

1916–1925

To Better Serve the People

During the decade spanning 1916 to 1925, Texans, Americans, and the world focused on the war in Europe, which had begun in 1914. Americans were somewhat insulated from World War I until the United States entered the war in 1917. One-half of all of the men who had graduated from Texas A&M since it was established served in the armed forces. Back in Texas, farmers, ranchers, and those in the timber industry — through mechanization and improved farm and livestock practices — also served by producing more meat, grain, and wood products for their nation at war.

On the home front in 1917, county commissioners courts, the centerpiece of county government, partnered with the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, providing a new mechanism for getting agricultural information to the people of Texas. This partnership has resulted in continuing cooperation between local governments, state government, and the federal government, providing better living and working conditions.

In 1920, crossbreeding cattle experiments at the Sonora Station and cooperative crossbreeding studies conducted on the King Ranch by the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Animal Industries forever changed and improved livestock practices throughout Texas and the United States.

Still, the challenges and tribulations of agriculture were virtually unrelenting in the three decades from World War I through World War II. Farm prices, which had declined sharply after World War I, continued relatively low into the 1920s and fell again with the advent of the Great Depression in 1929. Cotton, for example, dropped from its 1929 high of 18 cents per pound to 4.6 cents per pound by 1930. Also by 1930, over \$3 billion

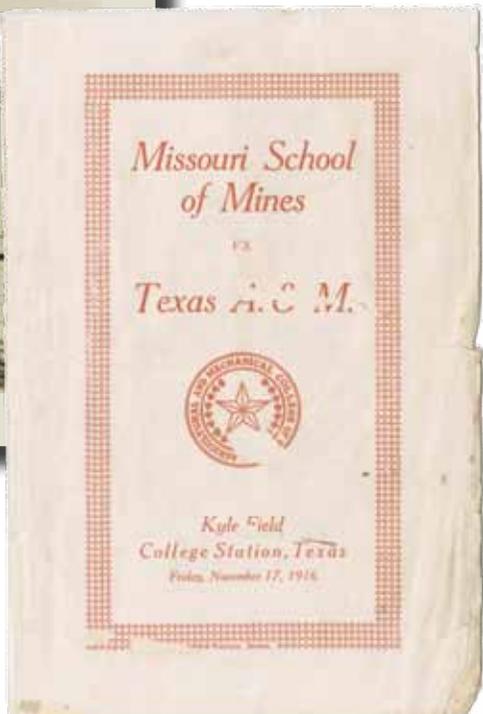


The faculty of the School of Agriculture is separated from the staff of the Experiment Station and remains so for most of the next 30 years.

1916

1916

The college hires its first full-time plant pathologist, J. J. Taubehaus, who lays the groundwork for the expansion in research, teaching, and extension in plant pathology in the newly created Division of Plant Pathology and Physiology.



Above: Academic Building under construction, 1912, and completed (top)

The first general survey and accounting of Texas woodlands is completed by Harry B. Krausz, assistant forester and instructor in forestry at Texas A&M, and A. H. Leidigh, soils agronomist with the Experiment Station.

1916



March 17, 1917

Texas A&M President William Bennett Bizzell volunteers the college as a military training facility in the event of war. On April 6, President Woodrow Wilson signs a declaration of war on Imperial Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Texas Aggies serving in the armed forces during World War I numbered 2,217. The production of meat, grain, and forest products became a national priority.

1916

The Department of Agricultural Education is formed, as the A&M College recognizes the growing need to teach agriculture in the public schools.

