Chapter Three: ESTABLISHMENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

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III
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

IT IS here that we draw the dividing line and proceed with the history of the Agricultural College rather than that of the University. Having seen the University established with its integral college units, it is now fitting to devote our attention primarily to the College of Agriculture, with only such references to the University as occasion demands.

It will be recalled that one of the primary purposes of the Land Grant Act of 1862 was to offer industrial education to the people, or as the Act stated, “to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts.” It was more from a sense of duty that the Agricultural College was established than because of any particular demand for that kind of instruction. It was at least thirty years before agricultural instruction received any great amount of recognition.

During these years, it must be remembered, there was a general intolerance of “book farming” among both farmers and non-farmers. The teaching of farming in the schools was regarded as a somewhat futile task.

It was some time before the Agricultural College succeeded in inducing students to take its regular courses. The first year of the University the Agricultural College had not come into existence. On September 5, 1871, “S. R. Thompson was elected to the Chair of Theory and Practice of Agriculture [later to be made dean], but not to enter on his duties sooner than one year from the present,” according to the report of the Board of Regents of that date.

In his report for the year ending in June, 1872, Chancellor Benton stated:
SAMUEL R. THOMPSON
First professor of agriculture and first dean of the college
"The Agricultural College as a co-ordinate branch of the University will also demand the attention of the Board. The requirements of the law creating these national schools make it necessary to provide for opening this College in the immediate future. It is important to determine accurately the limit of time prescribed by law, and not to allow the land grant to revert to the general government in consequence of neglect."

On June 25, 1872, the Agricultural College was established by the regents and ordered to be opened.

It appears that, altho the Agricultural College was formally opened for the year 1872-73, there were no regular students. That year a course of lectures was given, however. In his report Professor Thompson says:

"A small number of students have entered for the regular course in Agriculture, but for the present year have been pursuing preparatory studies chiefly. The work of agricultural instruction proper, has consisted of a course of lectures on vegetable physiology with reference to tree growing, and a course of popular lectures on agricultural chemistry. These lectures were very well attended. In general it is our intention to furnish instruction in any department of agricultural instruction which may be demanded, without, for the present, insisting on regular courses of study; yet providing a regular course for all who wish it."

So the second year of the University passed by, apparently without any very enthusiastic enrollment in agriculture. The third year seems to have turned out likewise, for the report of Chancellor Benton for the year ending June, 1874, stated that "the special instruction belonging to this department has not yet been in demand, and no solicitation has been used to urge students into this course of study." Professor Thompson in his report for the same year stated:

"But few students as yet have shown a disposition to take agricultural studies, and these only in the Preparatory department. I have seen a number of students who desire to attend the Agricultural School as soon as they can be accommodated with boarding on the farm, and can have employment so as to earn a part of their expenses. When not otherwise engaged, I have taught classes in the Academic department."
But the following year, 1874-75, fifteen students entered upon the agricultural course of study. These students enrolled gradually during the term, Charles Brainard being the first to take up the work. The cause of this unprecedented demand for agricultural knowledge was due largely to the fact that the University had come into possession of the present Agricultural College farm at the opening of that school year and besides providing the students with an economical place to board and room actually offered them remunerative employment. In fact, Chancellor Benton stated that the enrollment in the Agricultural College would have been still greater had it been possible to accommodate the students at the farm house.

THE FIRST COLLEGE FARM

This brings us to the subject of the college farm. It will be recalled that the Legislature in establishing the University provided "that the Governor shall set aside two sections of any agricultural college land, or saline land, belonging to the State, and shall notify the State Land Commissioner of such reservation, for the purpose of a Model Farm, as a part of the College of Agriculture, and such land, so set apart, shall not be disposed of for any other purpose." For some years it was evidently the idea that some of the state lands or land forming the endowment of the University could be set aside and used for a model farm. Some of this land was actually selected and used for a while. There is this notation in the report of the Regents for June 25, 1872, the same day the Agricultural College was officially established and ordered to be opened:

"After a report from the Land Committee, on motion of Regent Maxfield, the land selected by the Committee for a model farm was approved, and the Governor requested to set it apart for the use of the University."

Two sections of land were set aside for the farm about this time. J. S. Dales, the present secretary of the Board of Regents and a member of the University's first graduat-
ing class, recalls that it was in at least two or three parcels, but the bulk of it was in the neighborhood of the present fair grounds.

