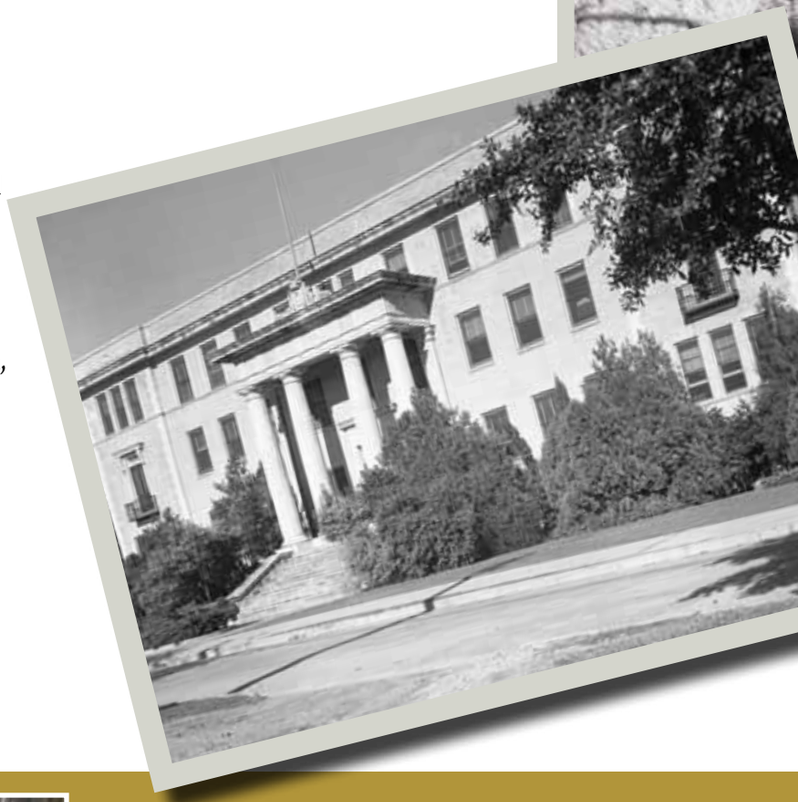
1946–1955

A New Vision: Teaching, Research, and Extension Reunited

Texas A&M emerged from World War II with a history and heritage of achievement in agriculture, engineering, and military leadership and in teaching, research, extension, and service. The business at hand included recovering from the trauma of war and reconstructing and enriching Texas A&M's land-grant college programs to enable a greater abundance and improved life for Texans. The "new vision" for Texas A&M was in many ways the reaffirmation of traditional values and programs, so the college could do the things it had done in the past, but better. That meant, in part, more closely and effectively integrating the teaching, research, and extension programs of the School of Agriculture.

The new vision included emphasizing science and innovation, providing greater counsel and training for county and community governments, building a stronger leadership team for Texas A&M and its statewide components, and building a stronger and more efficient interface with the people and communities of Texas (partly through increased outreach to Texas youth through Extension 4-H clubs). The Texas Forest Service also began a post-war reconstruction effort, expanding its programs to focus on reforestation, fire protection, conservation, and recreation.

Texas A&M's post-war instruction in agriculture and the life sciences transitioned from the state, county, and nation to include the global community, where the university's new vision was translated into educational and technical training programs in other countries. The decade 1946–1955 brought a time of almost revolutionary change in the Texas, U.S., and global economies. Populations grew, towns became cities, and the U.S. urban-industrial economy experienced one of its most expansionist, formative decades in history. It was a "miracle decade."



1946

Division of the School of Agriculture and the Experiment Station is ended, and scientists in College Station are assigned to departments in the Schools of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine, creating a more effective interface between teaching and research. From 1947 to 1950, the transition is completed, with Extension included.

1946

September 1946

Post-war enrollment at Texas A&M soars, from 2,000 students in 1944 to 8,200 students registered for fall.