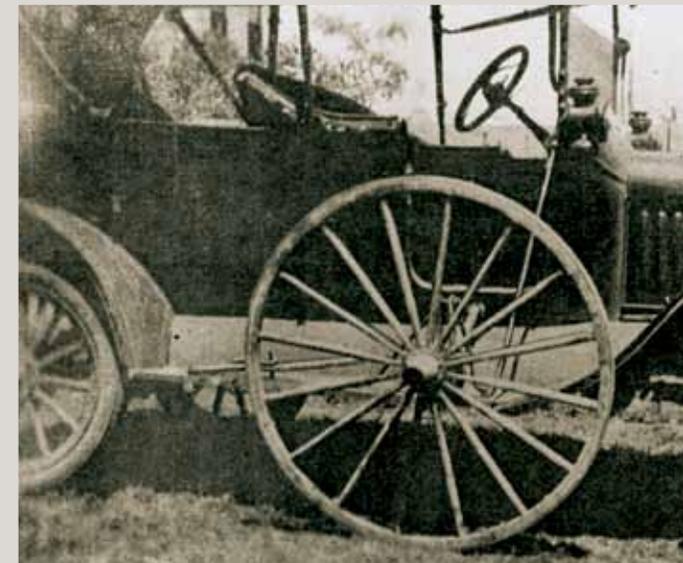


had been loaned to farmers under federal programs such as the Agricultural Credits Act (1921) and the Federal Intermediate Credits Act (1923), which provided government insurance for farm loans. In many respects, the farm Depression actually began in 1920 rather than 1929.

During this decade, the Texas Forest Service began to help make the private forest lands of Texas more productive through better management and to protect them through improved fire-prevention services. The Forest Service also began to make some of those forested lands available for general public use, establishing the first of a number of state forests, now named the E. O. Sieck State Forest in honor of Texas's state forester from 1918 to 1942.

In 1923 oil was discovered on state university lands, with the Santa Rita strike. By 1926, \$250,000 in oil royalties was being paid into the Permanent University Fund every month. Texas A&M and The University of Texas disputed the division of income. They reached an agreement in 1931, which provided Texas A&M \$200,000 per year until 1934, when the university would receive one-third of the income and The University of Texas would receive two-thirds. These funds were particularly significant to the continuing growth and development of both institutions during the Great Depression.

On September 3, 1925, the Texas A&M Board of Directors selected Thomas Otto Walton, past director of the Agricultural Extension Service, as president of Texas A&M, succeeding William Bennett Bizzell. Walton served longer than any other president, from 1925 to 1943. He was formally inaugurated during the college's semi-centennial celebrations held on October 15–17, 1926. In his acceptance speech, "Education That Serves the Whole People," Walton marked a time of significant change, growth, and development — some of it painful — for Texas A&M. It would be a decade of remarkable progress.



County commissioners courts partner with the Extension Service to form a tri-layered local, state, and federal government program to better serve the people of Texas.

1917



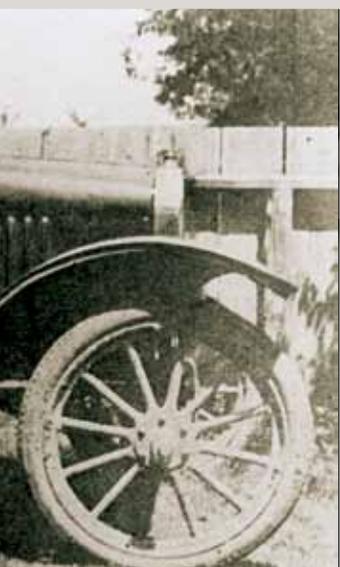
1917–1918

Congress passes the Smith-Hughes Act to provide for training teachers of agriculture, trades and industries, and home economics.

Membership in 4-H clubs in the United States leaps from 169,000 to more than 500,000 during World War I, as youths and adults contribute to the war effort. Such programs as "Can or Collapse" and "Eat More Fruit and Vegetables and Less Bread" (wheat was scarce) anticipated the victory gardens and other food-production efforts of World War II.



ABOVE: A&M College campus, 1917



LEFT: Special measuring "contrivance" designed and used in surveying soils, 1919



RIGHT: Terracing in Erath County, 1917

Germany and the Central Powers ask for an armistice, ending World War I. On the A&M campus, the power-plant whistle blows repeatedly, and the band plays patriotic songs as the student body marches to a city celebration in Bryan, 5 miles away.

November 11, 1918



1918

The administration building for the Experiment Station is erected. It was later named for the crusading editor in chief of *Progressive Farmer*, Eugene Butler, who was a longtime advocate of agricultural advancements.



Eric O. Siecke, professor of forestry at the Universities of Washington and Oregon and Oregon's deputy state forester, is selected Texas state forester. He serves until his retirement in 1942. Under his administration, the Texas Forest Service becomes a more autonomous agency, focusing on fire control and public education regarding state forest resources.

1918





The first scientific studies of crossbred cattle are conducted at the Sonora Station. These studies initiate research that leads to the acceptance of crossbreeding by the animal industry as a way to introduce disease resistance, increase adaptability to forage conditions, and improve meat quality.