During the years 1872-73 something was accomplished along the line of actual farming on the original farm belonging to the college. When, on June 25, 1872, the Agricultural College was established and ordered to be opened, $1,000 was appropriated for improvements. Out of this $1,000, but $63.40 was expended on farm improvements, $44 of which went for breaking the land. Money to the extent of about $500 was expended under the direction of the chancellor, however, for "things not specially used in or belonging to the Agricultural Department, but in other departments as well," including philosophical apparatus, chemicals, etc. The balance of this first appropriation went back into the treasury, but at the December meeting of the regents another appropriation of $2,000 was made and Professor Thompson, who was now in charge, was directed to buy implements and hire a farmer to take charge of the farm.

Anderson Root of Cass County was engaged at $50 per month as the "farmer." He began work February 1, 1873. Mr. Root was "an experienced and successful farmer, and came recommended by a large number of the leading men in his county," according to Professor Thompson. A three-horse team for plowing and breaking was purchased for $435. The starting of the work on the farm was quite an event. A number of the implement companies gave implements, or threw off part of the regular price. Individuals promised various donations. Governor R. W. Furnas and Mr. Abbey of Richardson County, and J. D. Spearman of Sarpy County gave Poland China pigs. Hon. John Taffe gave a quantity of imported sugar beet seed, while Senator Hitchcock supplied the college with eight volumes of Congressional documents and some seeds. Volumes of reports were received from the boards of agriculture in various states.
Farming operations were under way in the summer of 1873. In his report for the year ending June 26, 1873, Professor Thompson states:

“The land broken east of R. R. last season was plowed deeply and 6½ acres of it sown to wheat and 4½ planted in corn. The nine acres remaining of that piece east of R. R. has been broken and planted in sod corn. For the purpose of keeping the team employed until the breaking season, 16 acres of land contiguous to ours was rented at $2 per acre and planted in crops. The crops now in the ground are: 23 acres of corn; 5 acres in oats; 6½ in wheat; ½ acre in sugar beets (4 kinds), and about an acre in garden vegetables and experimental patches of wheat, barley and oats, sown with seed imported from Europe and furnished us by the National Agricultural Department at Washington. With the exception of one piece of corn, which has been injured by the squirrels, the crops are all in excellent condition. In addition to farm work, the Farmer has done considerable team work, plowing, dragging and cultivating on the University campus.”

EXPERIMENTS WITH SUGAR BEETS

This year, 1873, marked the beginning of agricultural experimental work, now carried on on such a large scale at the Agricultural College. The sugar beet industry which was many years later to become of great importance in the North Platte Valley was the subject of much inquiry, even at this early date. In his report Professor Thompson states:

“During the spring and summer I have taken it upon myself to secure a thorough and extensive trial of the capabilities of our State for the production of beets suitable for the manufacture of sugar. With this end in view, I presented the subject to the attention of the State Board of Agriculture at its last meeting, where I met with a cordial response and instant co-operation. Gov. Furnas, President of the Board, immediately ordered a quantity of seed from Europe, notice was given through the press and in response to requests I have distributed seed to something over 100 different persons in twenty counties.”
"I have written a number of articles for the papers, and in every way in my power endeavored to bring the value and importance of this experiment to the attention of the general public.

"Persons receiving seed agree to cultivate, and report to the State Board, sending specimens of beets to the Agricultural College for analysis. It will be seen that this arrangement will bring a large amount of additional labor upon the faculty of the Agricultural College, but in view of the great importance of the experiment, it has seemed to me that it ought to be undertaken. In sending out this seed, I paid $6.32 postage, which I have not charged in my account, since I was not certain that it was a legitimate expenditure under my department or not. I would be pleased to have the Board instruct me on this point."

The following year Professor Thompson was obliged to report that the results achieved from distributing the sugar beet seed had been so meager that the State Board of Agriculture did not think it wise to continue it another year, altho he personally believed ultimate success would greet the experiment. The half acre in sugar beets on the farm yielded at the rate of ten tons an acre. "Of the various new kinds of small grains which we tried last year, but one kind of oats was thought worthy of trial again this year," Professor Thompson stated in his report for the year ending June 23, 1874. "We have now growing and in good condition, small plats of two new kinds of oats, one of barley and one of wheat. . . . The six acres we had in white Mediterranean wheat produced 101 bushels of superior wheat. Part was sowed again the present year, and the remainder sold at an average price of fifteen cents above the ordinary wheat. Some of it which we had ground produced flour not inferior to winter wheat."

