

**Oops, major mistake —**  
Sometime in the 1920s, a typographical error caused a mix-up in *The Battalion's* volume numbers and it has never been successfully corrected. Today the volume number reads 93, when it actually is volume 101.

•1930•



1931 —

*The Battalion* is provided with its own office. The A&M Student Publications Board was created to handle administrative details of all student publications. For the first time *The Battalion* is printed by the A&M Press on campus.

1939 —

*The Battalion* is named the official publication for A&M and College Station.

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## 1898 — Death of Lawrence Sullivan Ross

The man has gone, but the character has not left us, mourner says of 'Sully'

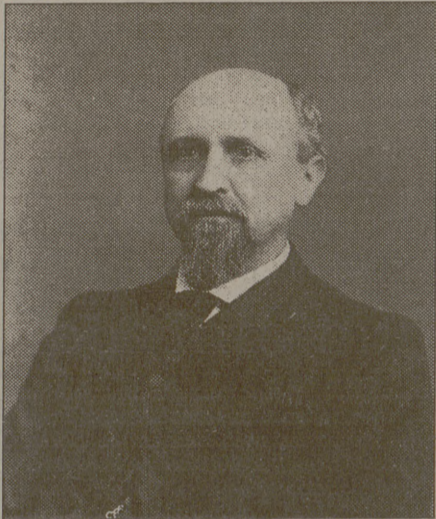
By Michele Brinkmann  
THE BATTALION

About 6:00 p.m. he suddenly roused up and looked around. He recognized everyone in the room. Dr. Fountain asked, Governor, how do you feel?

He closed his eyes and said, "Well, I feel like a new man, and I guess I am one."

Those were the last words he ever uttered.

From the article "The Last Moments" in the January 1898 *Battalion*, by Dr. Frank Ross, after the death of his father, Lawrence Sullivan Ross, who died Jan. 3, 1898 in his home near Bryan.



Lawrence Sullivan Ross

Lawrence Sullivan Ross, the late governor of Texas and Texas A&M College president, was the inspiration for some of the oldest traditions on campus.

Ross, also known as "Sully" or "Sul" Ross, served as governor of Texas from 1886-1891 and as the third president of the College from 1891-1898.

He is remembered as the father of A&M's "Golden Age" and is credited with turning a struggling ill-favored school into a well-respected college.

The first issue of *The Battalion* was published during his term, and for many years *The Battalion* dedicated its editorial page to Ross.

After his death in January 1898, *The Battalion* published a special memorial issue in his honor.

"He was not only a friend to the new student, but the first greeting was always as such that ever afterward we felt that if anything should happen, and we were in need of a friend, that we could always find in yonder office a trusty adviser," said agriculture major Glenn L. Sneed, Class of 1898, in the memorial issue.

Lawrence Sullivan Ross Clarke, grandson of Sul Ross, spoke of his experiences in a Jan. 4, 1963 *Battalion* article while he attended the University.

While he was a freshman, he said, he was required to keep an umbrella in his room. If it rained, he had to get up, grab the umbrella, and hold it over the statue of Ross until it stopped raining.

"Before that year was over, I got pretty damned tired of grandpa," he said. Ross was born Sept. 27, 1838 in Benton's Post, Iowa. His parents moved to Waco before his first birthday. Ross grew up around a Comanche Indian tribe. He attended Baylor University. Despite growing up with Indians, he later became a well-known Indian fighter.

Sam Houston wrote to Sul Ross after a fight with Indian Chief Peta Nocona, "Your name will ever illumine, with an

effulgence of glory, the historic pages of the Lone Star State. Continue to repel and punish every body of Indians coming into the state."

When Ross died in 1898, the A&M community showed its respect.

Silver Taps began in 1898 in honor of Ross. The solemn ceremony, held on the first Tuesday of most months, pays tribute to those students who have died within the previous month.

In addition, the Ross Volunteers, A&M's military honor drill team and Texas' oldest student organization, was named for Ross.

On May 4, 1919, a bronze statue of Sul Ross was unveiled. The statue, located in front of the Academic Building, is still the best known campus landmark.

The inscription under the statue reads, "Soldier, Statesman, Knightly Gentleman, Brigadier General C.S.A., Governor of Texas, President of the A&M College."

Almost 100 years after his death, Texans still write about Sully. In the May 7, 1983 *Houston Chronicle* columnist Lynn Ashby wrote about the days when Sul Ross was governor of Texas.

