1886–1895
Texas A&M and Agricultural Research

Located on the treeless prairie of central Texas, some four miles from the town of Bryan, the A&M College campus at first resembled a Wild West outpost more than an institution of higher education. As at other land-grant colleges, instruction in agriculture involved pioneering efforts. The lack of modern agriculture textbooks required some early professors to write their own. Agriculture professor George W. Curtis published one of the earliest textbooks on animal husbandry for agriculture students, *Horses, Cattle, Sheep and Swine*, in 1888. Edwin Jackson Kyle, professor and first dean of agriculture, co-authored *Fundamentals of Farming and Farm Life*, a textbook for elementary students published in 1912 and used for many years in the public schools.

The role of the land-grant college was to investigate, experiment, and conduct research to determine the "best" information regarding agricultural practices, the life sciences, and engineering — and then to constantly improve that knowledge base. Research, experimental farms, laboratories, and machine shops engaged students and faculty in learning about these subjects. Once new and improved practices and systems were established, that knowledge would be disseminated through classroom and laboratory instruction, through demonstration farms, and in time through Texas Agricultural Extension county and home demonstration agents and through youth clubs such as the Future Farmers of America and the Extension 4-H clubs.

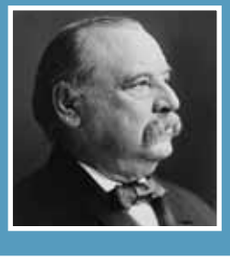
1886

The A&M College hires its first plant pathologist, L. H. Pammel, part-time. He will study the devastating plant disease cotton root rot; this research will be one of the original imperatives of the newly created Texas Agricultural Experiment Station.

1886

1886

Administration of the college farm is placed under the direction of the professor of agriculture, George W. Curtis.



Texas Governor Lawrence Sullivan Ross signs legislation authorizing the establishment of the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station.

April 2, 1887

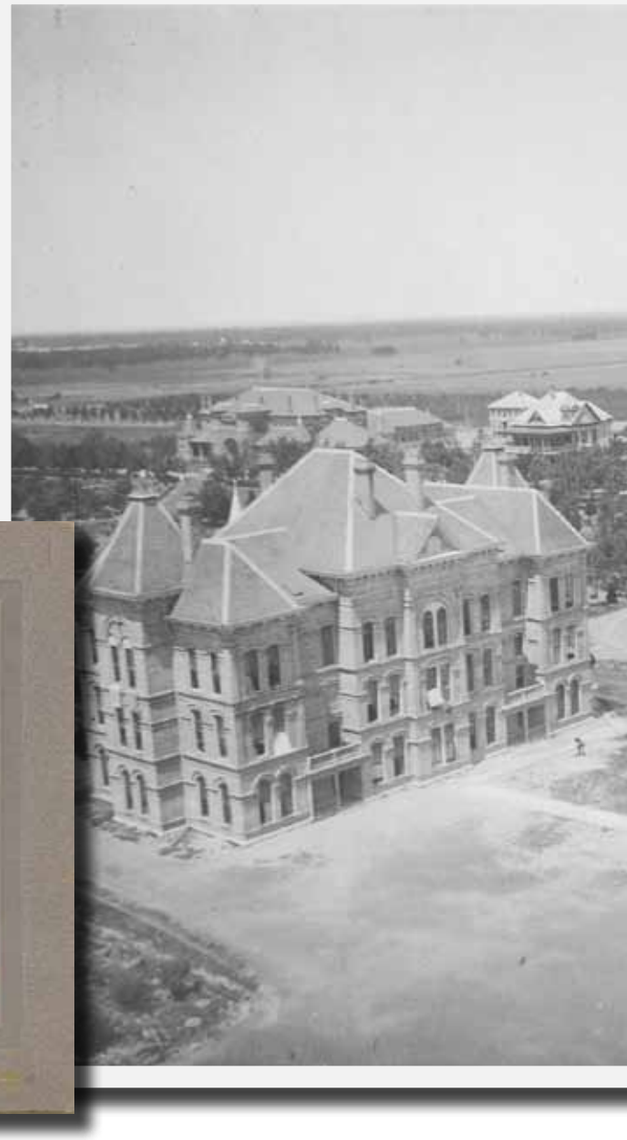
March 2, 1887

Congress approves the Hatch Act, providing for the establishment of agricultural experiment stations under the authority of the land-grant colleges.
President Grover Cleveland signs the act into law.
The primary concerns are cotton root rot and Texas tick fever, which is ravaging the American beef industry.