In the grasshopper times of the seventies Prof. Samuel Aughey was giving some attention to the injurious insects of the state, laying a foundation perhaps for the economic entomology of today. Among the insects with which he concerned himself were the Rocky Mountain locust, the chinch bug and the Hessian fly.
THESE FIFTY YEARS

WHAT KIND OF A FARM?

There was at this time considerable discussion as to just what kind of a farm the college farm should be. This same question was to prove a troublesome one for years. In his report for 1873 Professor Thompson raises the question:

"In planning our future work in the Agricultural College, the first question to be settled is, shall we aim to present a model farm, beautiful in its location, harmonious in its arrangements, exact in its divisions, neat in its keeping, and profitable in its working, or shall we arrange for an experimental farm, where it shall be our main business to discover new agricultural truth, rather than to exhibit what is old. The model farm will make the best showing to the general public and will incur less expense, but in the long run the latter will be of more real service to the State."

PURCHASE OF THE PRESENT COLLEGE FARM

The land set aside for a "model farm" was not considered particularly desirable, and efforts were being made to secure another farm. About September 1, 1874, the college came into the possession of the present college farm by purchase from Moses M. Culver. Professor Thompson's question as to the kind of a farm which should be built up was apparently not entirely settled. Experimental work was to be carried on, but it was the hope that the farm should also be made entirely self-sustaining. Regarding the purchase and development of the new farm there is this notation in the report of the Board of Regents for 1874:

"At its session, June 23, 1874, the Board of Regents deciding that no sufficient portion of the two sections of saline land, which had been set apart by the Governor for a model farm was suitable for that purpose, a committee was appointed by the board to secure, if possible, a suitable farm for the college, to be paid for from the proceeds of the two sections named.

"A purchase of a well improved farm at a moderate distance from the University was effected. The farm contains 320 acres, for which $55 an acre was paid. The farm is well adapted to the purposes of the College, and is in a high state of cultivation, having over four miles of Osage Orange hedge, four to five years old; twenty-
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five acres of young timber three and four years old; three hundred apple trees, fifty peach trees; a good stone house of ten rooms; a good frame barn, granary, etc.

"The provision made for the payment of this farm was by the sale of a portion of the saline land set apart for the use of a model farm. Of this land sale was made to the amount of $22,500, on such terms as the committee thought would enable the board to meet the payments on the land purchased for the College Farm.

"For improving this farm, furnishing teams, utensils, and well-selected breeds of cattle, and thus to enable the Agricultural College to accomplish effectively the work for which it was organized, the Board have appropriated during this year $6,300, which, with a former appropriation of $2,500, will furnish this department with ample appliances for experimental purposes, and after the present year, it is expected to make it entirely self-sustaining."

More light on this transaction is found in the regents' report for the two years ending December 1, 1876:

"That there may be a clear understanding of the farm, the cost of the same, and how paid, the following statement is submitted:

"It is doubtless well known that according to the law under which the University was organized, the Governor was authorized to select two sections of the public land for a model farm. This was accordingly done. The Regents, however, deeming no sufficient part of said land suitable for the purposes of a farm, decided to purchase a farm of 320 acres of M. M. Culver, east of Lincoln, for the agreed sum of $17,600. In part payment of such amount they traded a portion of the said two sections of land at an agreed price of $5,700, and also a certain lot in Lincoln, of which by some means they had become the owner, for $350 more, thus reducing the amount to be paid to Mr. Culver to $11,550. This latter amount they agreed to pay within five years from the time of purchase—June, 1874— with interest at 10 per cent, payable annually, and executed written obligations, in the form of notes, accordingly. The interest on these obligations has been paid as required.

"The remainder of the two sections of land, except about twenty acres, hereafter mentioned, was by them sold to other parties on five years time, with interest and time of payment the same as stated above, for the agreed sum of $16,500. The interest on said sum falling due annually has been paid to the extent of $720 only, as shown by the statement of the Treasurer. The said remaining twenty acres of land, together with the improvements thereon, was conveyed in part payment for the house erected on the farm during
the autumn of 1875, at the agreed price of $2,500. The house cost the sum of $3,895, and is commodious and substantial, very much enhancing the value of the farm."

