

Historical



# *The Gift of the XXV<sup>th</sup> Class*

## **Rhode Island State College**

The foundation of the present system of nationally aided vocational education was laid when President Lincoln on July 2, 1862, signed the Agricultural Land Grant Act. In 1863 the General Assembly of this State passed resolutions authorizing the Governor in behalf of the State to accept and receive the land script, which amounted to 120,000 acres, 30,000 acres for each United States Senator and Representative. This land script was transferred to Brown University in accordance with an agreement whereby that institution was to responsibly and faithfully discharge all obligations imposed upon the State by the Land Grant Act. The land script was located in Kansas, and on account of lack of funds with which to pay the taxes upon the property, Brown University sold the land, deriving therefrom a fund of \$50,000. The income from this fund was devoted to the payment of scholarships, the beneficiaries under these scholarships being required to take work in agriculture or allied subjects.

In 1887 a joint special committee was appointed by the General Assembly to investigate and report what action would be necessary in order that the agricultural interests of the State might obtain the greatest benefit in carrying out the Act of the 49th Congress to establish Agricultural Experiment Stations and also to investigate and report upon the disposition being made of the original Land Grant Fund income. This committee held several public meetings during the winter of 1887 and 1888, and in accordance with public opinion there was reported a bill establishing a State Agricultural School on an independent basis. This bill was passed March 23, 1888.

Three days earlier, March 20th, a resolution had been passed, appointing a joint special committee to select a site for the institution.

Many offers of land were made to the committee; five different sites were inspected and it was finally voted to buy the "Oliver Watson" farm at Kingston.

June 13, 1888, Governor Royal C. Taft appointed the first Board of Managers of the new school. This board formally organized at a meeting held in Kingston on July 30, 1888, Mr. Charles O. Flagg of Cumberland being elected president of the board. This meeting was held in an old corn crib which was located near the Watson House.

On May 24, 1889, Dr. John H. Washburn was engaged as Principal of the State Agricultural School. The work of organization and planning for the future development of the school was at once undertaken although no definite arrangements for students could be made as there had been no provisions for housing or for paying the necessary running expenses. The first building to be constructed

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for the institution was Taft Laboratory which was completed in June, 1890 (and for the first few years was used jointly by the Experiment Station and the School). The first exercises to which the public were invited was the laying of the cornerstone of this building. Brief exercises were held, about fifty people being in attendance. To provide for the proper housing of the Agricultural School, the State Legislature on March 18, 1890, made an appropriation of \$50,000. This money was expended in the erection of College Hall and South Hall. On March 27th a bill giving \$10,000 annually for the maintenance was passed. On July 23, 1890, the cornerstone of College Hall was laid. Governor John W. Davis, as the first speaker, in closing, said:—"We can hold foremost position only as our intelligence may be foremost and it is to promote such intelligence as applied to agriculture that this school is established and I most heartily commend it to the farmers of our State. Let us do what we may to speed the work."



CLASS OF '94 AS FRESHMEN

The first class entered the institution Sept. 23, 1890, with an enrollment of twenty-seven. The entrance requirements for the three year course then offered were stated as follows:—"The requirements for admission to our school embrace the ordinary English branches, arithmetic through square and cube root, geography, reading, spelling, English grammar and an elementary knowledge of United States history." The first class paid for table board three dollars per week and five dollars per annum for room rent. The Faculty and Experiment Station Staff combined consisted of twelve persons, two of whom were employed only part time. On Sept. 27, 1890, Mr. Thomas C. Rodman was appointed Instructor in Woodworking to which was added later the work of Superintendent of Buildings, which position he held until his death on November 18, 1916.

# The Grist of the XXV<sup>th</sup> Class

Until December 6, 1890, the few boarding students at the institution had been living in the village. On this date the Boarding Hall was finally completed and the boarding students moved to the upper floors of the Boarding Hall. Governor Davis on Dec. 12, 1890, on the occasion of an informal visit to the institution, laid the cornerstone of the Veterinary Hospital (Ladd Laboratory). The first year all recitations were held in Taft Laboratory until May, 1891, when the builder in charge of College Hall allowed the use of two partially finished rooms on the first floor for the botany and drawing classes.

