

Oldest state university

A&M has long past

Texas A&M's history began 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 15,000 and an academic structure of more than 60 departments.

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' wood pile. 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 the 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 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.

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 bandstand 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.

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.

A&M attracts National Merits scholars

Texas A&M University will enroll this fall approximately 50 National Merit Scholarship winners, nearly five-fold increase over the 1970-71 school year.

The scholars are selected by a National Merit Scholarship Corp. committee of college and school counselors from finalists drawn from a 250,000 students who took the NMSC qualifying test in early 1970.

About 1,000 unrestricted National Merit \$1,000 Scholarships and approximately 2,000 sponsored four-year Merit Scholarships ranging from \$100 to \$1,500 a year have been made to students across the U. S. in the 16th annual program.

"Over the last several years, Texas A&M has definitely attracted a much higher number of scholastic achievers among graduating high school seniors," noted Robert M. Logan, director of A&M's student aid office.

"Students, high school seniors, counselors, parents and people over the state have learned of the exceptionally fine quality education obtainable at A&M," Logan added.

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FRESHMEN POLISH statue of Lawrence Sullivan Ross. Each year different groups compete to see whose freshmen will be the first to polish the former A&M president.

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