

A&M facts, figures and trivia

Campus buildings source of history, university legends

By Katsy Pittman

FEATURE WRITER

For all you Aggie fans who think you know everything about A&M history, see if you can guess the following campus buildings.

- This campus building once sheltered visiting Budweiser Clydesdales.
- This is probably the most commonly mispronounced building on campus.
- Cows and pigs occasionally escaped from this central campus building and roamed around campus.
- The construction costs for this building ran 94 cents over budget.
- This building is now being renovated for more than 27 times its original cost.
- This building is rumored to be the home of the ghost of a campus employee.

If you weren't able to answer all of the previous questions, there may be some interesting campus trivia you'd like to know.

For instance, it was the Pavilion that served as an overnight hotel to those famous Clydesdales. The building was converted from an animal arena to a registration center in 1981. Computer terminals and a snack bar now take the place of a dirt floor, arena, and cattle stalls.

The exterior of the Pavilion looks about the same today as it did when it was first built. However, the origi-

nal 1916 plans called for a portico to be supported by columns, which then would be supported by the backs of kneeling concrete bulls.

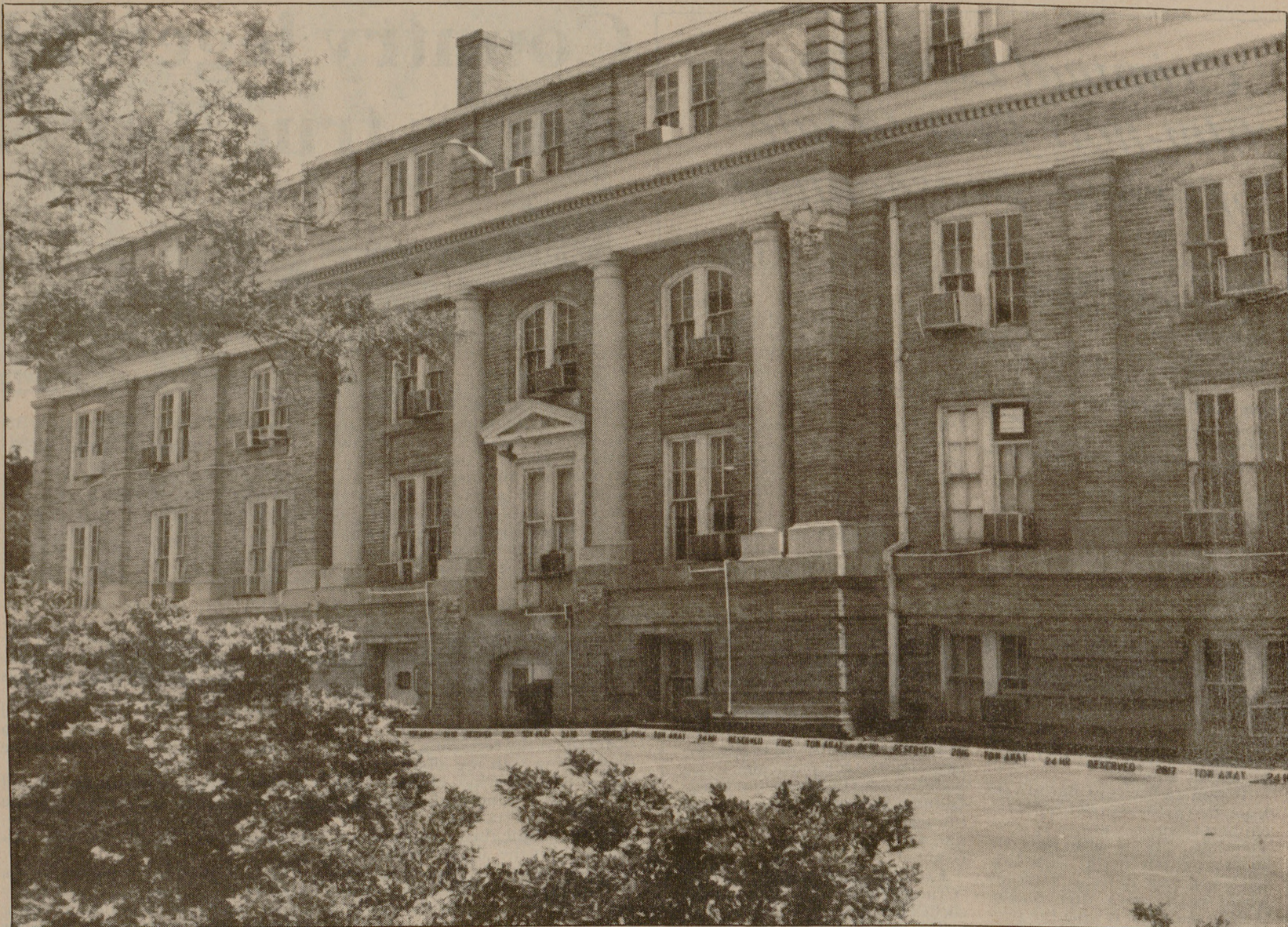
The most commonly mispronounced building on campus? It's most likely that of our favorite dining hall — Sbsisa.

