

The first 100 years

# First Board of Directors meet

By DON MIDDLETON  
Staff Writer

As Texas A&M approaches its centennial, we begin to look to the future and the promise of continued growth and expansion in all fields. But to ignore the long and colorful history of the University as we near this monumental occasion would be tragic. This column will be devoted to exploring the past century from the inception of the college to the present.

On July 2, 1862 President Abraham Lincoln signed into law a bill entitled "An act donating public lands to the Several States and Territories which may provide colleges for the benefit of agriculture and the mechanic arts," better known as the Morrill Land Grant College Act.

The bill granted each state 30,000 acres of land for each Senator and Representative representing that state in the United States Congress, up to one million acres. The land was then to be sold at public auction at a maximum of \$1.25 per acre and the proceeds invested in stocks or bonds yielding a minimum of 5% yearly interest.

The act further stated that revenue from the stocks would be used to establish and support at least one college where the main studies would be agriculture and the mechanic arts, with military tactics to be included in the course of study.

The original provisions of the bill gave the states two years to take advantage of the act, and set five years as the limit for completing the first college once a state approved the

bill. But at that time the country was in the midst of civil war and another clause of the bill prevented any state in condition of secession or rebellion from taking advantage of the bill.

The bill was amended on July 23, 1866 to extend the acceptance deadline until July 23, 1869. It was then that the Texas Legislature approved a resolution accepting the provisions of the act. The resolution was made law on November 1, 1866 by the signature of Governor James W. Throckmorton.

The state was given 186,000 acres of land, 30,000 each for its two senators and four representatives in Congress. The land was sold in 1871 at 87 cents an acre and the proceeds from the sale, \$156,000, invested in 7% gold frontier defense bonds.

In accordance with the provisions of the Morrill Act, on April 17, 1871 Governor Edmund J. Davis signed an act of the Texas Legislature which created The Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas.

A subsequent act authorized funds to be appropriated from the State school fund for the construction of buildings for the college since the Morrill Act prohibited use of the interest received from the sale of lands for that purpose.

Davis later approved the establishment of a board of commissioners, consisting of three legislators, whose job it was to locate a suitable location for the college. The men chosen were Senator J. G. Bell and Representatives M. D. Lorraine and F. E. Grothaus. Lorraine later died and was replaced by George B. Slaughter.

After considering sites in Grimes County, Austin, San Marcos, Waco, and Tehuacana the commission settled on spot in Brazos County six miles from the town of Bryan.

The Legislature appropriated \$40,000 in April, 1874 to begin construction on the campus buildings, and subsequently appropriated a total \$112,000 on three different dates to complete the campus.

With the location chosen and construction under way, the legislature created a Board of Directors to begin the administration of college business. The board was to be made up of the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and six directors, one from each congressional district elected by joint ballot of both legislative branches.

Each director was paid \$5 per diem for each day of Board meetings up to \$100 a year. In addition, each was allowed \$5 per 25 miles traveled from his place of residence to the meeting.

The first meeting of the Board was convened on June 1, 1875 in Bryan. In attendance were Governor Richard Coke, Lt. Governor R. B. Hubbard, Speaker of the House Guy M. Bryan, and Directors B. H. Davis and C. S. West.

The business of the meeting consisted of establishment of a committee to set up a curriculum, the decision to create a faculty consisting

of a president and five professors, and the nomination of Jefferson Davis as President of the College.

When the Board met again on July 15, 1876, Speaker Bryan had been replaced by T. R. Bonner and the four directors who had failed to attend the first meeting were again absent.

The curriculum committee submitted a list of faculty positions which included a President and professor of Moral and Mental Philosophy; Professor of Pure Mathematics; Professor of Ancient Languages; Belles Lettres, History and English Literature; Professor of Modern Languages; Professor of Chemistry, Practical Agriculture and Natural Sciences; and Professor of Applied Mathematics, Civil Engineering and Military Tactics.

The Board approved the positions and fixed the instructors' salaries at \$2,250 per year with the president's salary set at \$3,000.