An old "lecture and recitation card, spring term 1891" shows that the day's class work commenced at 8.15 A. M. and continued until 4.00 P. M., with a noon intermission from 12.30 to 1.30 P. M. Aside from the noon interval, the only vacant periods during the five school days were from 11.30 to 12.30 Wednesday and Friday. In those days the laboratory work in agriculture was listed as "practical agriculture" and consisted of digging ditches, building roads, grading lawns around the buildings, harvesting farm crops in the fall term, plowing and planting in the spring. In the late fall and during the winter term, of that year, instruction in woodworking was commenced. In pleasant weather, the class worked upon the Veterinary Hospital, and stormy days in the basement of Taft Laboratory. During this year, there was installed according to the report of the Board of Managers, "an adequate water supply, consisting of a six-inch artesian well, hard pine tower, forty feet high, circular tank, 10 ft. x 10 ft. A four-inch wrought iron main was laid to Taft Laboratory from which a three-inch main supplied the new dormitory and boarding hall. Three two-inch hydrants have been provided, one each at the laboratory, dormitory and boarding hall."

In September, 1891, the second school year started with two classes on the grounds. In October, the first reading room at the institution was opened. This was financed very largely at first by the Students' Reading Room Association which raised nearly fifty dollars the first year to pay for newspapers and periodicals.

Until 1892, communication between the village and school was either by way of the wagon road leading from the boarding hall south to the main road from the village to the depot or by means of the footpath which necessitated the climbing of several stone walls and pairs of bars. The direct road to the village was opened in the spring of 1892, and Arbor Day that year was celebrated in co-operation with the Kingston Improvement Society by the building of the sidewalk from the village to the school.

May 19, 1892, the General Assembly passed an act amending the act establishing the Agricultural School and establishing the Rhode Island College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts. Upon receiving notification of the passage of this amendment, the students held the first large celebration at the institution, preparations for which had previously been made. In this celebration the old cannon,

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"OLD BEN BUTLER"



CLASS OF '94 AT COMMENCEMENT

# The Crisis of the XXV<sup>th</sup> Class

"Ben Butler" played an important part. "Old Ben" is still on the college campus, bearing a tablet duly inscribed telling of the event. This tablet was placed by the classes of 1894 and 1895. During the summer of this year the Faculty arranged a new course of study which went into effect with the opening of the college year September 14, 1892. This changed the length of the course from three years to four years and carried with it the granting of a degree upon completion instead of a diploma. The students were also allowed an option between agriculture and mechanic arts.

The principal events of the college year which opened September, 1893, were the attendance for the first time of four classes, and the first Commencement exer-



COLLEGE HALL BURNING

cises which were held in a tent erected upon the front campus, June 12, 1894, with a graduating class of seventeen.

In 1890, Congress passed an act known as the Morrill Act which gave to each college established under the provisions of the Land Grant Act of 1862 a sum of \$25,000 annually. The question of which of the two institutions in Rhode Island, namely, the State Agricultural School or Brown University should be the beneficiary of this act was taken into the courts for decision and was finally settled by a compromise when on April 19, 1894, the legislature passed an act authorizing the State Treasurer to pay Brown University the sum of \$40,000 in consideration of which the University was to turn over to the State the proceeds of the Land Grant

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Act of 1862 and relinquish all claim to the Morrill Fund of 1890. With the opening of the college year in September, 1895, there were several changes and improvements made possible by the increase in funds. The department of botany was established, as was also the military department, the first drill being held in November. During this college year the institution received one of the most serious setbacks in its history when on January 27, 1895, the college dormitory burned to the ground. Due to the splendid work of members of the student body, much of the apparatus and many of the books which were on the two lower floors were saved. Following this fire, temporary wooden quarters for housing the male students were built. This structure, which was located immediately in the rear of the present Davis Hall, was known as the Barracks. After the completion of Davis Hall this building was moved to a site east of Lippitt Hall where it served a quarters for the chemical department until the completion of Science Hall in 1914, when it was again moved to the side hill below the poultry department and is now used as a home for the sheep and swine. Within three weeks after the fire, there were erected three temporary buildings, the Barracks, the present carpenter shop, and a building for the botanical department which upon the completion of Science Hall was moved to the east of the dairy barn and is now used as a dairy laboratory. During the construction of these temporary quarters, recitations were held in the village court house. Following the fire, an agitation was started to do away with



EARLY VIEW OF CAMPUS

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the institution, later this was modified to moving the buildings to a site near West Kingston. As a result, the appropriation for the replacing of the burned dormitory was delayed. However, an appropriation of \$55,000 was obtained late in the spring for the replacing of the dormitory which was occupied October 10, 1895.

