



Founded 138 years ago and eager to honor the past, Texas A&M is as rich in history as it is in spirit. In "Archives," we explore that history and pay tribute to our proud Aggie heritage.

# AGGIE ARCHIVES

## Texas A&M: From Humble Beginning To Global Impact

By Lane B. Stephenson '77

It's getting increasingly difficult to comprehend Texas A&M's modest beginning. After all, it now has the largest student body in Texas and one of the five largest in the nation. Students come from all over the country—and from about 120 other countries.

How did it stack up in the beginning? The "catalogue of students" for the institution's first session in 1876-77 lists 106 names—all referring to men, since it would be another 87 years before women were allowed to enroll, other than in the occasional case of the daughter of a member of the faculty or staff taking an occasional class.

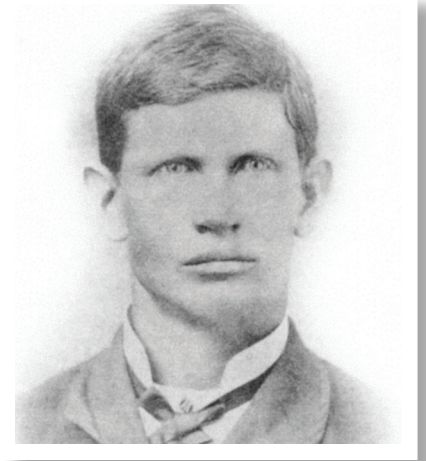
That 106-member student body at the end of the first school year is not even as large as some of the university's lecture-type classes these days, but that total represents a major increase over the number of students enrolled during the first few days the institution was open. The precise number of Aggies who showed up those first days varies from tale to tale, but here's what is stated in Prof. Henry Dethloff's authoritative two-volume book, *A Centennial History of Texas A&M University, 1876-1976*: "Great expectations must have been thoroughly dampened when only six students appeared for registration during the first few days of enrollment, but by the end of the first term forty-eight students were

in attendance . . ." and then noting the 106 count by year's end.

Although the inaugural student body was small, the names in its ranks went from A to Z—from Abbott to Zulch—the latter conjuring up thoughts of a possible connection to the nearby area that shows up on highway signs as North Zulch. The roster included several students with the same last name and same hometown, raising the distinct possibility there were some sets of brothers.

Then there are the geographic origins of those early Aggies. For decades, Texas A&M—or the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, as it was formally known until 1963—was thought to be the higher education destination for young men from rural Texas. That reputation was at least partially deserved, but that first catalogue also shows such hometowns as Austin, Dallas, Galveston (then the largest town in Texas), Houston and San Antonio.

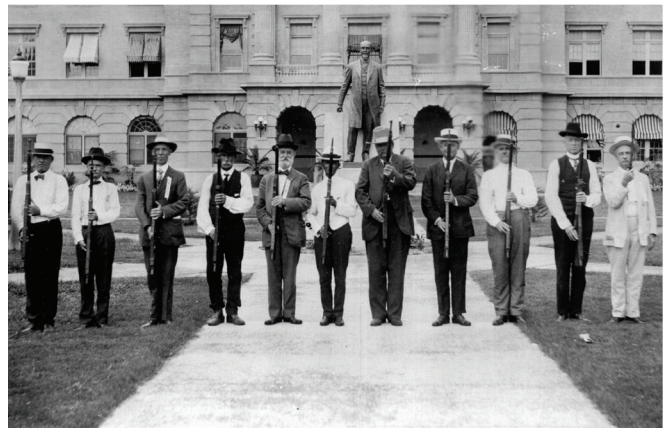
Along with those "big cities," but which were not



In 1876, John Archibald McIver rode a horse from Caldwell, spent the night under a tree and then became the first person to register for classes at the new A&M College of Texas.

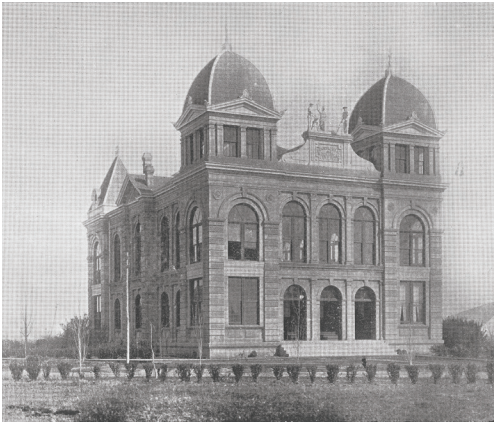
so big back then, the list is dotted with the likes of Caldwell, Hearne and Navasota, as well as some towns a bit more distant from the fledgling college. There was even one seemingly adventurous out-of-stater: William Washington Whitaker from Cotton Gin Port, Miss. Perhaps not surprisingly, the most students, 13, were from Bryan. Perhaps surprisingly, the next highest number, 10, was attributed to "College Station"—surprising because there was no officially designated College Station then. By 1877, however, the area around the campus was unofficially taking on the "College Station" name of the train station serving the campus.