University archives show it was named after Bernard Sbsisa, the official supervisor of subsistence in the early 1900s. Rumor has it that Sbsisa only served one meal late. That one delay was when the old Mess Hall burned down on the morning of Nov. 11, 1911. Breakfast that morning wasn't served until 10 a.m.

For those interested in getting down the correct pronunciation, it should be pronounced as "spee-zah" instead of "suh-bee-suh."

The building responsible for a little animal frolic a few years back was none other than the Animal Industries building, across from the Pavilion on Spence Street. Although the building with stone cows' skulls adorning its roof is used now primarily for more traditional classroom purposes, it once served as the campus slaughterhouse.

There is also a legendary ghost of the Animal Industries building — that of meat laboratory manager Roy Simms. During routine meat cutting 25 years ago, Simms' knife slipped and cut straight through the femoral artery in his groin. For many years, late-shift workers in the



Goodwin Hall, the oldest building on campus, was constructed in 1908 at a cost of \$53,000 — 94 cents over budget.

Photo by Dean Saito

building complained of eerie noises and elevator ghost rides in the dark hours of the night.

The Grand Old Dame of campus — the Academic Building — was built in 1914 for \$225,000. Built to replace the Old Main building which burned to the ground in 1912, the Academic Building today is still considered one of the finest architectural monuments of its time.

A little-known fact about the Academic Building has to do with its structural designer, Professor F.E. Giesecke. According to Ernest Langford's book, "Here We'll Build the Campus," workers were unable to drill through floors to install drinking fountains in the early 1930s.

Questioned about the mesh of

steel bars between floors, Giesecke is reported to have said, "I knew a whole lot less about reinforced concrete than I do now. So I just figured out the amount of steel for which I thought was necessary and doubled it!"

The other architectural wonder on campus — the Systems Administration building — is famed for its marble, huge urns, and its 14 grand columns.

Ever wonder who the helmeted, bearded man is who adorns the top of each column? Legend has it that it was the architect's idealized portrait of the typical A&M student.

The building whose construction

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Steam tunnels lure students into darkness; mystery awaits beneath A&M sidewalks

By Donald Kopf

FEATURE WRITER

Many people on campus know about them, but few people actually have dared to explore them. With about 4.5 miles of underground passageways, the steam tunnels have long been a source of curiosity for Texas A&M students.

Built in the 1930s to house utility lines extending from the newly built power plant on the north side of campus, the tunnels have been thoroughly explored by students for more than 50 years.

Containing a combined total of about 22 miles of water pipes, elec-

tric cables, refrigeration lines and computer lines, the dark tunnels offer any tunneling enthusiast thousands of nooks and crannies to poke his nose into.

Ed Kozlowski, A&M associate director for maintenance and modification, said maintenance personnel do their best to make the tunnels secure against curious students.

In the past, people used the tunnels to perpetrate thefts and bomb threats and to set fires, he said. As a result, motion sensors and heavy doors have been installed to stop these and other illegal activities.

Kozlowski said another reason for all the security measures is because they're afraid someone exploring

will get hurt or lost.

"When someone is in the tunnels illegally, chances are maintenance knows about it," Kozlowski said. The only time the tunnels are patrolled is during football games and big events on campus, he said.

Although students know they are forbidden to explore them, the mystery of dark passageways is more temptation than some students are able to resist.