After being informed by Governor Coke of Davis' refusal of the presidency, the board reviewed a list of applicants for instructors and decided on Thomas S. Gathright to fill the post. Chosen for the faculty were Alexander Hogg, John T. Hand, W. A. Banks, C. P. B. Martin, and R. P. W. Morris.

Other officers appointed were William Falconer as college secretary; H. P. Bee, Steward and superintendent of the farm; and Dr. De Port

Smyth, college physician.

The business of the board meeting on July 24, 1876 ranged from trivial to historical. The secretary of the Board was instructed to get a suitable book in which to record the proceedings of the Board. Perhaps the directors wanted to insure that the decision they were about to make would be preserved for the future, or perhaps the secretary was in the habit of taking notes on tablecloths. Whatever the reason, the meeting continued and the minutes were recorded.

The only other order of business was to set the date for the formal opening of the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, the fourth day of October, 1876.

## A&M entries win in district film competition

TAMU's new movie, "Research Impact," won first place in institutional film competition sponsored by the Southwest District of the American College Public Relations Association.

The university also placed third in annual reports. The entry was TAMU's 1974 Sea Grant annual report.

The movie which won over entries from colleges and universities throughout a four-state area emphasizes TAMU's various research activities while presenting an overview of the university.

## Allowance stop called political

"Elimination of the depletion allowance on large oil and gas producers was politically motivated and will deprive producers of \$1.7 billion of exploration funds per year, send gasoline prices up three cents per gallon, and hurt employment growth prospects in Texas," says Dr. W. Philip Gramm, a TAMU economics professor.

Dr. Gramm, speaking at a meeting of the Private Truck Council of America, earlier this month, called on the Congress "to explain why it eliminated the depletion allowance for large oil and gas producers, but did not alter the depletion allowances given every other major mineral extraction industry in America."

"What reason except political reprisal can explain keeping the depletion allowance on sand and gravel and eliminating it on oil and gas?" asked Dr. Gramm, who serves as a consultant on energy-related matters to both the U. S. and Canadian governments.

"It just does not make sense to take steps to stifle investment in the petroleum industry when we are being robbed by the O.P.E.C. nations."

Dr. Gramm charged that price ceilings on natural gas have stifled output, created foreign dependence, and increased consumer prices.

"In 1972 about half of the petroleum imports into the U. S. consisted of heavy oil which is used as a substitute for natural gas for heating homes and generating electricity," Gramm noted.

He said economists estimate that if natural gas price ceilings were eliminated, output would expand, natural gas would undersell heavy oil by one-half, and imports would fall off as would fuel prices.

"Having done so well regulating interstate gas sales, the federal government now wants the power to regulate intrastate sales," Gramm said.

He pointed out that intrastate regulatory legislation not only would give the federal government the power to set prices on sales within a state but to set up allocation priorities as well. Under such regulation, the federal government could force the sale of natural gas produced in Texas to consumers in Massachusetts even if Texas consumers needed the gas and were willing to pay for it.

"There are a lot of fancy words to use in describing such allocation mechanisms," Gramm said, "but legalizing theft is quite adequate."

Gramm told the private truck operators that America has the petroleum needed to keep their trucks rolling and to keep the U. S. economy moving ahead, but government controls have hamstrung the oil and gas industry, produced foreign dependence and cost the American consumer higher prices and shortages.

"The federal government forgets that the only place that consumption comes before production is in the dictionary," Gramm stated. "To consume more, we must produce more and only private industry can do the job."

"We are in the midst of a great wave of exploration which, if allowed to continue and expand, will give us fuel to turn the wheels of industry," Dr. Gramm concluded. "While government can do much to help in basic research funding for the development of new fuels, it can best help in the development of fossil fuels by getting out of the way."



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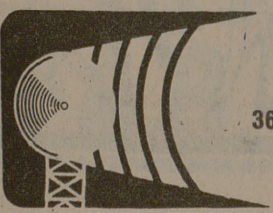
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