Rudder Center box office.

### SG to sell discount tickets

Student Government has purchased 100 discount tickets from the ABC Interstate Theaters. The tickets are being sold for \$1.50, which represents a \$1 saving on each ticket purchased. These tickets will be good from the time of purchase until May of 1976. The passes will admit one person to any regular feature at Cinema I and II in College Station. Coming attractions include "Funny Lady," "Tommy," and "Once is Not Enough." The tickets may be obtained from 1:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday in the Student Government Office. Additional information may be obtained by calling 845-3051.

## Heart attack fells fireman

A Texas Firemen's Training School participant was hospitalized Monday with an apparent heart attack.

Robert K. Evans, fire marshal and chief of police at Kaufman, will be retained at St. Joseph's Hospital for observation. An FTS spokesman at TAMU said Evans "seemed to be all right."

The fire official, known in the Kaufman and University Park area as a dedicated public servant, was stricken while driving to his campus dormitory room after lunch Monday.

Evans phoned for ambulance assistance himself. FTS officials indicated Evans was not involved in training nor instruction at Bryton Firemen's Training Field. He was in class at the TAMU campus, where many participants spend the entire week.

The Municipal Firemen's Training School began Monday and continues through Friday.

## CS Council to discuss ordinances on electricity, water, animals

College Station City Councilmen are scheduled to consider ordinances establishing new water and electric rates at their 7 p.m. Thursday meeting.

The proposed ordinances are a result of an interim utilities agreement entered into between Bryan and College Station on July 10.

Ordinances regulating animals and fowl running at-large and the breeding and sale of animals and

fowl in commerce will also be considered.

Under the proposed ordinances, the police department can destroy an at-large animal "in the event capture cannot be effected promptly."

Councilmen will also hold a discussion concerning the drilling of the water well test hole to the Simsboro sand.

Requirements for installing sidewalks in new subdivisions are also scheduled for discussion.

## TAMU school trains Texas firemen



Clouds of black smoke in the sky signal that the annual fireman's training school is in session again. Every summer hundreds of firemen from all over Texas leave work (many without pay) to instruct or learn the latest techniques in firefighting.

The men are taught how to repair pumps and nozzles, care for hoses and strangely enough, how to breathe correctly.

Synthetic building materials used in modern homes, produce many toxic gases when burned. Of necessity firemen use oxygen tanks to

protect themselves from the fumes. Regulated breathing thus extends their air supply.

The men also are shown the latest products used to fight fires. Protein foams, which, when mixed with water, reduce the extinguishing time of a given fire, and "Light Water" an aqueous film forming solution manufactured by 3M Company, are two examples. "Light Water" combines with water and enables it to float on top of oil and other fuels.

From an environmental standpoint, most Bryan-College Station residents are angered a bit

by all the smoke. However, firemen trained here are able to put out fires more quickly, thus saving more lives and cutting fire-caused air pollution.

The fuel used to ignite the training fires is donated by many different companies. It is slightly contaminated, thus not fit for industrial or commercial use.

Four days of the week-long session are spent in the classroom. The fifth is spent on the field fighting short but hot refinery-type fires, apartment, commercial, and multi-story building blazes. Firemen also

extinguish flaming tank-trucks, cars and natural-gas storage tanks.

The classes, offered through the engineering extension service, are the only ones like them in the country. They have been conducted for Texas firemen for several decades. This school, located adjacent to Eastwood Airport, is holding a public demonstration tonight at 8 p.m. Among the scheduled demonstrations are the Firebird, a firefighting helicopter from Ft. Hood, a rocket-propelled line thrower, and an air rescue bag.

Photos and story  
by Tom Kayser