1887

The Department of Horticulture and Botany (now Horticultural Sciences) is established.

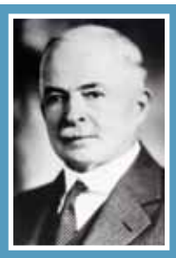
Like other land-grant colleges, the new A&M College of Texas enjoyed growing enrollment but faced severe shortages of operating funds and capital needed to develop the required research farms and laboratories. In response, Congress approved the Hatch Act in March 1887, providing funds for the establishment of agricultural experiment stations, to be developed and operated by the land-grant colleges. Texas Governor (and president of the A&M College, 1890–1898) Lawrence Sullivan Ross signed legislation authorizing the establishment of the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station on April 2. It was an important new beginning. In time, regional research and extension centers and their substations would serve the particular needs of area farmers and ranchers and become an integral ingredient in Texas growth and development.



Edwin Jackson Kyle as A&M College of Texas student, late 1890s

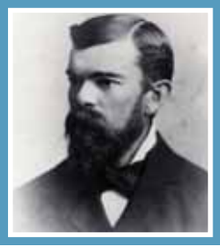
The A&M College Board of Directors establishes the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, with research to begin on beef and dairy cattle, including feeding methods and inoculation against Texas tick fever. Scientists will also study cotton blight, farm and garden crops, forage grasses, and fruit varieties. Frank Arthur Gulley, a former professor at the A&M College of Mississippi who had recently joined Texas A&M as professor of experimental agriculture, is appointed as director.

January 25, 1888



Congress approves the Second Morrill Act, authorizing the Southern states to establish land-grant colleges and universities for African American students.
The Texas legislature designates Prairie View A&M College as an 1890 land-grant institution.

August 30, 1890



June 6, 1888

The Board of Directors names Dr. Mark Francis associate professor and veterinarian of the college and veterinarian of the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station. His work to eradicate the cattle fever tick became legendary.

Beeville Substation: Part of South Texas's History

Although temporary Texas Agricultural Experiment Station substations were started at McKinney and Wichita Falls in 1893, the Texas legislature chose Beeville as the site for the first permanent regional station in 1894. Initially the station consisted of 151.5 acres contributed in 1895 by area rancher John Cook. The station's early projects included the cultivation of 40 varieties of cotton; experiments with warm-climate fruits and olives; and establishment of apple, peach, and grape orchards. In the early 1900s, research centered on citrus and other subtropical crops, cabbage, cauliflower, and the Bermuda onion. Field crops gradually superseded fruit and vegetable research. The Beeville station is credited with planting the first flax in Texas (1918) and harvesting the first flax with a combine (1938). By 1930 the station was conducting beef research, and in 1938 an additional 298.2 acres were purchased. Today the Beeville station is part of the Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center at Corpus Christi.

Agriculture professor George W. Curtis is named director of the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station.

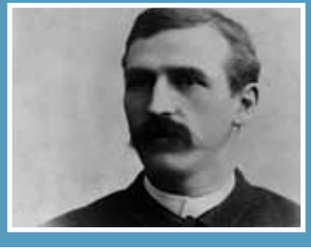
1890

The Experiment Station discovers that cottonseed meal and cottonseed hulls contribute significantly to livestock weight gains. This provides a new market for cotton by-products in commercial feeds. Cotton has historically been the leading cash crop in Texas.

1895–1896

1890

Helge Ness is appointed as assistant professor of horticulture and botany. He later developed the Ness hybrid oak and planted these trees throughout the A&M campus — some still shade the campus today.



1895

The first Experiment Station substation opens at Beeville, followed by a number of other stations through 1948. The later merger of area experiment stations with extension centers greatly enhanced research and the dissemination of information to the community.