

## 1936–1945

### *Texas Farmers Fight: Depression and War*

The Great Depression began to subside after 1934, but recovery was slow and difficult. No sooner had the adversities of the farm recession of the 1920s and the Great Depression of the 1930s come to a close than the American people were confronted by the terrible reality of a second world war.

The United States entered World War II on December 7, 1941. Because food and fiber production were critical to the war effort, the demands on Texas farmers and livestock producers became even greater. Gasoline, farm equipment, and labor became scarce commodities, so farmers had to produce more with less.

The farm and home became a crucial part of national defense. While farmers needed to produce more, households needed to consume less. Rationing, victory gardens, and home canning became a way of life, and this new lifestyle was greatly aided by the agricultural research and extension programs and traditions of the A&M College. Food for Freedom became the motto for farmers and households everywhere. Home canning, already a byword of the home demonstration agent, became a weapon of war. Agricultural research stations and laboratories, the county extension agent, and the extension home demonstration agent, as well as Texas A&M and land-grant colleges everywhere, were vital elements of national defense throughout World War II.



The Texas Cooperative Wildlife Collection (now the Biodiversity Research and Teaching Collections) is established by W. P. Taylor (below) and Dr. William B. Davis, founder of the Department of Wildlife Management (now Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences). The collection is now one of the largest university-based natural history collections in the U.S., with over 1 million preserved specimens.

1936



1936

The A&M Board of Directors approves the Ph.D. degree and the Doctor of Science degree in agriculture and engineering.



LEFT: Office for Emergency Management war poster, 1942-43

ABOVE: Research laboratory at Jacksonville, Texas, near Overton, 1930s



## Food for Freedom

From 1941 through 1945, Americans of every age and locale became engaged in World War II. Farming remained a vital war industry, and many farmers received exemption from military duty to raise corn, grain, livestock, poultry, food, and fiber. At home, war bonds, scrap-metal drives, home canning, and victory gardens became a way to help win the war. Texas Agricultural Extension 4-H clubs began the Feed a Fighter program. By raising enough food to feed at least one soldier for an entire year, boys and girls gained membership into the I Feed a Fighter Club and, in Texas, were rewarded with a trip to Randolph Air Field and neighboring army camps.

Arriving by train, President Franklin D. Roosevelt visits Texas A&M, reviews the Corps of Cadets, speaks to some 20,000 people assembled in the football stadium, and receives a complementary white-faced Hereford for his Warm Springs, Georgia, farm.

**May 11, 1937**



**June 1937**

Texas A&M applies to the Reconstruction Finance Corporation for a \$2 million loan to construct new dormitories containing 1,250 rooms. The 12 new dormitories, built over the next few years, became Texas A&M's Corps Dormitories.

The Department of Wild Game is created after the Texas legislature adds a curriculum in wildlife conservation and management. It is the now the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences.

**1937**



**1937**

Texas A&M horticulturists begin a peach-breeding program to develop cultivars that will grow in low-chill southern regions. The program had a significant impact on the peach industry. Today's horticulturists are collaborating with researchers in Thailand to develop peach cultivars to replace opium poppy farming.

Texas A&M students, faculty members, and former students were deeply involved in war, both on the battlefield and at home. Some 20,000 students served in the military during World War II, more than 14,000 of those as officers and 29 as general officers. Students, farmers, ranchers, and families in Texas and throughout the United States were all part of the American war effort, along with the men and women in uniform and in combat. Mobilization meant more than sending soldiers to war. It also meant providing the wherewithal, the food, fiber, machinery, and resources to achieve victory. The Aggie yell “Farmers Fight!” came to mean much more than victory on the gridiron.



ABOVE: Texas A&M College campus, late 1930s



LEFT: Grasshopper poison mash distributor, Hemphill County, during the 1938 grasshopper control campaign

College Station becomes an incorporated city, and in 1939 the A&M Board of Directors specifies that all faculty members living in on-campus residences must vacate them by September 1, 1941, since the college is no longer required to provide housing for its faculty.

**1938**

The Texas Forest Service’s Forest Products Research Laboratory, a first for a state forestry agency, is established at Lufkin. The use of sawmill residues by paper mills to make newsprint, invented in 1957, is one result of this laboratory’s work.

