

Color, Humor Mark Old A&M

School Celebrates 89th Anniversary

Texas A&M's colorful past began 89 years ago in the fall of 1876 when 40 students attended the school's first classes.

A&M, the state's oldest institution of higher learning, has grown to house a studentbody of over 8,000 and an academic structure of over 50 sections and divisions.

In July of 1862 President Abraham Lincoln authorized the Morrill Act permitting the Federal government to offer each state a grant of public lands which could be used to raise funds for establishing colleges specializing in agriculture and the mechanical arts.

In the first year of its existence, A&M's enrollment jumped from 40 on Oct. 4, to 100 in January and 331 in the spring.

In these early years, accommodations were insufficient for anything like this number. The second and third floors of Gathright Hall and the second, third and part of the fourth floor of the Main Building were used for barracks.

During cold winter months, students kept these rooms warm with fire wood. Each student had his own axe, cut his own wood at the common wood pile and carried it to his room in his arms.

Wood piles were kept outside each building with the owner's name above each, roughly on this order, "This is John Jones' woodpile. Keep your hands off of it!"

The first floor of Gathright

Hall was used as a dining hall with classes held on the first floor of the Main Building.

As for the actual campus in these early days, one professor said:

"The campus was such a wild waste that it was not considered safe for children to be out at night. The howling of wolves provided nightly serenades. On one occasion a wild animal wandering over the campus threw the whole community in a frenzy of excitement. An alarm was given and the whole battalion of students and some professors turned out to kill it but in the high weeds of the campus it easily escaped."

The conduct of the professors also left room for improvement during the memorial '76. Following complaints from throughout the state the Board of Directors fired the entire faculty.

A mathematics professor showed his contempt for being fired by going fishing. "I can't be bothered," he said.

In the late '70's and mid '80's, Garland James succeeded Gathright as president, four buildings were constructed and the entire curriculum was revised.

The school slumped badly in the '80's until Lawrence Sullivan Ross was named president in 1890. Once the state legislature even considered abandoning the college, with the buildings to be used as a Negro insane asylum.

Ross literally saved the school from destruction. During his eight-year reign, enrollment increased tremendously, the first Corps trip was held in Houston property value reached \$389,502.64 and most of all, the college for the first time acquired a good name among citizens of the state.

Intercollegiate football first served to unite the student body in 1892 with the first clash with Texas University in 1894. In 1902, the Aggie were named "Champions of the South" after beating Tulane.

First football games were played at the Bryan Fair Grounds, with bleachers accommodating 500. These bleachers were later moved to the campus, and Kyle Field came into being.

During the first years of the century such events as a cane rush between freshmen and sophomores caused quite a stir.

One morning mysterious noises had been tacked up at various places forbidding any freshmen to carry a cane past the band stand between 4:30 and 4:45 p.m. At the blast of a bugle, freshmen and sophomores emerged from every hall, clad in old clothes.

A freshman, attended by a

bodyguard, attempted the feat and the struggle was on.

Reinforcements arrived and the battle raged for two hours, but without success on either side.

President H. H. Harrington's administration was rocked by a student strike. After several days, most of the students went home. One student, crossing the Brazos, was met by his father with a shotgun. He returned. Harrington resigned. The same fate befell the administration of Col. R. T. Milner, and he resigned also.

Two tragedies enabled the campus to first take on its present appearance. In 1911 the mess hall burned and in 1912 Old Main was gutted by fire.

Soon afterwards Sbis Dining Hall and the Academic Building sprang up. Also, not long afterward, Guion Hall was built.

World War I gave the school its first test. The entire 1917 senior class enlisted. More than 2000 Aggie grads served in the war and 52 gave their lives for democracy.

After the war the Reserve Officers Training Corps was established and A&M immediately became a member. With the change, the famed Aggie grey gave way to khaki and olive drab.



LAST VISIT TO A LANDMARK

Charlie (Babe) Lopez paid the old Aggieland Inn a last visit this summer before the building was razed. He helped lay the foundations for the building in 1925 and worked there most of the years until 1950.

Especially To Babe Lopez

Aggieland Inn Was Tradition

A landmark in the life of Charlie (Babe) Lopez as well as Texas A&M was removed when the old Aggieland Inn was razed this summer. Lopez helped lay the building's foundation 40 years ago and served as its head waiter.

The Aggieland Inn was once the only state-owned hotel in Texas. The inn was closed in 1950 when the Memorial Student Center opened and was converted into the Counseling and Testing Center. The A&M Board of Directors approved plans to raze the building this summer.

Charlie Lopez' memories of helping lay the foundation are

clear. He recalled his father also worked in the labor crew.

"They told us some supplies played out and we'd have to wait a week before doing anymore work," Charlie said. "I couldn't wait, so I went back to work at Sbis Hall for Mr. W. A. Duncan."

"When it opened I worked one meal at the mess hall and then two at the Aggieland Inn, or however they needed me," Charlie said.

He left the campus job twice but returned to stay in June, 1935. In 1943 he was head waiter at the inn's coffee shop when the

draft called him. He returned to the inn after the war and, when it was closed, assumed store-keeper duties in the Chemistry Department.

"It was a very nice place to work," he said of the coffee shop. "We got acquainted with practically everyone on the campus." Charlie used "special coffee and the best of equipment" to brew java which helped make the inn a popular place.

University Archivist Ernest Langford records: "Its reputation as a place where one could get a nice-cool room and meals at moderate cost spread throughout the state."

Rudder Becomes President Of State-Wide System; Other Staff Changes Made

Texas A&M President Earl Rudder assumed duties as chief administrative officer for the state-wide A&M System Sept. 1.

The joint position of university and system president was created by the Board of Directors last spring. Rudder replaced Dr. M. T. Harrington who served as chancellor since 1959.

Harrington becomes coordinator of international programs for A&M.

Rudder was appointed vice president of A&M on Feb. 1, 1958, coming over from his post of Texas Land Commissioner.

In other staff changes during the summer:

— Fred W. Dollar was appointed food services director. Dollar, '44, waited in both dining halls while a student here.

— Jim Lindsey, director of University Information, was named chief of the system's state-wide information program. All information programs in the system were consolidated under Lindsey's direction.

— Joe Buser, director of the "Life Line" radio program and a former Battalion editor, rejoined the A&M staff as assistant director of information and supervisor of publications.

— Rupert C. Woodward took over the reins as acting librarian. He will serve in that capacity until a successor is named for Robert A. Houze who became librarian at Trinity University.

— William H. Little of College Station joined the library system as a junior cataloger, after serving as an instructor in the Department of History and Government last year.

— Richard L. Puckett has become head of the library's circulation department. He is a re-

tired Air Force major.

— Harold Gaines, a retired Army Lt. Col., has assumed duties as student programs advisor for the Memorial Student Center.

— Vergil B. Clark, A&M staff member since 1957, is now director of physical plant for the University of West Virginia.

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