"Sul Ross was the only governor of Texas to call a special session of the legislature to deal with a unique problem: the state had too much money," Ashby wrote. "Ah, those were the days."

The January 1898 *Battalion* printed comments from Ross's memorial service describing the impact he had on Texas A&M and the state of Texas.

An unidentified mourner said, "The man has gone, but the character, well-rounded, unselfish, conservative, complete, has not left us, and it will be many a day before we forget the refining lessons of his life."

## 1912 — Burning of Old Main

# Fire destroys campus' first building

By Cheryl Heller  
THE BATTALION

Old Main, Texas A&M College's first building, housed all activities and records of the College until it was destroyed by fire on the morning of May 27, 1912.

According to the May 31, 1912 issue of *The Battalion*, the fire was discovered at 2 a.m. by senior cadets G.W. Ashford and W.G. Church, who were studying in a nearby dormitory. The fire, which began on the fourth floor, "had eaten its way over half the fourth floor and nearly down to the third floor by the time hose and ladder companies appeared on the scene," the newspaper reported.

Bryan firefighters and cadets fought the flames until they determined the building could not be saved, and then began rescuing official records from the burning building.

Old Main construction was completed in 1875, a full year before the opening of the Agricultural and Mechanical College on Oct. 4, 1876. It was the first building constructed on campus and served as a dormitory and classroom for every cadet until Pfeuffer Hall was built in 1887, when it was converted to an administration building.

The fire that destroyed Old

Main took a toll on Texas A&M morale nearly equal to the loss of the building itself. According to "We Are the Aggies," a book published by the Association of Former Students in 1988, "nearly all aspects of student life outside of dorm rooms and the mess hall, which had already burned, were gone."

The *Battalion* stated in its May 31, 1912 issue that "today the Main Building is a collection of blackened walls, heaps of brick and fallen plaster. It is hard for the cadet corps to realize that it is no more. Only the passing by of it on the way to classes and meal formations, which occur in front of the ruins, bring home with shocking force the fact that it is a thing of the past."

Although Old Main's life span was less than 40 years, many well-known A&M teachers, such as Dr. Mark Francis, Dean Charles Puryear, and Dean D. W. Spence began their careers within its walls.

Various goods from the exchange store, athletic equipment, and part of the college records from the president's office were salvaged. The fire took a tremendous toll on property.

In addition to the Office of the Commandant, Old Main housed the fiscal and athletic departments, the college post office, the student publications office — including *The Battalion*



The cause of the Old Main fire has never been determined.

office — the publicity department, numerous classrooms and the armory. Records of former students and the entire contents of the library were lost in the blaze. Total damages amounted to over \$75,000.

According to "We Are the Aggies," there might have been no record of student enrollment before 1912 if it weren't for Edward B. Cushing and Alva Mitchell. They had compiled a list of all former students for the association.

"It will prove to be a valuable record of names of those who were here, but will not have their academic records," *The Bryan Daily Eagle* commented that year.

Although the fire destroyed all

departmental offices, the president's office and many classrooms, Texas A&M recognized no interruption in its schedule.

In the May 28, 1912 issue of the *Houston Daily Post*, A&M President R.T. Milner announced that there would be no interruption in the work of the college because of the fire. Temporary arrangements were made for all departments of the college, and the session was to be completed according to the regular schedule.

A committee, formed after the incident, conducted research to determine the cause of the fire, questioning faculty and students about the night of the blaze.

The *Battalion* featured a story about the blaze in the Jan. 29, 1976 issue. According to the article, the committee ruled out faulty wiring as the cause of the fire. The committee did not include in its report a statement by Head Yell Leader J.E.L. "Lindy" Millender, who told committee members his friend had seen two drunk men leave the Old Main building about 1:30 a.m.

According to *The Battalion*, a gasoline can found in the rubble caused no great concern to the committee and was also not mentioned in the report. Even though an instructor, whose classroom was on the fourth floor where the fire began, admitted smoking in an area where the floor was covered with oiled sawdust, the committee ruled out a smoldering cigarette butt as the cause. The committee never determined how the blaze started.

Today, the Academic Building stands on the site of Old Main.



After the fire, all that remained of Old Main was a 'collection of blackened walls.' The blaze did over \$75,000 in damage.

## 1917 — Aggies march into World War I

# WWI turns campus into military training ground, puts cadets on the battlefield

By Jacqueline Mason  
THE BATTALION

Between 1916 and 1918, Texas A&M University sacrificed academics for what would perhaps be more valuable instruction for its cadets — success on the battlefield.

The Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College did not try to remain unchanged by World War I.

It encouraged the United States government to look to its cadets and its campus as a great provider to the war. At the time, A&M was the largest military college in the United States with 1,250 men in uniform.

The government called on many senior cadets for service. And, the campus was transformed into a military training ground for other Aggies.

The effects of wartime conditions left a permanent mark on the

student body and the campus.

"The Texas A&M College of 1920 stood in marked contrast to the Texas A&M of 1915," said Henry C. Dethloff in his collection "A Centennial History of Texas A&M University, 1876-1976."

"Texas A&M emerged from World War I much more of a professional military institution than when it entered the war," he wrote.

Daily reports about the war from newspapers provide insight as to how the war matured.

On June 28, 1914, Austria-Hungary felt itself provoked to go to war after Archduke Franz Ferdinand (heir to the Austria-Hungary throne) was killed by a Serbian student in Sarajevo.

A few days later, Austria-Hungary declared war on Russia, a protector of Serbia. Other European countries soon chose sides: Ger-

many and Austria-Hungary comprised the Central Powers while France, Great Britain and Russia comprised the Allies.

It was not until April 6, 1917 that the United States stepped into World War I on the side of the Allies to "make the world safe for democracy."

Anticipating a great need for soldiers, Texas A&M administrators allowed most seniors to withdraw from classes to train for service.

Almost half of the senior class entered officer-training school at Camp Fenton, in Leon Springs, Texas. The 1917 senior class held graduation ceremonies while at this camp.

The *Bryan Daily Eagle* reported: "For the first time in the history of the Agricultural and Mechanical college, no graduation exercises were held at College Station this year."

Texas A&M President W.B.

Bizzell passed out Honor War Certificates in place of diplomas to students in good standing, even those who did not get the opportunity to complete classwork.

Stewart D. Hervey, one of the seniors who graduated at Leon Springs, was commissioned by August 1917. "Practically all of the class came into the service, either the Army or Navy," he said.

But not all cadets were sent overseas to fight.

Hervey was sent to train troops on the Mexican border. When the Armistice was signed in November 1918, silencing the war, all prospects for his overseas trip were canceled.

"That meant that our division was dismantled, and we ended up in different places," he said.

For the Aggies who did fight in Europe, military training proved beneficial.

Joe Fenton, curator for the Corps Center, said Andrew David Bruce, Class of '16, was probably the youngest lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army.

"At 24 years of age, he was lieutenant colonel," Fenton said. "He moved very rapidly with battlefield promotions."

Bruce was awarded the Purple Heart for valor.

Fenton said it was an honor for a man to become an officer in the military.

"That was the beginning of his political career, his business career was to be a successful, decorated officer," he said. "That is why it was very popular to come to Texas A&M."

He added that A&M had a rash of people coming to the college to get an education and military training at the same time.

The Department of Electrical Engineering offered a course in telegraphy, also called "buzzer practice," for people wanting to volunteer in the Signal Corps.

For students wishing to become radio mechanics for the Air Service, a course in radio communication was offered.

The campus itself was also changing.

The addition of Bizzell Hall in 1918 helped ease the problem of finding housing for new students. And, there were a lot of them to house.

The April 24, 1918 issue of *The Battalion* reported the 1917-1918 class of freshmen was the largest in the history of the college.

Between the years 1915 and 1920, the A&M student population more than doubled and the faculty and staff nearly tripled in size.

In 1918, the first female professor, Wanda M. Farr, joined the faculty as a botany instructor because of the scarcity of male professors.

Students did whatever they could to keep Aggie spirit alive on the main campus during World War I.

An editorial in the Feb. 6, 1918, issue of *The Battalion* states: "We realized that under existing conditions it is impossible to show the old-time pep of the old days (which means much that the '22 man cannot understand); still, it is desirable to have the students united by some common interests."

After the war, the Aggies who contributed to war efforts were honored by the college in various ways.

"At one time, amazingly enough, the stadium was called Memorial Stadium," Fenton said. The stadium was later renamed Kyle Field when the University of Texas adopted the same name for its stadium.

Around Kyle Field, 55 American flags fly to honor the Aggies who died in World War I.

Likewise, 53 oak trees were planted around Simpson Drill Field in 1920 to pay tribute to the Aggies who died in World War I.

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