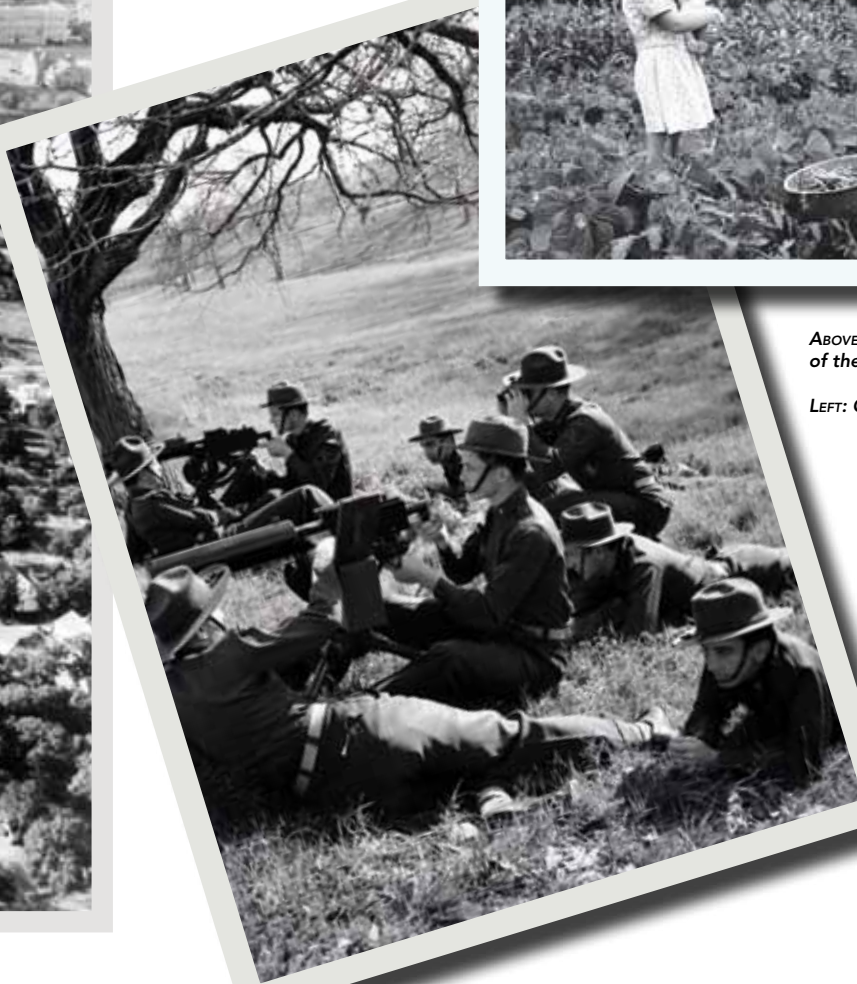
**1940**

**May 1940**

Dorris David Giles, a student in animal physiology and nutrition, becomes the first recipient of a Ph.D. degree from Texas A&M.



Photo: U.S. Library of Congress



*ABOVE: Home gardening was an important part of the war effort, 1940s.*

*LEFT: Cadets in machine gun training, 1941*



The Brazos Plantation Farm is purchased by A&M College to be used under the direction of the School of Agriculture.

**1941**



**1941-1945**

**December 7, 1941**

Japanese forces launch a deadly surprise attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, changing life at Texas A&M and throughout the nation. On December 8, Congress declares war on Japan. Students and faculty depart for military service, and the Texas A&M campus becomes a training post for the Army, Air Corps, Navy, and Marines.

More than 20,000 former students of Texas A&M serve in World War II, including 14,000 officers and 29 general officers. Their practical training in agriculture, engineering, and the life sciences proves to be particularly useful in the transport and supply of combat troops.



*ABOVE: Ranchers' Roundup,  
Sonora Station, 1940*

*RIGHT: Reserve Champion 4-H Club Steer,  
Houston Fat Stock Show, 1943*

*FAR RIGHT: Crop dusting machine for insect  
control, Brazos Bottom Field Station, 1941*



Filming of the wartime morale-boosting movie *We've Never Been Licked* begins on the Texas A&M campus.