Above: Burnet County 4-H'er with champion sheep

Left: A&M campus Agricultural Extension Service headquarters, 1940s

Extension 4-H Club Roundups at Texas A&M

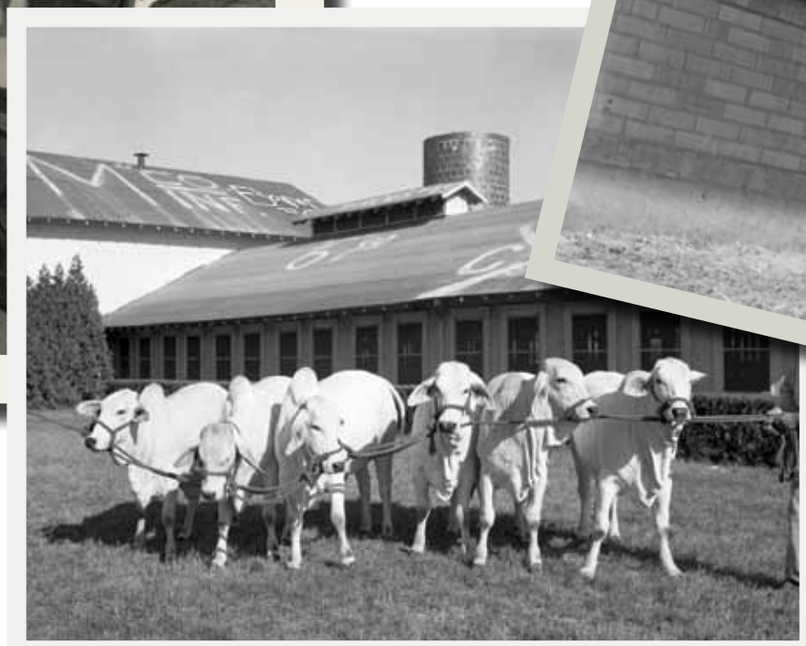
The Texas Agricultural Extension Service, in cooperation with the School of Agriculture and the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, sponsored a variety of "short courses" on the Texas A&M campus in the 1920s and 1930s, usually in June, featuring instruction and competitions in livestock raising, corn growing, vegetable canning, and clothing construction. In 1946, these short courses were converted into one general 4-H Roundup for all areas of interest, and those roundups, under the supervision of the Extension Service, were featured every year thereafter. Students from all across the state participated. Roundup was and still is an excellent learning and social experience.

1946
First Texas State 4-H Roundup is held at Texas A&M.

The programs of the current Department of Ecosystem Science and Management begin, initially as the Department of Range Management. In November, the name is changed to the Department of Range and Forestry when a Forest Science degree program is established. The Department of Forest Science was created in 1969, with Society of American Foresters accreditation granted in 1975. It is now part of the Department of Ecosystem Science and Management.

1946

1946
The Department of Plant Pathology and Physiology is established, with A. A. Dunlap as the first department head. The department grew under his administration, as disease identification and public service through the Extension Service became new priorities. It continues to study a variety of new diseases plaguing Texas crops and landscapes.



Left: A&M College directors gather to meet with state and local partners, 1948.

Center: Brahma heifers, Animal Science Department, 1946

Right: Team of horses on A&M campus, 1946

The Department of Biochemistry and Nutrition (later renamed Biochemistry and Biophysics) is formed, with Professor Paul Pearson as head.

1947

1947

Boll weevil eradication begins with the work of Willis Lawton Owen, who becomes the first scientist to conclusively show that boll weevils overwintered in the Texas High Plains. This marks the beginning of the cooperative effort between the U.S. and Texas Departments of Agriculture, Plains Cotton Growers, and the Experiment Station and Extension.

1947

The Department of Agricultural Engineering becomes jointly administered by the School of Agriculture and the School of Engineering.