One student, who asked to be called Joe, said he and his friends have explored many of the tunnels and even have made maps of them. Joe said he knows where most of the electronic motion detectors are and

knows how to get around them without getting caught.

At one time there was a diagram of the tunnels located in the map room of Sterling C. Evans Library. However, map room employee Rosita Alkhatib said it was checked out about a year ago and has not been returned.

Joe said the original reason he and his friends ventured into the tunnels is because of stories they heard about an old ammunition dump located under Kyle Field. They got curious and decided to explore. According to the stories, the dump contains ammunition and military equipment left over from World War II.

Another story that drew Joe and his friends down into the tunnels, concerns a passage that goes all the way from Sbsisa to Duncan Dining Hall.

It supposedly was used at one time to transfer food and equipment between the two dining halls, he said. But just like the ammunition dump, they still haven't been able to locate it.

Joe said he found three levels of tunnels in the course of his explorations. Some of the tunnels cross over and under each other.

On one occasion, Joe and his friends located a door near Rudder Tower that had been welded shut. There were two messages written on the wall next to it, he said.

The first said "Tunnel Masters opened this door in '84." Near this message was another message: "Tunnel Master busters closed this door!"

Joe said he can't wait for the new construction around campus to be completed because the tunnels surrounding the construction sites are closed.

He said that when the construction is finished, the tunnels will be reopened and then they can explore them. Supposedly, maintenance workers are installing new alarms and sensors in the tunnels.

"We want to be the first down there because the sensors will make

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Monuments, fountains add to cultural richness, beauty of A&M grounds

By James A. Johnson

FEATURE WRITER

If a school's pride, history and tradition are characterized by the diversity of its architecture, Texas A&M's buildings are a true reflection of Aggie pride.

Its historical monuments and scenic fountains have attracted tourists for more than half a century.

David Chapman, a Texas A&M associate archivist, says it is difficult to choose one visual attraction above the rest, primarily because A&M has so many.

"A&M has always been admired because of its loyalty to tradition," Chapman says.

"The natural appearance of the visual structures here certainly enhances the overall beauty of the campus."

While most universities pay tribute to their historical figures through library donations or scholarships, this practice rarely seemed appropriate for A&M.

Since the unveiling of Old Sully in 1919, statues and monuments have been A&M's most acceptable way of expressing gratitude toward its forefathers and their contributions to tradition.

Sully, the 10-foot Lawrence Sullivan Ross statue located in front of the Academic Building, was unveiled in 1919 at a cost of \$10,000.

Created by San Antonio artist Pompeo Luigi Coppini, the statue was cast in Chicago from a clay mold before attaining its present brass finish.

At that time, a bronze figure of any kind was considered rare and highly expensive.

Sully's official unveiling ceremony drew 1,500 loyal Texans.

Open space surrounding the monument in 1919 was limited, making 1,500 spectators something a 1919 Bryan Eagle story reported as a "capacity" crowd.

Today, 70 years later, Sully continues to stare out at an expanded campus while thousands of students and tourists pay tribute to his heroic stature.

Mike Magee, a senior economics major from Pennsylvania, says Old Sully represents more than just a piece of metal.

"I was in the Corps for four years, and Old Sully stands for everything this campus stands for," Magee says.

"Tourists realize how important the statue is to A&M. It emphasizes and reinforces the college's traditional background."

Of all campus sites, perhaps none possess the romanticism of Military Walk.

Wayne Stark, MSC Director Emeritus, says many couples have

made permanent plans at the site since its construction in 1936.

"Thousands of marriage proposals were made at Military Walk then," Stark says.

"Since there was no MSC at the time, students and their dates strolled up and down the Walk or spent time at the YMCA for recreation."

No one can say Aggies can't take a joke. Aside from the more traditional monuments, other campus structures provide students with comic relief.

"Eternal Flame," possibly the most questioned and ridiculed monument on campus, was unveiled in 1983 as a senior class gift.

The structure has been plagued by mechanical problems since its unveiling in 1983, preventing its "flame" from burning.

A symbol of the "burning, undying" spirit of Aggieland, the not-so-"Eternal Flame" has been plagued with problems.

Marcella Bell, a freshman general studies major from Dallas, says the Flame has become a joke to many people.