**November 1942**



The Research and Extension Center at El Paso is established. It was expanded in 1976, with an additional research site at Socorro.

**1942**



*Photo: Universal Pictures*

**December 1942**

All Texas A&M juniors and many seniors, a total of 1,306 students, are called into active duty. By December 1944, student enrollment is 1,893, down from 6,679 enrolled at the beginning of World War II.





*“In the opportunity to render a real service, there is hardly any other profession that will equal agriculture. The entire nation is deeply interested today in the successful solution of many pressing problems connected with agriculture. The study of agriculture in a standard agricultural college prepares a young man to assist in the solution to these vital problems.”*

— Edwin Jackson Kyle, Dean of the A&M College School of Agriculture  
 (from “What Shall a Young Man Study?” radio talk, May 1, 1931)



Photo: LBJ Presidential Library

Geneticist Raleigh E. Patterson and nutritionist and biochemist Paul B. Pearson become the first faculty members to hold joint appointments in the School of Agriculture and the Experiment Station since the separation of the college and agencies in 1916.

**1943**



**May 25, 1944**

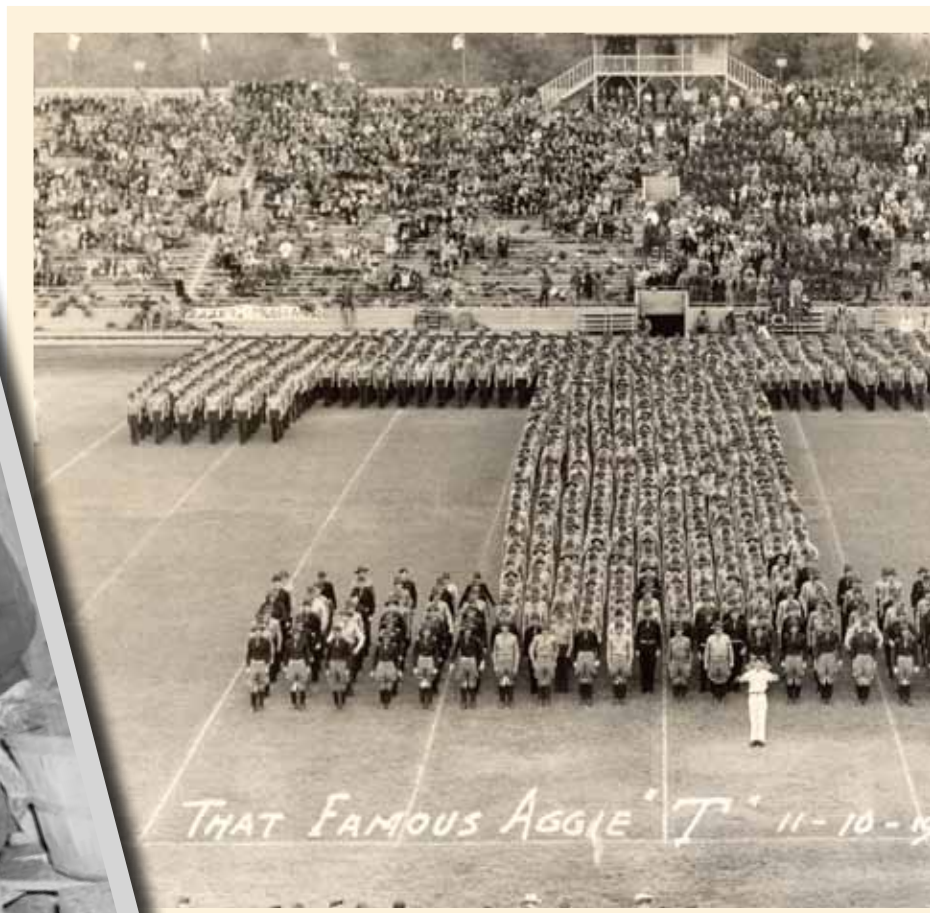
Gibb Gilchrist is named president of Texas A&M College. He announces the New Vision at Texas A&M: (1) to focus on engineering and agricultural research and instruction, in conjunction with the basic sciences, and (2) to establish “technical training centers” throughout Texas for instruction in agriculture and engineering in short-term job-training programs.

