

## **A&M College Consolidated Rural School**

In 1909, the State of Texas chartered an independent school district encompassing the Texas A&M College campus.<sup>1</sup> The school district consisted of 3,500 acres of land that was owned by the state. This land was non-taxable and thus could not support a public school. The non-taxable status and the lack of school age children on the campus prevented the creation of a school at that time.

There were several incentives to establish a public school on the Texas A&M College campus. First, the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 appropriated funds for teaching agriculture in public schools and also provided funding to help prepare the teachers. Texas A&M College had been designated as a teacher training college but the student teachers needed sufficient facilities to obtain their training.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, the college professors and staff wanted a school on campus so their children would not have to attend Bryan schools.

Even with these incentives, problems such as too few children and not enough funding existed. To alleviate these problems, Professor Martin Hayes, Head of the Department of Vocational Teaching, worked out a "gentlemen's agreement" with three of the surrounding Common School Districts (CSD).<sup>3</sup> The agreement allowed the children to be bused onto the college campus thus eliminating the need for the rural schools. It also provided for merging all four districts' finances under the administration of A&M College Consolidated Rural School.<sup>4</sup>

William Bizzell, President of Texas A&M College, and Professor Hayes petitioned the State Board of Education for funding to start a public school on the college campus. In 1920, the funding from the Rural Aid Law was granted contingent upon the approval of a fifty-cent tax by the residents of the four districts involved. The tax for A&M College School District was approved on May 24, 1920.<sup>5</sup>

After the creation of A&M College Consolidated Rural School, much of the support came from Texas A&M College. President Bizzell made available \$25,000 to construct the school building. This money had been allocated to build a new residence for the President.<sup>6</sup> The salaries of several high school teachers and the principal were paid by the Department of Vocational Teaching and the

tables and chairs were constructed by the Mechanical Engineering Shops.<sup>7</sup> The college also paid for equipment and miscellaneous expenses.<sup>8</sup>

When the school session opened in September 1920 the children from Wellborn CSD #2, Union Hill CSD #6, and Shirock CSD #13 (Shiloh and Rock Prairie had combined in 1919) came to the Texas A&M College campus. However, the new school building was not completed in time for the beginning of the school year. The classes met in Guion Hall until the new building, which later became the Band Hall, was erected. In the first year, 304 children were enrolled in first through eleventh grade.

The A&M College Consolidated Rural School was touted as one of the finest of its time. It was located on a college campus and would have the use of the campus' facilities such as the zoo and the Textile Engineering Plant and Laundry.<sup>9</sup> The school utilized advanced ideas and was a model for other rural schools. The highest quality teachers were hired for each grade. Also each grade had no more than thirty-five pupils. The curriculum of the high school met the needs of both college entrance requirements and vocational life work.<sup>10</sup> The girls received course studies in home economics and the boys were taught agriculture and shop skills.<sup>11</sup> Many "take home" projects were assigned and had practical applications. In addition, all students received a basic core education.

During the first few years of existence the school districts were not legally consolidated. The people of the outlying areas were reluctant to completely lose their school districts. To assist in the success of A&M College Consolidated Rural School, the A&M College Consolidated School Board applied for and received state aid for consolidation in the summer of 1928.<sup>12</sup> Thus Wellborn CSD #2, Union Hill CSD #6, Shirock CSD #13, and A&M College Independent District became A&M Consolidated Independent School District.

During 1938, the school found themselves in need of more facilities due to overcrowding. When Texas A&M officials were notified they responded by saying further accommodations could not be provided. Therefore it was decided to move the school off the Texas A&M campus. In February 1939, a year after the establishment of College Station, a group of College Station residents petitioned the school board for funding to build new school buildings. The residents bought and



donated a parcel of land known as the Holick property. The site, approximately fifteen acres, had separate buildings for the elementary and the high school classrooms. The buildings were occupied in March 1940.<sup>13</sup> Thus the foundations for the present-day College Station Independent School District were laid.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 Deborah Lynn Balliew, *College Station Texas 1938/1988* (College Station: Intaglio Press, 1987), p. 25.
- 2 "Your City." *The Battalion* (July 19-August 9, 1945), p. 2.
- 3 "Your City." *The Battalion* (July 19-August 9, 1945), p. 2.
- 4 W. L. Hughes, 1922, "A Project in Rural School Consolidation And It's Contribution to the Solution of the Rural School Problem of Brazos County." M.S. Thesis, Texas A&M University.
- 5 "An Election For Voting Maximum Tax On District." *The Daily Bulletin* (Vol. 3, No. 201, May 24, 1920), p. 1.
- 6 "Your City." *The Battalion* (July 19-August 9, 1945), p. 2.
- 7 A&M College Public School Board Minutes, Book 2, July 19, 1920.
- 8 W.L. Hughes, 1922, "A Project in Rural School Consolidation And It's Contribution to the Solution of the Rural School Problem of Brazos County." M.S. Thesis, Texas A&M University.
- 9 "High School In This District Next September." *The Daily Bulletin* (Vol. 3, No. 190, May 12, 1920), p. 1.
- 10 "Your City." *The Battalion* (July 19-August 9, 1945), p. 2.
- 11 "High School In This District Next September." *The Daily Bulletin* (Vol. 3, No. 190, May 12, 1920), p. 1.
- 12 A&M College Public School Board Minutes, Book 2, September 3, 1928.
- 13 "Your City." *The Battalion* (July 19-August 9, 1945), p. 2.

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A&M College School Board Minutes. College Station ISD Administration Office. College Station, Texas.

"An Election For Voting Maximum Tax On District." *The Daily Bulletin* Vol. 3, No. 201 (May 24, 1920): p. 1.

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"Your City." *The Battalion* (July 19-August 9, 1945): p. 2.