The student team became a fixture of the institution when the Legislature passed an act directing that the institution transport day students. While young women were admitted to the institution from the very first, no dormitory accommodations were furnished until the fall of 1895 when Watson House which had formerly been occupied by the farm superintendent was renovated and used for the young women.

*Buildings and Maintenance.* When the State purchased the farm for the institution, the only usable building was Watson House. Soon thereafter, Taft Laboratory, College Hall, South Hall and Ladd Laboratory were constructed. Lippit Hall, now used as the headquarters for the engineering departments, housing the library and drill hall, was built in 1897. The dairy barn was constructed in 1898 at which time Taft Laboratory was remodeled. For a period of three years thereafter, there was no further construction work until after the destruction of the horse barn by fire on January 9, 1901, the present structure was built. The next addition to the building equipment was made in 1905 when an appropriation was passed for the building of the greenhouses and college poultry buildings. These buildings were occupied late in the year 1906. April 29, 1908, a bill was passed by the General Assembly providing for the erection of East Hall and the remodeling of Davis Hall which was to be used as a dormitory for young women, who, for the preceding two years, had been living at the Wells House in the village. The athletic field house was provided for in an appropriation made by the General Assembly in 1910. This appropriation was secured very largely through the efforts of the student body. In 1912, the appropriation for Science Hall was made. The cornerstone of this building was laid with appropriate exercises, October 26th of the same year and the building was occupied at the opening of the college in September, 1913.

The maintenance funds have increased from a State Grant of \$10,000 to the State Agricultural School and a Federal Grant of \$15,000 to the Experiment Station annually to a maintenance fund from the State at present of \$40,000 annually and Federal Grants of \$92,500 annually. The State maintenance was advanced from the original sum to the present sum in increases of five and ten thousand dollars. The Federal funds have been increased from the Hatch fund of 1887 by the Morrill Act of 1890, transfer of the Morrill fund of 1862 from Brown University, Nelson Amendment of 1907, the Adams Act of 1906 for Experiment Station Work and the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 for Extension Service.

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*Administration and Faculty.* When first founded, the control of the institution was vested in a Board of Managers of five members, one from each county, appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. At present the Corporation consists of seven members, there having been added to the county representation the State Commissioner of Schools, ex-officio, and a member from the State Board of Agriculture. The first principal of the Agricultural School and President of the College was Dr. John H. Washburn, who served from September, 1889, to August 15, 1902. After his resignation, Dr. H. J. Wheeler, who was then Director of the Experiment Station, was made Acting President, which position he held until April 1, 1903, when Kenyon L. Butterfield, now President of the Massachusetts Agricultural College, assumed the duties of President. January 5, 1906, President Butterfield resigned to accept the Presidency of the Massachusetts Agricultural College, this resignation to take effect June 30th of that year. The vacancy caused by this resignation was filled by the appointment of Dr. Howard Edwards, the present incumbent, who took up the work on July 1, 1906. During this time the scientific and teaching staff of the institution has increased from twelve members in September, 1890, to fifty members at present.

*Development of Courses.* The first change in course was made in 1892 when mechanical engineering was introduced. In 1893 the entrance requirements were increased slightly. The next change was in September, 1898, when a modern language was required for entrance. At that time the Preparatory School was established and also the course further strengthened by the addition of a chemical and biological course. The next year the mechanical course was changed to mechanical and electrical engineering, thus offering two options in the engineering work. In 1901 a general science course was established, which course was abandoned in 1907 upon the establishment of our present applied science course. An agricultural high school course of two years was established in 1902. This course never attracted very large numbers and was later changed to the two-year short course in agriculture. The following year an industrial high school course was established. This was later followed by the two-year engineering short course, which course was discontinued several years ago. In the same year a course in highway engineering was established; the name of this course was changed and its scope broadened in 1907 when it became the civil engineering option in the engineering course. In 1903 the extension work was inaugurated. In 1907 all of the courses were thoroughly revised and much strengthened along scientific and technical lines. For the first time a course was added to the college curriculum devoted entirely to the training of women for their life work. At a formal reception held on April 28, 1908, the object and aims of the home economics department were presented to the people of the State. The first students were enrolled in this course in September of that year. From 1898 to 1908 there had been slight modifications in the entrance requirements. In the latter year, by a vote of the faculty, the entrance requirements were increased from nine to fourteen points, to be effective two points in 1909, two points in 1910 and one point in 1911. Since this time the entrance standard of this college has been that required for admission to the Carnegie Foundation. The Preparatory School was abolished in 1907. With this addition of

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courses and broadening of the scope of the institution it seemed advisable to change the name, and the charter was amended on May 4, 1909, changing the name to the Rhode Island State College.