**1943**

U.S. Representative Lyndon B. Johnson (later President Johnson) works with Texas A&M horticulturist Guy W. Adriance to establish a food-canning facility on the A&M campus. F. R. Brison is the first professor to teach commercial food preservation at Texas A&M.



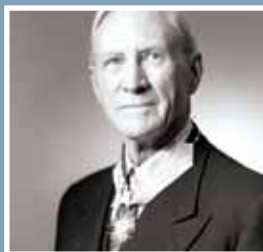
*LEFT: Workers at the Indian Mound Nursery preparing seedlings for sale*



*CENTER: Famous Aggie "T," Kyle Field, 1945*

*TOP RIGHT: War ration promotional photo from World War II, 1943*

*BOTTOM RIGHT: New Salem Home Demonstration Club, 1940*



The nation's first tree-farming movement is organized in Texas. The Indian Mound Nursery was acquired in 1940 near Alto in Cherokee County to raise tree seedlings for farmers, landowners, and forest industries.

The nursery closed in 2008.

**1944-46**

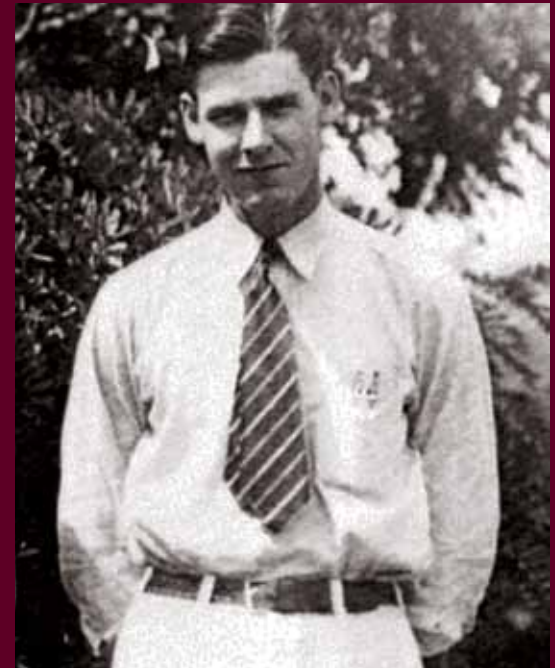
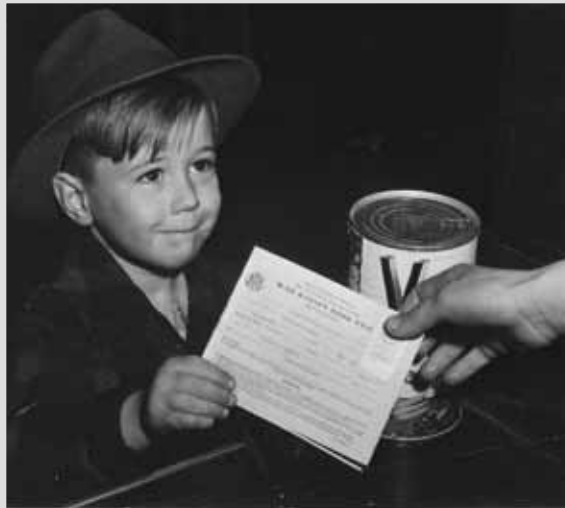
**1944**

Edwin J. Kyle retires as dean of agriculture, ending 33 years of service in the position. At his retirement, Texas A&M led the nation's colleges in agriculture and athletics. Dean Kyle was appointed ambassador to Guatemala by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1945. He served two years in the post and was the first American to be awarded the Guatemalan government's highest honor, the Order of the Quetzal.





Photo: U.S. National Archives



## Beef Cattle Performance Testing

Texas A&M's Balmorhea agricultural research station became the first state experiment station to begin beef cattle performance testing, through the work of Professor John K. Riggs (above) and station superintendent J. J. Bayles in 1940. Early centralized bull performance tests conducted at the Balmorhea and McGregor research stations between 1942 and 1959 led to other testing programs. Performance testing of cattle and later of livestock (ram performance testing began in 1948 at the Sonora Station) changed the selection criteria for livestock by 1959 and permanently changed the way beef cattle evaluation was taught. Performance testing has had a global impact on the livestock industry.

