

COLLEGE STATION, TEXAS
Home of Texas A&M University

The City of College Station grew up as many small Texas towns often did around a central town square. In this instance, however, the “town square” was Texas A&M University, a world-renowned educational and research institution which today boasts a student population of over 48,000. Established through the Morrill Land Grant Act, the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas became the first public institution of higher learning in Texas by October of 1876. Situated four miles to the north was the Brazos County seat of Bryan. Other than a few roads, the only transportation connection between the college and Bryan was the Houston and Texas Central Railroad. The depot near the tracks also served as the area’s first Post Office. The sign on the train station depot read: College, which gave rise to “College Station.” The scene was set for the independent and progressive development of College Station, Texas, home of Texas A&M University.

In the early beginnings of A&M College, all students, faculty, and staff lived on campus. The surrounding areas of the campus were comprised mainly of prairie and farmland. The fertile Brazos Valley made it a prime location for agrarian businesses. Immigrants from Europe in the outlying communities worked the land with the help of recently freed African-American slaves. Indigenous Hispanic groups, and those emigrating from Mexico, also worked the land.

Small shops and places of business sprang up around the outskirts of the campus. Around 1920, the Northgate entrance to A&M became the area’s earliest “strip mall,” consisting of a U.S. Post Office, a hamburger shop, and a camera supply store. More businesses soon sprang up at the Eastgate and Southgate entrances to the campus, setting the physical boundaries for the location of the community. In later years, the university brought in high tech industries and a larger variety of commerce to the area.

The college built homes for faculty and staff in an effort to provide for the growing campus and its residents. An on-campus grade school was built to provide education for the children they called the “campus kids.” This school was the forerunner of the A&M Consolidated Schools now celebrating their 100th anniversary. In 1931, the campus growing pains forced the President to order the removal of the faculty and staff housing. The addition of numerous “campus houses” further developed the few neighborhoods which had sprung up around the university over the years. The last house was moved off campus in the early 1960s.

In 1938, when the community named for the train stop incorporated, the election was held in the train depot. The incorporation passed with a vote of 217 to 39. The first City Council was made up of members of the A&M faculty. The city relied heavily on A&M for meeting space, a fire department, and utility lines. This close knit connection between the college and the community continues today and has fostered a highly educated city, rich in a variety of cultures, grounded in agriculture, and with all eyes on the future. It just does not get any better than this.