

A&M's Past Dates Back To 1876

Texas A&M's colorful past began 90 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 student body of over 9,000 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.

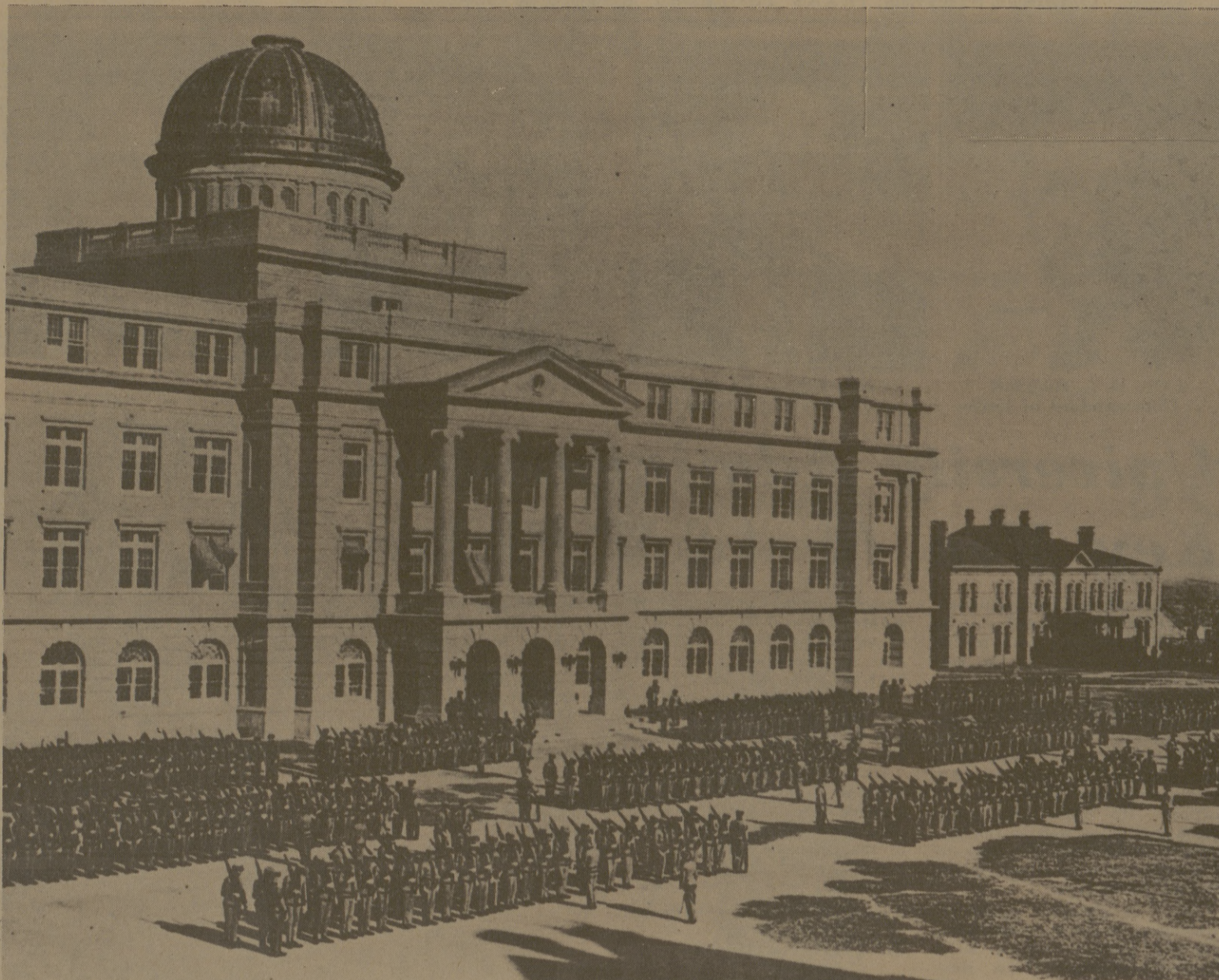
During cold winter months, students kept these rooms warm with fire wood. Each student had his own axe, cut his own wood at the common wood pile and carried it to his room in his arms.

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



TEXAS A&M IN 1915
... famous Corps of Cadets assemblies in front of Academic Building in center of campus.



EARLY CADETS AT A&M
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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 Jones 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 Aggies 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 notices 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, at the proper hour, groups of 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 Sbsa 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 2,000 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.

A&M-Operated Hospital Opened To All Students

The Texas A&M Hospital, which provides all the health services for students, is one of the best equipped college hospitals in the Southwest.

Facilities available include physical therapy, state approved laboratory and an X-ray department.

These are only part of the various services provided for the Aggies who pay the health fee at registration time.

The medical staff includes specialists in the fields of medicine;

surgery, eye, ear, nose and throat; and mental hygiene.

The hospital also has a staff of registered nurses on duty at all times when the college is in session.

Office hours in the Clinic are from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 8 a.m. to noon on Saturdays. Emergency cases and those needing hospitalization will be seen at any hour.

Ambulance service may be obtained for emergency cases by calling the hospital.

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