

The first 100 years

College of Agriculture had rough start

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Contributor

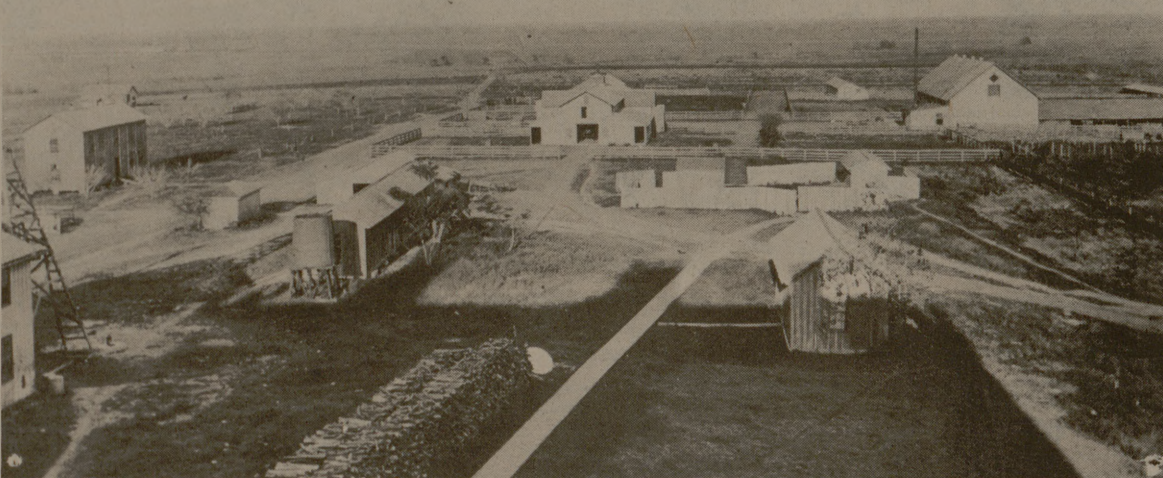
Amidst today's progressive agricultural programs at Texas A&M, it is difficult to imagine the College of Agriculture ever experiencing near membership due to the rough conditions and mismanagement. Today's agricultural instruction, research and extension service would have flabbergasted the early lecturers and students of the A&M College.

After the opening of the college in October, 1876, President T. S. Whright, unfamiliar with "agricultural and mechanical endeavors," concentrated on a course curriculum based on "elective studies with the sciences as its great central idea." Little was done to foster an agricultural program, outside the small college garden and the president's pet turkey.

With the wholesale resignation of the faculty in November, 1879, and the appointment of Colonel John G. James as president, the agricultural course of study was finally fully included. In a report by Colonel James on July 1, 1880 he said of the early college instruction: "instead of specializing the study of agriculture, horticulture, stock-breeding, the mechanic arts, and thus focusing a juster appreciation of the unity and importance of those great industrial pursuits the college sedulously cultivated a sentiment antagonistic to the development of these branches of study. It is in spirit and in fact, as far as circumstances permitted, a strictly military college, top-grafted with a more prominent military feature."

Colonel James began at once to attempt a viable agriculture program. In order to obtain some idea of the type of work conducted on the A&M farm along the Brazos, James requested a full report from Captain Kellner, Farm Superintendent. Kellner's first annual report was as follows:

"On July 11th, 1879, I arrived at the College, and went to work with the laborers to save some fodder and hay. A corn crop was not made last



The A&M Farm, 1890, as seen from the top floor of Old Main, looking eastward.

year. There was only a small area under plow, and the place over-run with weeds. In the fall I sowed some seventy acres in wheat, rye, barley and oats. The frost at Christmas 1879, killed nearly all of it. Only 5 1/2 acres of oats I have harvested, which had rusted badly. The rye, being also badly rusted, I plowed under, and I now have a fine field of millet on the rye land.

I planted potatoes very early, before Christmas, because the seed potatoes received from Philadelphia took the dry rot. The frost March 13th (when the potatoes bloomed fine), cut them down, and we only harvested two barrels of small potatoes, which were consumed at the mess hall.

Of corn I planted 9 varieties, of which the "Golden,"

from Pulaski Illinois, seems to be the most promising. His corn was sent here by his excellency, Governor O. M. Roberts.

The corn was partly killed by the frost 13th of March, and rotted afterwards in the

ground. Two-thirds of the corn I had to replant, causing extra labor.

Of cotton I planted seven acres, which does not promise much, but will pay for the labor expended. Causes are poor soil and weedy lands.

The College owns three mules and two breeding sows, six shoats and three little ones. These animals (the hogs) I purchased from the money received from the sale of garden seeds to the professors of the College.

Kellner, as a result of the poor 1879-1880 season, commented, "With all your plowing and subsoiling you must have a basis to grow your crops from, and this is manure. (The soil at the A. and M. farm is the poorest in Texas.) Artificial fertilizers are very nice, convenient to handle, but they do not at present justify the purchase."

Little did he know then, that the heavy clay consistency of the soil was the prime cause of his problems. In time this was overcome.

Professor C. C. Georgeson was selected as the head of the "Department of Agriculture and Horticulture" by James in mid-1880. His main objective was to establish daily lectures in agriculture and farm management. Freshman for the first time, in late 1880 studied courses related to agriculture. Labs were established, the dairy herds enlarged, new land cleared and the college farm fenced.

President James' insistence on a well organized progressive agricultural program set the mood for Texas A&M's agricultural endeavors.

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Grant aids top students

Texas A&M University educational researchers have been awarded a \$60,000 federal grant to gift students with career decisions, announced U.S. Rep. Olin

Teague said the Department of Health, Education and Welfare gave the grant to Texas A&M to support a project involving students at A&M Consolidated High School College Station.

Directed by Drs. Christopher Nash and William Nash, educational psychologists, the project will help the high school identify gifted students and help them in career decisions.

Nash and Borman's procedures will be carefully viewed by HEW for possible application as a career education model in other cases, said the congressman.

"I am very pleased with this grant because of its efforts to encourage talented young people to make contributions to our society," Teague

A&M Consolidated students will go through three phases in this program.

They will spend a full quarter in the counseling laboratories at Texas A&M's Educational Psychology Department exploring various career options. They then work in a department on campus with a professor in a chosen field to gain first-hand knowledge of the discipline. Third-phase activities include an internship in a business in the community or in a job-related area of interest.

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