

COLLEGE STATION, TEXAS

A City on the Right Track

In looking back at the history of the City of College Station, Texas, three important events stand out: the separation from Texas A&M College in 1938, the admission of women into Texas A&M University in 1963, and the overnight desegregation of the public schools in 1966. These major milestones were accomplished with relatively little upheaval. The majority of citizens in the area were highly educated and progressive. There was some opposition along the way, but nothing like what could have been. Fortunately, they transitioned into a future that would eventually show College Station as one of the fastest growing cities in the nation and one of the safest places to live.

When the City of College Station incorporated in 1938, it had been a community for over 60 years. The groundwork was set by civil engineers, architects, and engineers who, as members of the Texas A&M faculty, had a vested interest in creating a city for their own families. As educators, they sought to provide the best public schools for their children. In all, the citizens worked together to ensure that College Station would become a model community.

In 1963, under the leadership of President Earl Rudder, Texas A&M University admitted women as degree-seeking students. One can only imagine the encouragement he received from home as the father of three college bound young women. Females had been admitted to the College of Veterinary Medicine for years because it was the only vet school in the region. Women had been allowed to take classes in A&M's summer school but not to earn degrees from A&M. It was a gradual process, first allowing daughters of faculty and staff, and later, women who lived in Brazos County. This one decision had a tremendous commercial impact on the City of College Station. More housing, more shopping, more restaurants began to appear to accommodate the influx of coeds to the community. The growth and expansion has not stopped since and today, the women on campus almost outnumber the men.

At the same time as women gained their equal rights at A&M, the issue of desegregation was coming to the forefront. In the mid-50s, a handful of concerned citizens found the voice to speak out against desegregation. Several small groups made up of teachers, professors, laborers, businessmen, church leaders, Negroes, and whites began what became a concerted effort lasting over a decade. By 1966, stair step integration had reached the third grade level at A&M Consolidated Elementary School, but overall progress was slow. For reasons still unknown, but widely speculated, the all Black Lincoln School burned the night of January 20, 1966. Overnight, approximately 76 Lincoln students integrated into the A&M Consolidated High School. The transition was a relatively smooth one. Mr. Art Bright, a teacher and coach at that time, believes that the coaches played a valuable role in ensuring that the students were welcomed. It was not easy for the Lincoln students to leave their alma mater. But they knew that the opportunities for a better education would, at last, be available to them. Lincoln School was eventually rebuilt and is now a bustling and integral part of the Parks and Recreation Department as a community facility called Lincoln Center.

Today, the City of College Station is a multi-cultural and diverse city with a population of over 90,000. Almost half of the Texas A&M students live off-campus. The city has numerous award winning departments that oversee a multitude of programs and projects all focused on continuing to maintain a standard of excellence. From a small whistle stop town beside a railroad depot to a city anticipating a population of 100,000(?) by 2012(?), the City of College Station is on the right track.