"The flame seems more occasional than eternal," Bell says. "Maybe there's a message behind it."

Lance King, a freshman mechanical engineering major from Houston, agrees.

"The original idea is catchy," he said, smiling, "if it only worked."

Repairs for the \$14,000 monument last year were \$4,000 and problems continue that prevent it from working properly.

Joe Estill, director of the campus physical plant, estimates an additional cost of \$500 to \$750 a year just to keep the flame "eternal."

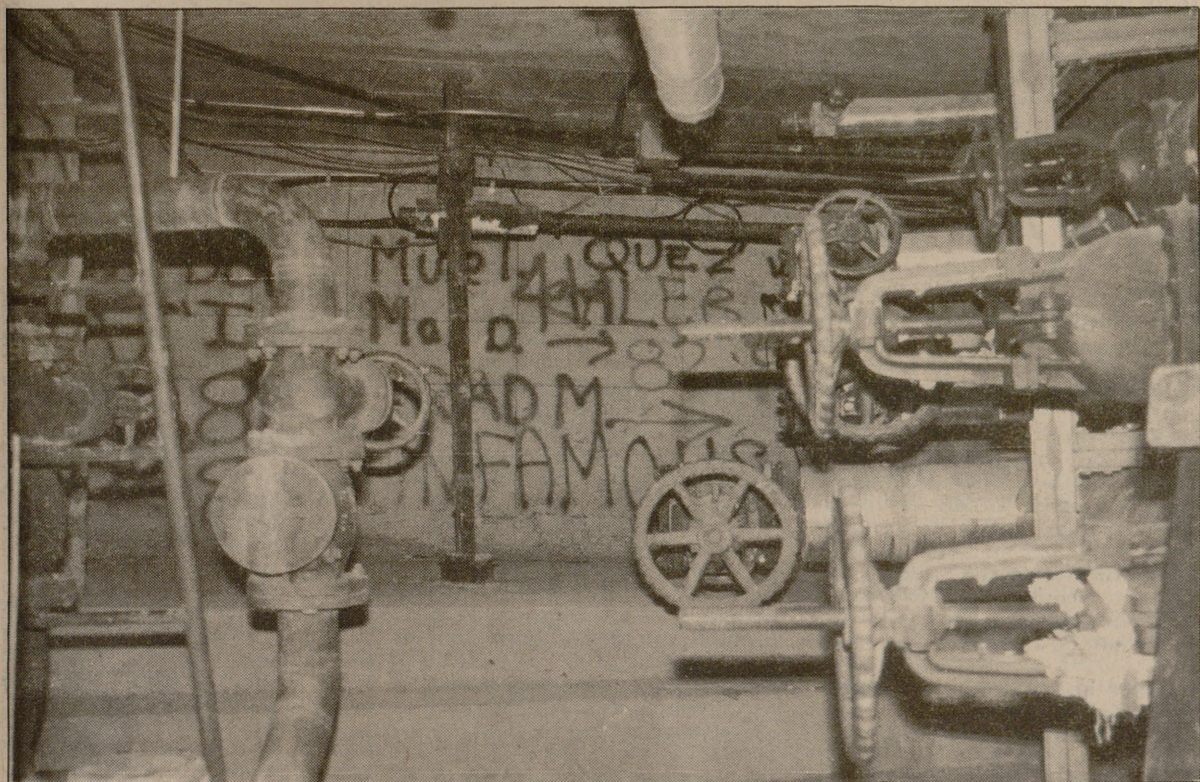
Another caricature near the MSC often stirs controversy. "Planned For the Future," a statue of a naked man and woman holding a book, is thought to have gotten its name purely by accident.

Catherine Hastedt, registrar and curator of the University Art Collections and Exhibitions, says rumor has it that when the architecture for the original MSC was being finalized, the building's architect noticed a spot on the floor plans where someone had written "Planned For the Future."

Because there was no other proposed name for the statue, it received this name when the college celebrated its centennial in 1976.

Both Sully and "Twelfth Man," figures anyone with maroon blood is familiar with, are exam-

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Battalion file photo

The steam tunnel walls are covered with graffiti drawn by illegal visitors who avoided

movement sensors and security. Some of the drawings are believed to be 30 years old.