Agricultural Communications over the Decades

In 1948 information offices serving the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station and the Texas Agricultural Extension Service combined to form the Agricultural Information Office, which focused on news about the agencies and Extension publications to inform the public about dozens of topics. In the decades that followed, the unit added capabilities in video production, photography, marketing, graphic design, and web design as well as printing, binding, mailing, and an online bookstore. Today, Texas A&M AgriLife Communications is housed in the new AgriLife Services Building on the West Campus in College Station, where it continues to serve Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension as well as the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory. AgriLife news writers are stationed statewide.

Fred Walker becomes the first Range Extension specialist in the United States and starts the Range Extension Program at Texas A&M.

1947

The Department of Range and Forestry grants its first Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees.

1948

September 1, 1948

The Texas A&M College System is established. It is made up of Texas A&M College, John Tarleton Agricultural College, North Texas Agricultural College, Prairie View College, the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, the Texas Engineering Experiment Station, the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, the Texas Engineering Extension Service, and the Texas Forest Service. Gibb Gilchrist, former A&M College president and dean of the School of Engineering, is appointed as chancellor; he serves until 1953.

Above: Cadets carry the colors in front of the Academic Building.

Top right: Dr. Leo Merrill conducts pasture rotation research, Sonora Station, 1955.

Bottom right: Bruce Zobel, Texas Forest Service, studies pine pollination, 1953.

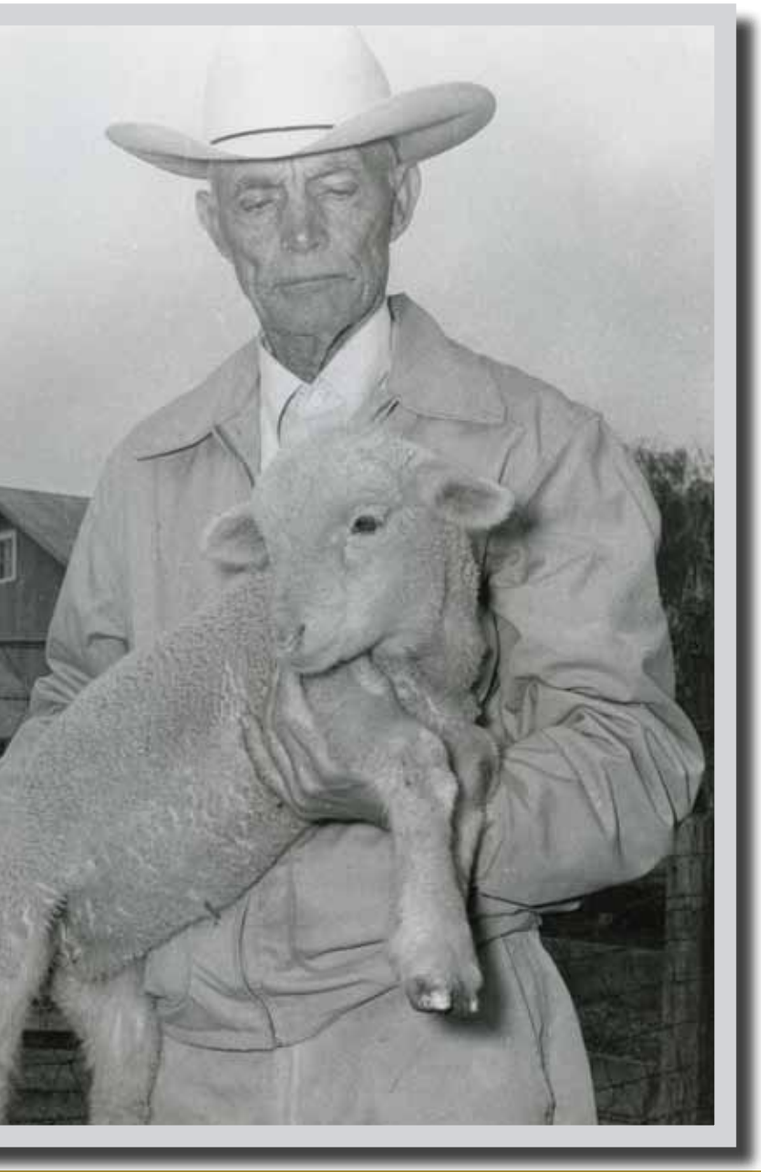
Far right: Oscar Carpenter cares for lambs, Sonora Station, 1954.