In 1897 Dr. A. A. Brigham, then Professor of Agriculture, organized and conducted the first poultry course ever given in an American agricultural college. December 28 to 31, 1909, Farmers' Week was instituted, the object of this course being to give practical demonstrations and lectures at the college to those actively engaged in agriculture in the State.

*Social and Religious Organizations.* For the first few years there were no definite organizations of the student body aside from that of the class organizations. The first definite society of which there is any record is the Young Men's Christian Association which was established May 29, 1894. In one of the old GRISTS, we find an account of the Eclectic Society, established October, 1894, of which it was said "it was not formed for pleasure simply, but for literary and musical culture." In 1896 there was formed a Botanical Club, Zoological Club and Chemical Club. In 1897 the Young Women's Christian Union was established. With the exception of the two christian associations, all of the societies of that day have ceased to exist, although at the present time there are on the campus special societies and clubs representing all of the main college courses.

The first musical organizations were started under the name of the Rhode Island Glee and Banjo Club in 1899. Since that time musical organizations have held a prominent place in the social life of the student body.

The Lecture Association, which was organized on October 8, 1900, has each winter since that time given a series of lectures and entertainments which have added much to the college life.

College dances previous to 1900 were given as subscription dances or class functions. The first Military Ball was held January 20, 1900; the Junior Promenade became a fixture in college life on May 2, 1902. When first instituted the Sophomore Hop was given as a spring function, the first hop being held April 26, 1907. This function was changed to the fall of the year in 1909.

In 1904, at the request of President Butterfield, the Student Council was organized, it being composed of representatives from each class in college. The object of this organization at first was to foster a greater sense of responsibility in the student body. Due to the influence of the council, Freshman rules were established and Freshman caps were first seen upon the campus in 1909, the Class of 1913 being the first to come under the new Freshman rules.

The next year debating became a part of the college activities, the first inter-collegiate debate being held April 19, 1910, with the Massachusetts Agricultural College as an opponent.

*Fraternities.* As a result of discussion and agitation which had been going on in the student body for a considerable time, the 1906 GRIST contained an article suggesting the formation of fraternities in the student body, either local or as chapters of a national fraternity. Nothing came of this suggestion until October 15, 1908, when Rho Iota Kappa was formed. The first year this organization had for

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its headquarters the "Peckham House" on the road to the depot. The next year they occupied "Watson House," removing to their present home in South Hall in 1910. The second fraternity to be formed was Sigma Delta, which organization on April 22, 1912, became Eta Chapter of Theta Chi, marking the institution of the first chapter of a national fraternity at the Rhode Island State College. Nineteen hundred and ten saw the foundation of Beta Phi, which fraternity has the honor of having built the first fraternity house at the institution. This house was built in 1913. Nineteen hundred and eleven saw the establishment of Gamma Delta Sigma, which on October 19, 1914, became Eta Zeta of Lambda Chi Alpha. The next fraternity to be formed was Delta Alpha Psi, established in 1912, their home being the Perry House on College Road. In order to establish a better feeling between the different fraternities, there was formed in 1912 The Polygon, composed of representatives from each of the fraternities then established. Nineteen hundred and thirteen saw the organization of the first sorority upon the campus when Sigma Tau Delta was formed by the young ladies of Davis Hall. In 1915 Rho Chapter of Phi Epsilon Pi was founded.

The faculty, feeling the necessity for an improvement in scholarship, established in 1910 an honor system. By this system, students attaining a high grade in scholarship receive honors at the end of each year of their course and also final honors upon graduation. Paul Burgess was the first to receive honors at graduation. Shortly after the establishment of the honor system it was deemed wise to form, if possible, at the institution, a chapter of a national honorary society, and accordingly in 1913 a chapter of Phi Kappa Phi was founded.

*Publications.* The first student publication to appear upon the campus was the *Grist*, Volume One of which was issued June, 1897, by the Class of Eighteen Ninety-Eight. William C. Clarke was editor of the first number. Since that time, the *Grist* has been an annual feature of college life, and the old volumes contain much of historic interest in connection with the growth and development of the institution.