1920



1920

October 18–22, 1920
Home demonstration agents host the four-day Home Demonstration Girls' Educational Encampment at the State Fair of Texas in Dallas, open to girls winning the highest awards in their county 4-H club. Three scholarships are awarded to exhibit winners.

4-H holds the first International Livestock Judging Contest in Atlanta, Georgia. The Texas team wins the championship and a trip to the Royal Livestock Show in Derby, England.



ABOVE: Bee County Canning Club exhibit, c. 1915

LEFT: Measuring height of sorghum, Chillicothe Substation, 1919

“We should be carrying the gospel of agriculture to every farmer in Texas who desires to know more about his profession. This is the gospel of Extension, this teaching without the walls of the College.”

— Edwin Jackson Kyle, Dean of the A&M College School of Agriculture
(from “Agricultural Education in Texas as Compared to Other States,” address delivered before the Texas Farmers’ Congress)

Animal husbandry students form the Saddle & Sirloin Club, with 30 members. The club now has a membership of over 300 in the Department of Animal Science.

1920



Circa 1920

Guy W. Adriance (in hat) is appointed head of the Department of Horticulture. He served in this position until 1961.

The Agriculture Building is erected, at a cost of \$225,000.

1922



May 28, 1923

Oil is discovered on state university lands, with the Santa Rita strike in Reagan County. This well marks the beginning of oil production in the Permian Basin.



Above: Pink bollworm quarantine station, Odessa, 1924

Right: Irrigation plant, engine house, and reservoir, Lubbock Station, 1921

The Texas Agricultural Research and Extension Center is established at Weslaco; it becomes a catalyst for the Rio Grande Valley's tremendous economic and population growth.

1923



Texas's first state forest, originally named State Forest Number One, is established in Newton County near Kirbyville. It was renamed the E. O. Siecke State Forest in 1943.

1924



1923
The Department of Poultry Science is separated from Animal Husbandry, with Duncan H. Reid as head.





1924

The Master of Science degree is authorized in the Texas A&M School of Agriculture departments.

The Experiment Station, in cooperation with the USDA Bureau of Animal Industry, conducts breeding experiments on the King Ranch with Shorthorn-Brahman and Hereford-Brahman steers. Their work produced the first American cattle breed, the Santa Gertrudis, which is based on a cross between the Shorthorn and the Brahman. Feedlot experiments were conducted with crossbred steers to determine how the volume and variety of feeds over time improve beef yields and save money. Crossbreeding and feedlot performance became standard stock procedures after World War II.

1924-1927





“The fire control program, which began with rakes and jeeps, has progressed to become one of the best in the nation. Better equipment, communications, and training were responsible for the milestone.”

— Bruce R. Miles, Director Emeritus,
Texas Forest Service

State Forest Number Two is established near Conroe; it is renamed the W. Goodrich Jones State Forest in 1944. State Forest Number Three, the largest, is established in Cherokee County on former State Prison Board land. It is later renamed the I. D. Fairchild State Forest, in honor of a former state senator.

1925



February 24, 1925

The Purnell Act passed by Congress allows federal funding for economic and social research to be carried out by the state agricultural experiment stations and increases funding for extension work.



1925

An agreement is executed between the U.S. Forest Service and the State Forester of Texas for a cooperative in forest fire protection, authorized under the Clarke-McNary Act of 1924.



The 38th Texas Legislature directs a study of conditions affecting the supply of timber in Texas and requests recommendations for conserving the state's timber resources and the establishment of constructive forest policy.

1925



‘Special Unofficial Students’

Texas A&M President William Bennett Bizzell (1914–1925) publicly supported the admission of women students to the A&M College because he believed they could benefit from programs not offered elsewhere. Since 1909, a few women had attended nondegree classes during the summer sessions, and others were allowed to study during regular sessions — mostly the wives, daughters, and other relatives of professors and administrators. By 1924, 14 women were listed as “special unofficial students.” In 1925, Mary Evelyn Crawford, the sister of engineering professor Charles Crawford, became the first woman to receive a degree from the college (it was awarded in the registrar’s office instead of during regular commencement). Soon afterward, the board of directors decreed, “No girls should ever be admitted to the College.” The following year, the sole woman on the board, Mrs. J. C. George, was able to persuade her fellow members to rescind the prohibition as it pertained to women in summer classes. Some foreign students also enrolled during the 1920s. But while these small changes were taking place, the college remained on paper and in character an all-male military school for instruction in agriculture and the mechanical arts.