Two of those young men listed from College Station have last names of



Members of one of the first classes at the A&M College of Texas are seen in a photo taken at a Reunion in 1921.

COURTESY CUSHING MEMORIAL LIBRARY & ARCHIVES



A photo of Assembly Hall, taken in 1898.

Gathright, presumably both sons of the college's first president, Thomas S. Gathright. There can be little doubt that one of them was the president's offspring because his name is the same, with the addition of "Jr." It's equally easy to presume that most—if not all—of the others listed as from College Station were sons of faculty or staff members.

More was learned last fall about that first class when it came to light that the current student body includes the great-great-granddaughter and great-great-grandson of the first man believed to have actually registered for classes—John Archibald McIver, who came

over from nearby Caldwell.

The current students of extraordinary legacy proportions are Lindsay Lawrence '14 and Zachary Lawrence '16. He is a sophomore psychology major and member of Texas A&M's Corps of Cadets, just as his father, grandfather, great-grandfather and great-great-grandfather were. Lindsay is a senior majoring in allied health. Also, a brother, Ryan Lawrence '12, a history major, graduated from Texas A&M last

spring. They grew up in Shiner in South Texas. Their ancestry makes them fifth-generation Aggies, a distinction shared by few others.

Attention to this Aggie archival footnote was brought to light in a modern manner—a tweet from a former Classmate of the father of the Aggie trio to then Texas A&M President R. Bowen Loftin '71. The student-oriented Aggie president asked a staffer to check into it.

Once identified and asked why he had not made known this connection of historic significance, even though he had been an Aggie for more than a year, Zachary replied: "I didn't want to call attention to myself," adding he didn't

want his family connection to be a factor in his admission. "I wanted to get into Texas A&M on my own merits."

Zachary recounted often-repeated family history that helps substantiate the belief that McIver was indeed the first Aggie: "What I've often heard family members say is that he rode over on horseback from Caldwell to enroll but was told he was a day early. Rather than ride back to Caldwell as he had planned, he decided just to stay overnight. He slept under a tree that night and then registered the next morning."

The family has copies of newspapers stories reporting McIver's death in 1923, with each having headlines noting he was the first student to register at Texas A&M.

Modest though that Oct. 4, 1876, opening was, it was a beginning—the beginning of an institution with a now global reach and that for the fall semester of 2013 had a student body of 58,809, including 53,672 on the College Station campus.

*Lane Stephenson is Texas Aggie's Archives columnist and the director of News & Information Services for Texas A&M's Division of Marketing & Communications.*

## The First Aggies

The "Catalog of Students" from the first session of classes at the A&M College of Texas, 1876-77, courtesy of Cushing Memorial Library & Archives:

<b>Abbott, Charles Gustavus</b> (Hempstead)	<b>Elliott, Clarence Powhattan</b> (Austin)	<b>Malone, William Robert</b> (San Antonio)	<b>Rice, David</b> (Houston)
<b>Abercrombie, Charles Anderson</b> (Montgomery)	<b>Elliott, Ferdinand Hamtramock</b> (Austin)	<b>Malone, William</b> (San Marcos)	<b>Sample, Jess Perry</b> (Calvert)
<b>Anderson, Reuben Lysander</b> (Mexico)	<b>Edwards, Harden Harrison</b> (Nacogdoches)	<b>Martin, Carlisle B.</b> (College Station)	<b>Shands, Edward Wright, Jr.</b> (Austin)
<b>Banks, Aubrey Leonard</b> (College Station)	<b>Franklin, Thomas Hadley</b> (Houston)	<b>McCoy, Pinkey Cicero</b> (Bryan)	<b>Sheridan, John Russell</b> (Crockett)
<b>Baylor, George Wythe</b> (San Antonio)	<b>Gathright, Hugh Gaston</b> (College Station)	<b>McIver, James Archibald</b> (Caldwell)	<b>Shindler, James Thomas</b> (Hempstead)
<b>Bee, Clement Stevens</b> (College Station)	<b>Gathright, Thomas Sanford, Jr.</b> (College Station)	<b>McIver, James Daniel</b> (Madisonville)	<b>Shepherd, Frank Terry</b> (Austin)
<b>Bee, Jack Tarver</b> (College Station)	<b>Gay, James Bates</b> (Columbus)	<b>McLean, Erasmus Sidenham</b> (Wheelock)	<b>Sims, Samuel Holloway</b> (Bryan)
<b>Bonner, Walter</b> (College Station)	<b>Goode, Robert E.</b> (Bryan)	<b>Morris, William Archy</b> (Bryan)	<b>Sleeper, William Markham</b> (Waco)
<b>Boren, Richard Long</b> (Wortham)	<b>Goodwin, John William</b> (Brownwood)	<b>Muench, Martin Joseph</b> (San Antonio)	<b>Smyth, Alva P.</b> (Mexico)
<b>Boyd, David Woodson</b> (Tyler)	<b>Grant, Green Wiggins</b> (Bryan)	<b>Mullins, James Monroe</b> (San Marcos)	<b>Smythe, Harry Gordon</b> (Bryan)
<b>Bridges, Reuben McDonald</b> (Cooper)	<b>Hand, Barton Bee</b> (College Station)	<b>Murphy, James Alfred</b> (Marshall)	<b>Stone, Dewitt Clinton</b> (Galveston)
<b>Brown, Thomas Henry</b> (Willis)	<b>Hardeman, John Hamilton</b> (Galveston)	<b>McGehee, Willy Gilmore</b> (Bryan)	<b>Story, William Herff</b> (San Antonio)
<b>Burchard, Charles August</b> (Navasota)	<b>Hardeman, Thomas Johnston</b> (Galveston)	<b>Nichols, Robert Lee</b> (Bastrop)	<b>Terrell, Robert Henry</b> (Navasota)
<b>Burleson, Ford McD.</b> (Gonzales)	<b>Hardy, George Washington</b> (Millican)	<b>Norwood, Walter Nathaniel</b> (Navasota)	<b>Thrumond, George Beauregard</b> (Paris)
<b>Burnitt, Pyke</b> (San Marcos)	<b>Harrison, Robert Henry</b> (Columbus)	<b>O'Grady, Francis John</b> (Boerne)	<b>Trenckmann, Wm. Andrew Frederick</b> (Willheim)
<b>Burnitt, Seth</b> (Hearne)	<b>Henderson, Calvin</b> (Chatfield Point)	<b>Owen, William Fleming</b> (Navasota)	<b>Vernor, Henry Enloe</b> (Bryan)
<b>Balhou, Francis Augustus</b> (Hearne)	<b>House, Reuben James</b> (Tyler)	<b>Paine, Herbert Albert</b> (Bryan)	<b>Weatherington, John William</b> (College Station)
<b>Calhoun, Patrick</b> (Navasota)	<b>Howard, Charles Barnett</b> (Iola)	<b>Patillo, John Franklin</b> (Marlin)	<b>Wettermark, Benjamin Shepherd</b> (Houston)
<b>Campbell, Duncan</b> (Navasota)	<b>Hoxey, Thomas</b> (Independence)	<b>Patillo, William Lewis</b> (Marlin)	<b>Whitaker, William Washington</b>
<b>Carter, Henry Clay</b> (Oakville)	<b>Hoya, Joseph Theodore</b> (Nacogdoches)	<b>Patrick, Samuel Alexander</b> (Navasota)	(Cotton Gin Port, Miss.)
<b>Carrol, Monroe Walter</b> (Carthage)	<b>Jacob, Morris Isaac</b> (Dallas)	<b>Pyron, Mathew Lin</b> (San Antonio)	<b>Williams, Thomas Jefferson</b> (Calvert)
<b>Cerf, Lous Amedee</b> (Beaumont)	<b>Jones, James Leonidas</b> (Gay Hill)	<b>Randle, Rush R.</b> (Independence)	<b>William, Ernest Fisher</b> (Bryan)
<b>Chinski, Clarence</b> (Corsicana)	<b>Keifer, William</b> (Bryan)	<b>Rankin, Harry William</b> (Hempstead)	<b>Wilson, John Edwin</b> (Navasota)
<b>Cohen, Meyer</b> (Columbus)	<b>King, Henry Gill</b> (Caldwell)	<b>Reid, Benjamin Lafayette</b> (Kosse)	<b>Woodward, Jesse</b> (Navasota)
<b>Crisp, John Claybourn</b> (Bryan)	<b>Long, Daniel Thomas</b> (College Station)	<b>Rogan, Charles</b> (Giddings)	<b>Yates, Edward Musgrove</b> (Columbus)
<b>Davidson, Green Adkins</b> (Bryan)	<b>Lowry, Alfred Lawson</b> (Waco)	<b>Rodgers, William Lemuel</b> (Pursley)	<b>Zulch, William Lorenzo</b> (Willow Hole)
<b>Dickinson, John</b> (Liberty)			