

**LOCAL HISTORY OF
A. & M. COLLEGE**

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languages; R. P. W. Morris, applied mathematics and military tactics; Dr. D. Port Smith, college physician, and General H. P. Bee, steward of the mess hall and superintendent of the farm. Four three-year courses were offered as follows: (1) A course in literature, (2) a course in mechanics and engineering, (3) a course in language and literature, and (4) a course in military tactics.

Since there were no shops and no professor of engineering, no farm, no equipment and no conception of scientific agriculture, it can easily be seen that the first two courses amounted to nothing. How the authorities could see any need of a three-year course in military tactics, we cannot understand. Tho called the A. and M. College, the school was nothing more than a literary institution of the old type. In fact, it is said that public opinion demanded such training and that educators of that day could conceive of no other kind. The vast subject of agriculture, with its multitude of subdivisions, was placed under the care of the professor of chemistry! The courses were at first almost entirely elective.

Early Conditions.

The college opened with an attendance of six students. However, the number swelled to 106 before the end of the first year, and 331 before the end of the second. The accommodations were not sufficient for anything like this number. The second and third floors of Gathright, the second, third and part of the fourth floors of the Main Building were used for barracks. So crowded did conditions become that some of the students were placed in the president's office, some in the hallways and some even in the tower rooms. The students owned their own axes, cut their own wood at the common wood pile, and carried it up in their arms. The first floor of Gathright was used as a mess hall and the first floor, only, of the Main Building was available for class rooms.

Prof. Robert Smith in his history tells of conditions on the campus in early days. "The campus was such a wild waste that it was not considered safe for children to be out at night. The howling of wolves furnished an every night and all night serenade. On one occasion a wild animal wandering over the campus threw the whole community into a frenzy of excitement. An alarm was given and the whole battalion of some thirty students and professors turned out to kill it, but in the high weeds of the campus it easily escaped." We learn from other sources that deer were fre-

quently seen on the campus, and that wolves sometimes stuck their noses in the door of what was then used as the mess hall.

From the writings of W. A. Trenkman, '79, we gather the following information. "The rapid increase in attendance brought with it other troubles than lack of room and overwork for the teachers. Many parents imagined that the military discipline at A. and M. would prove a cure-all for their wayward sons, and many of the latter came with their minds set on getting just as much fun as possible out of their banishment. Major Morris and his successor, Captain Olmstead of the U. S. Army (the first "Bull") had their hands full in trying to control these young rebels. Strict regulations only added zest to their violation, and stolen excursions at night were all the more delightful when all the floors were guarded with sentries by fixt bayonets. A lightning rod furnished the means of escape from the fourth stoop. Gambling and drinking crompt out, and it was only by the united efforts of the faculty and the more thoughtful students that a better spirit got the upper hand. The students officers, especially, were in a trying position, for young men who had not learned to respect parents or teachers at home were reluctant to obey the orders of fellow students wearing the stripes of corporal, sergeant, or other officer. Finally the precedent was set and the rule established that certain differences between officers and privates were not to be taken before the commandant but were to be settled in the primitive method by an honest fist fight, and while this method was not strictly military results were quite satisfactory."

In the very beginning of its history the college thus came to be looked upon as a reformatory and this reputation persisted for many years thereafter.

Literary Societies.

The literary nature of the new college was shown by the fact that in the first year, 1876, a portion of the students met and organized a literary society which they named in honor of the great Texas hero, Stephen F. Austin. This society grew rapidly in numbers and prestige and came to wield considerable influence in the lives of the students.

Three years later a rival appeared, apparently having been organized by revolting members of the original society. This second society was named the "Calliopean," in honor of the Grecian goddess, Calliope, goddess of heroic poetry and literature.

These societies both met on the mathematics; John T. Hand, ancient languages; William A. Banks, modern

fourth floor of the Main Building. The historian of the Calliopean in 1895 states: "Not more than ten years ago the societies were noted for throwing dead animals of the feline species across the hall at each other. But this being a progressive age, they have discarded the cats and now throw bricks.

"Last February the societies resolved themselves into a legislative body for a session of two months. There was a big talk about which should act the part of the Senate, which was finally decided by pitting 'heads and tails' with a five-cent piece, both treasuries being low at the time. The Austin man, 'by a simple twist of the wrist,' won, and his society became the Senate, the Calliopean the House of Representatives.

The First Mess Hall Man.

The first steward of the mess hall was Gen. H. P. Bee, a gallant soldier and dignified Southern gentleman. Out of the generosity of his heart, he fed the boys so well that he came near bankrupting himself. His wife, too, was a motherly, kind-hearted woman, who never let a sick cadet go uncared for, even tho he were merely home-sick.

Dissensions Arise.

The board of directors and the original faculty had a stupendous undertaking before them when they attempted to build up an agricultural and mechanical college, for the few schools of that type then in existence were but experiments themselves. It is not strange, then, that the true purpose of the college was not at first carried out, and that the institution was made a classical one.

The chronicle of James Hayes Quarles will give an idea of the difficulties under which the faculty labored: "At one time six professors with an assistant or two were attempting to teach over 300 young men. This, without apparatus, agricultural or mechanical, chemical or physical. The students were crowded together. Discontent arose and complaints were heard. The attempt to accomplish impossibilities resulted in failure. Then it was that those who for various reasons sought grounds for complaint readily found them. Unfavorable criticism soon discovered the great perversion of the course of instruction. A hostile spirit was developing in the Legislature and in the newspapers. The college was named a nursery of military aristocracy. The farmers looked coldly upon it and pronounced it a humbug. Beset by complaints growing louder every day, the faculty, with no means to remedy the evils complained of, fell into dissensions among themselves. These at last necessitated a meeting of the directors on the 18th of November, 1879, at which meeting the college was reorganized by the election of a new faculty."

Bernard Sbis.

Bernard Sbis, the present steward, who had been placed in charge of the mess hall on January 1st, 1878, and L. L. McInnis of Bryan, who remained with the college for many years thereafter, were the only two who were fortunate enough not to be included in the wholesale dismissal. Mr. Sbis was born in Austria and reared in New Orleans. In 1864 he opened the Commercial Hotel in Matamoras, Mexico, and four years later he opened the Washington Hotel and Restaurant at Galveston. In 1874 he built the Grand Southern Hotel in the same city, it being destroyed by fire in 1887. From Galveston he came to A. and M.

Somewhere along in this period the

negro janitor, "Uncle" Dan, came to the college and has now served it faithfully in his humble capacity for something like 35 years. The Long Horn one year devoted a page to this unique character.

**SOUTHWESTERN DEFEATED
BY A. & M. FIVE 17 TO 10**

Interesting Contest Held on College Grounds, With Gilfillan as Star.

The Southwestern University basket ball team met defeat Tuesday night at the hands of the A. and M. squad by the score of 17 to 10. The game was fast thruout and proved one of the best contests staged here this season.

Gilfillan proved the star for the Farmers. The visitors had two good men in Hay and Betts, whose work stood out above the remainder of the team. The line-up was:

Hanson, Gilfillan	Hay, Betts
Forwards	
Braumiller	McCorkle
Center	
Barnes, Burkett	Weimers, Smith
Guards	
Umpire—Firth (Chicago).	

The Campus Reading Club has given \$10.00 toward a reading tabale for the Y. M. C. A.

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GABY DESLYS

In a Masterpiece, "HER TRIUMPH"

Thursay, Feb. 25th, Tyrone Power in "ARISTOCRACY"
Coming, Blanche Sweet in "WARRENS OF VIRGINIA"