1948

Texas A&M offers its first degree in food technology, an intensive five-year program that graduated a small number of successful food industry professionals. This became a four-year curriculum in 1951. Texas A&M was one of 12 original U.S. universities to offer academic training in food technology.

Leo Merrill begins research on a three-herd, four-pasture, deferred-rotation grazing system at the Sonora Station. The Merrill Grazing System became one of the most widely used grazing systems in the Southwest.

1949



Those Sweet Vidalias®

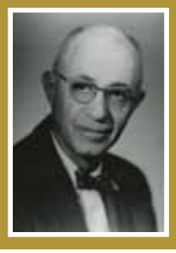
The Granex yellow onion, developed by Texas Agricultural Experiment Station scientists in cooperation with the USDA, was released in 1952. Georgia farmer Mose Coleman grew them from transplants the same year and discovered their sweet taste. He struggled to sell the onions at first but persevered, getting $3.50 for a 50-pound bag. Other farmers began planting the onions, and when the State of Georgia built a farmers' market in the small, crossroads town of Vidalia, tourists spread the word about those sweet "Vidalia onions." Today, thanks in part to Texas Agricultural Experiment Station research, the annual harvest brings some $50 million to Georgia's economy. Vidalia onions are now available in all 50 states and in most of Canada.

1949

Genetic improvement of Rambouillet sheep begins at the Sonora Station, with the work of Maurice Shelton, who began central performance testing to compare economically important traits in a common environment. The research and testing continues today at the Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center at San Angelo and has resulted in well-documented improvements in the breed that have been disseminated throughout the United States.

A. D. Folweiler is appointed Texas state forester. He oversees postwar reconstruction of the Forest Service and participates in the reorganization of the A&M College. Expansion of Forest Service programs focus on reforestation, fire protection, conservation, and recreation.

1949



"Like the tree that shades the farmhouse, 4-H grew slowly and soundly, throwing out its branches, and taking its character from the fertile soil in which it was so deeply rooted."

