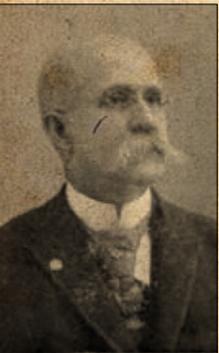


200 Acres and a Plow



Name Here

A one-bottom plow pulled by a team of horses broke through the sod on Wednesday morning, Dec. 2, 1891, signaling the first campus development project at Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College.

Only one week earlier, the campus had been created when the deeds to four properties from Stillwater

homesteaders were transferred to the OAMC board of regents.

The Oklahoma Territorial Legislature had approved construction of a land-grant college in Payne County the previous December, but it took nearly a year to identify a specific location due to stiff competition within the county.

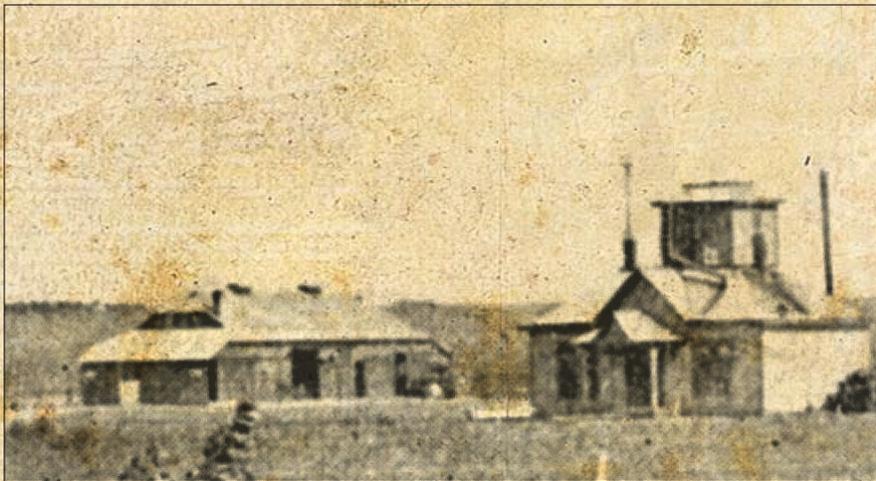
Territorial Gov. George W. Steele appointed a three-member commission to tour the county and submit a recommendation. On June 22, 1891, the committee: William H. Merten, William H. Campbell and James M. Stovall, visited with Stillwater civic leaders and were shown a tract of land northwest of town.

In their report, the commission expressed the following opinion, "We ... selected a body of land containing two hundred acres that contained the various qualities of soil as we thought would be most suitable for the purposes for which the college is to be established."

At the time it was believed that only about five acres would be necessary for college buildings, and the balance of the property would be designated for the

agricultural experiment station. One of the committee's primary concerns was choosing a site with appropriate soil for field trials and for pastures that would support livestock.

Four Stillwater families had agreed to provide portions of their 2-year-old homesteads for the campus. Frank E. Duck, a bachelor, was willing to transfer the northwest 40 acres of his 160-acre homestead for only \$50. This would guarantee that his remaining property would be located between the community and the college. Alfred and Elizabeth Jarrell also agreed to relinquish 40 acres directly west of Duck's land for \$50. The Jarrells had several college-age children and anticipated higher education opportunities would benefit their family.



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The Morse and Vreeland families were given larger compensations because their remaining property wouldn't increase in value at the same rate as the remaining Duck and Jarrell property located closer to the rest of the community. Charles and Martha Vreeland received \$200 for 40 acres north of the Duck donation, while Oscar and Sarah Morse were paid \$1,200 for their willingness to provide 80 acres west of the Vreelands' land.

The official transfer of the four deeds to the board of regents took place on Nov. 25, 1891. The Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College finally had a location and owned 200 acres of land.

On the following Tuesday, Dec. 1, the agriculture experiment station director, James Neal, led six Stillwater citizens in marking the corners of the

campus and experiment station with stones and burning prairie grass along the borders to mark the property's edges.

Experiment station employees hooked up a three-horse team to a one-bottom plow the next morning and began the slow process of turning the virgin sod. Hampered by winter weather and the reality that a hitched team could cover only several acres a day, the project wasn't completed until the spring of 1892.

Construction on the new campus was limited to federal funds available through the Hatch Act of 1887, and only \$3,000 was available in 1892 for experiment station facilities.

While the plowing continued on the balance of the property, a wood-timbered barn was built in the southeast quarter of the campus. Completed in

the early spring, this first structure at the college contained stalls on the first floor for mules, horses and cattle, along with storage for harnesses, tools and implements.

The second floor included bins for grain, hay and seed storage and a small carpenter shop. It was 30 feet by 50 feet with a small lean-to that provided space for a greenhouse and horticulture lab. A four-room, wood-framed chemistry lab with darkroom also was built near the barn. Its cupola was used to collect insects by leaving a light shining at night, and it also served as the official weather station.

By the time plowing was completed that first spring, two wooden structures — a barn and a laboratory — stood on the campus. Several other wood-framed buildings would soon follow, but it would take two more years before the College Building, now known as Old Central, would join them on the prairie.

The open grasslands northwest of Stillwater had become a home for a college, and the landscape would never be the same again. **□**

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