The *Beacon* first appeared as a monthly publication, the first number being issued May 25, 1905; A. M. Howe, editor-in-chief. After a short existence as a monthly publication it was changed to a weekly.

*Athletics.* The first athletic contest held by students of the Rhode Island State Agricultural School was a football game on Thanksgiving Day in 1891 when the Mystic Valley Institute of Mystic, Conn., was defeated in their home town. The following year the Athletic Association was formed and a football game played with Connecticut Agricultural College. In the early years, the games with the exception of those played with Connecticut were high school games. The schedules for 1896-97 shows the football schedule to have consisted of four games with high schools in Providence, and the baseball schedule of the same year shows games with eight high schools and the Brown Freshmen. The first athletic contest with the Massachusetts Agricultural College was baseball in 1902. New Hampshire first appeared on the Rhode Island schedule in 1908 as an opponent in football. This same year Rhode Island for the first time beat the Massachusetts Agricultural College at baseball, it being the first victory in any line of athletics over that

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institution. This year was also noteworthy as being the first year in which an all college schedule was played in the principal lines of athletics. Brown first appeared on the Rhode Island football schedule in 1909, the score of that game being Brown 6, Rhode Island 0. Basketball and baseball games were played with that institution the following season. Track events as a branch of athletics were instituted with a class meet held on June 9, 1906, the prizes for the events being given by Mr. James V. Weeden, who was then a student. This meet was held on the race track at the Washington County Fair Grounds. Two years later the interscholastic meet was established, the first meet being held May 20, 1908, ten of the high schools of the State entering contestants in this event. The first intercollegiate track contest was a relay race with Connecticut on February 12, 1910, in the Armory at Providence. The first intercollegiate track meet was held with New Hampshire on May 13<sup>th</sup> of the same year, since which date annual meets have been held.

In the early days of athletics the members of the team were obliged to furnish their own uniforms, and coaching was provided for by subscriptions among the student body. The first year that any outside assistance in coaching was given to a team, enough money was raised to pay a member of the Brown football team to visit Kingston for three afternoons and give the candidates instruction in the rudiments of the game. Later the finances of athletics were placed upon a better foundation by the establishment of an athletic tax which was assessed against all members of the student body. However, this was not a complete success until the establishment of the present blanket tax with its method of collection as part of the term bills of the college.

To Prof. M. H. Tyler belongs much credit for the establishment and development upon a firm basis, of athletics at this institution. For many years, with a small student body and hardly candidates enough for a team, he succeeded in turning out teams which were a credit to the institution.

*Alumni.* The Alumni Association of the Rhode Island State College was organized at the banquet held by the Class of Eighteen Ninety-Four upon the day of graduation, in Providence. Since that time the association has endeavored to build up a strong Rhode Island spirit among the graduates and former students. As an aid in fostering this spirit there have been established five local Alumni Clubs. The first local club was founded in New York in 1911. In 1912 clubs were established in Detroit and Pittsburgh, followed in 1913 by the Providence and South County Clubs. In order to establish a closer relationship between the corporation of the college and the Alumni Association there was formed in 1915 the Alumni Advisory Board. At the present time there are three hundred and thirteen graduates of the institution, holding advanced degrees from fifteen other universities and colleges, living in twenty-seven States, the District of Columbia, Porto Rico, Hawaii, the Philippines, Uruguay, Argentine, and two Canadian Provinces, and holding responsible positions in technical and educational work.

In the twenty-seven years we have seen developed from an agricultural school of twenty-seven pupils a State College offering four degree courses and with an enrollment of three hundred and thirty-two students.

# Rhode Island State College



STAIRWAY, OLD COLLEGE HALL



PRACTICAL LABORATORY WORK



THE FIRST ANNEX



MEETING PLACE OF FIRST BOARD OF MANAGERS

# In Memoriam

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Thomas Carroll Rodman

Long did we feel your presence  
The years that you were here,  
And in the heart of everyone  
Your memory is dear.

You helped us on our journey  
And soothed us when in pain.  
Your quiet words of plain advice  
Like sun dispelled the rain.

Your friends are scattered far and wide  
In all parts of the land,  
But never can we half forget  
Your eager, helping hand.

You were with us for many years,  
But now you're gone above.  
And ever as we think of you  
Our thoughts are filled with love.

WILLIAM E. GILLIS