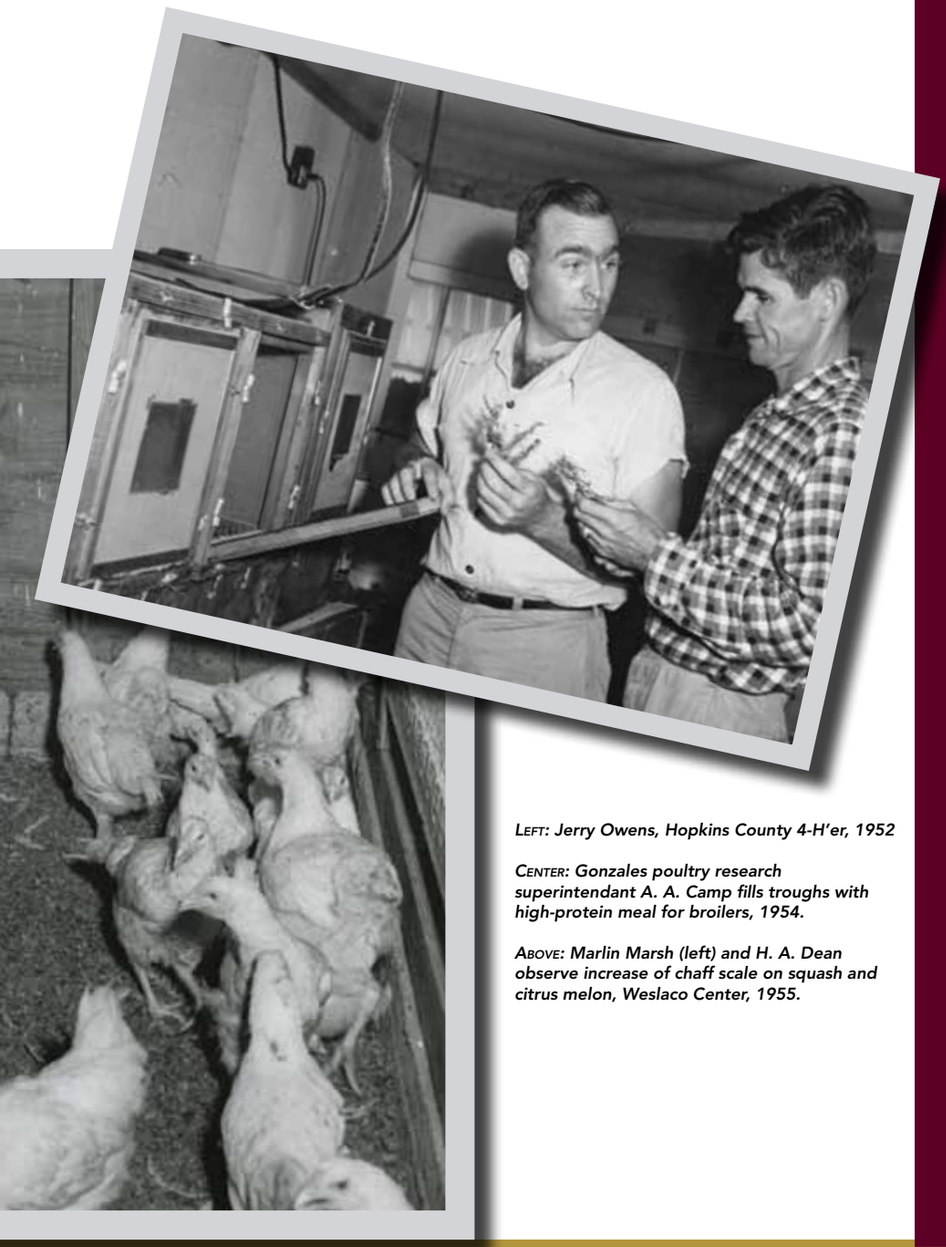
— Floyd Lynch
Texas State Extension 4-H Leader
1949–1970

Poultry science professor James Russell Couch, in the course of his research on the use of vitamin B12 to improve poultry nutrition, discovers the growth-promoting effects of antibiotics when added to feed, beginning an era of substantial animal nutrition research and graduate programs at Texas A&M.

1950

1950

Edward Fred Knipling, a 1930 Texas A&M graduate and career entomologist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is able to put his sterile insect technique (SIT) theory into practice after Nobel Prize–winning geneticist Hermann Joseph Muller discovers the use of radiation to sterilize male fruit flies, thereby reducing populations. After success in eradicating screwworm flies in the southeastern United States, this method was used to eradicate screwworm in Texas livestock and, by 1972, throughout the United States.



Left: Jerry Owens, Hopkins County 4-H'er, 1952

Center: Gonzales poultry research superintendant A. A. Camp fills troughs with high-protein meal for broilers, 1954.

Above: Marlin Marsh (left) and H. A. Dean observe increase of chaff scale on squash and citrus melon, Weslaco Center, 1955.

A&M Celebrates 75 Years

On October 4, 1950, the Texas A&M College celebrated its 75th anniversary at Kyle Field. Governor Allan Shivers addressed the gathering, and the following words in a commemorative brochure captured the spirit:

"From fighting forest fires in the piney woods of East Texas to poisoning prairie dogs on the High Plains, from developing a new profitable crop of Texas farmers to training supervisors on her railroads, the activities connected with A. and M. run the gamut of research, extension and teaching needed to meet the problems of a growing state and pave the way for even greater growth tomorrow. Texas has left behind forever the era of the raw frontier, the free range and the simple machine. In a complex society, geared to scientific agriculture and industry, A. and M. has developed to meet the demands of the state to which it belongs."

1950
The Department of Landscape Art, organized in 1925, is reorganized with a broader mission and becomes the Department of Floriculture and Landscape Art, under the leadership of A. F. DeWerth. It was renamed the Department of Floriculture in 1961.

1950
The Department of Range and Forestry awards its first doctoral degree. It is the first Range Science Ph.D. awarded in the United States.

1950
The first Texas 4-H Council is organized. The council is made up of 4-H members elected in their district to represent Texas 4-H at events throughout the year.

Left: Memorial Student Center dedication, April 21, 1951

Above: The System Administration Building (later named for Jack K. Williams) served as Texas A&M agriculture headquarters from 1951 to 2011.

Right: Dr. Kenneth B. Porter conducts wheat breeding tests at the Amarillo Center's Bushland Station, 1954.

Far right: Dr. Morris E. Bloodworth (left) and W. R. Cowley study soil cores to determine effect on crops, Weslaco Center, 1955.

The Bruce McMillan, Jr., Foundation, Inc., is established in Overton, Texas. Among its philanthropic contributions to the area is its primary role in organizing the Texas Agricultural Research and Extension Center at Overton.

July 28, 1951

April 21, 1951

The new Texas A&M Memorial Student Center is dedicated to the men of A&M who gave their lives in military defense of their country.

1951

The new Administration Building is erected for Texas A&M College. Vacated space in the System Administration Building is filled with administrative offices of the Experiment Station and the Extension Service and later the Office of the Vice Chancellor and Dean of Agriculture.

With financial help from several Texas forest products industries, the Texas Forest Service and Texas A&M University work collaboratively to initiate the first cooperative forest tree improvement program undertaken by a southern organization, public or private.

1951

The first graduate course in molecular biology, Biochemical Genetics, is taught at Texas A&M.

1952

1952

The Water Research and Information Center is established. It will later be renamed the Texas Water Resources Institute.

1953

Texas A&M begins cooperating with the U.S. Agency for International Development to help foreign governments develop programs in agricultural education. Students from foreign countries received federal assistance to attend Texas A&M, and the college provided technical assistance to Prairie View A&M in Liberia and for programs in Mexico, Ceylon, Tunisia, the Dominican Republic, Argentina, and East Pakistan.

Congress revises the Smith-Lever Act to give agricultural extension services the authority to promote and assist industrial projects in rural communities.

1954

Commercial hybrid sorghum seed is released from the work of J. Roy "Mr. Sorghum" Quinby (right) and J. C. Stephens at the Experiment Station's Chillicothe Research Station. As a result of their research and farm demonstrations by Extension agents, Texas became a major sorghum-producing state.

1955

1954

The first Beef Cattle Short Course, organized by the Extension Service, is held at Texas A&M. Today, with more than 1,000 participants each year, it is recognized as having the largest attendance of any beef cattle educational program of its type in the world.

Far left: Texas A&M Dairy Science Center, 1950s

Left: Agricultural Economics and Sociology class, 1954

Above: Agriculture field day at Spur Station, 1955

Right: Dr. J. Roy Quinby, compares height of dwarf sorghums at Chillicothe Station, 1954.

1955
The Departments of Dairy Science and Poultry Science are formed in the School of Agriculture.

The Texas A&M College System and the U.S. Department of Agriculture enter into a memorandum of understanding that officially recognizes Texas Extension work as "cooperative" rather than simply agricultural, expanding Extension's role. It also provides that all full-time Texas Extension employees receive a joint appointment from the USDA and provides for revised federal funding formulas.

1955

1955
Texas ratifies the South Central Interstate Forest Fire Protection Compact. The agreement provides for aid between states to be directed to the control of forest fires during periods of high fire hazard when local facilities are inadequate.