The house mentioned above stood on the campus for nearly fifty years, being torn down in the fall of 1923. A note to posterity was discovered by workmen tearing down the house. The note was written on a block of wood and the block had been placed in the wall above one of the doors. It read:

"To whom it may concern: Know ye that this 15th day of December, 1875, that the sun shines bright and the roads are dry and you can work out in your shirt sleeves.—J. W. Beatty."

J. W. Beatty, it was recalled at the college campus, was one of the carpenters employed when the building was erected half a century ago by M. L. Hiltner.

There seems to have been considerable difficulty in collecting the money due for parts of the original model farm that were sold, and some of the contracts were cancelled, and the land resold. The report of the Board of Regents for the two years ending December 1, 1880, straightens the matter out. "The debt which matured June 25th, 1879, was paid," says the report, "and the title to the farm has been made perfect. The appropriation made by the legislature of 1879, with other funds realized from the sale of lands set apart for that purpose, was applied in discharge of the debt, and the funds and securities remaining in the hands of the Regents were transferred to the State Treasurer, as directed in the act of the Legislature making the appropriation." The Legislature had appropriated $8,000, which together with $5,984.50, evidently received from the sale of parts of the old farm, was sufficient to wipe out the debt on the Culver farm. Securities, presumably representing mortgages on the parts of the old farm which had been sold, were transferred to the State Treasurer, to reimburse the state for the legislative appropriation.

In June, 1875, Professor Thompson reported that there were 171 acres of crops "now in the ground," including 55
acres of wheat, 18½ acres of oats, 19½ acres of barley, 68 acres of corn, 3 acres of broom corn, 1 acre of sugar beets, and 6 acres of miscellaneous crops. "These all, except the sugar beets, which the grasshoppers twice destroyed, are in a highly promising condition at this writing," he stated.

IMPROVING THE FARM


Hogs were represented by the Essex, Poland China, and Berkshire breeds, about twenty-four in all. In poultry there were "fair specimens of buff Cochins, dark brahas, light brahas, Houdans, black-red game bantams, and white bantams."

The new farm demanded a number of improvements. In his report Professor Thompson stated:

"The farm was found to be in a fair state of cultivation, but excessively weedy, and most of the inner hedges grown up with grass. A systematic war of extermination has been begun upon the weeds, and a portion of the hedges put under cultivation. There were not funds at command to justify more. The piggery which was on the road front, and in plain sight from the farm house, has been removed to the grove west of the orchard. . . . A pasture containing about fifteen acres, lying near the farm, has been enclosed by a four-board fence. . Cost $283.45. A cattle shed, twelve by forty, has been built adjoining the barn, and the small barn-yard enclosed by a high board fence. Cost $97.30. The poultry house on the old farm was moved up and supplied with a spacious yard, surrounded by a lath fence six feet high. Cost $119.73. The stone kitchen, attached to the farm house, but hitherto unfinished, was floored and plastered outside and inside, a chimney built to it, and a bedroom partitioned from one end. This arrangement adds largely to the capacity of the house. The spouting on the main building was repaired and extended to the kitchen. Cost $161.35. A coal house, twelve by sixteen feet, adjoining the kitchen, was put up and
divided into small compartments for the use of students and the farmer. Cost $48.28."

A large well, six feet in diameter, was dug at the rear of the farm house, and water, drawn by a windmill pump, was piped to the piggery, pasture and farm house. A 75-barrel tank was placed at the well, to insure a supply of water at all times. "The whole scheme is a complete success, and practically solves the water problem for all time to come," said Professor Thompson in his report. "Entire cost, $591.23."

Among the articles of "illustrative apparatus" purchased for the department were a dynamometer, for testing the draft of plows and other agricultural implements, skeletons of a horse and a cow, "for use in studying the anatomy and physiology of domestic animals," and hay and stock scales, together with some books. It will be recalled that the large dwelling house, torn down in 1923, was added to the farm campus in the fall of 1875.

INSTRUCTION IN AGRICULTURE

But in the same way that Professor Thompson was in doubt as to whether the college farm should be simply a model farm or an experimental farm, Chancellor Benton was worrying himself as to what kind of a college the Agricultural College should be. Plainly, the first few years, there was not a great demand for agricultural instruction, and this same situation was to continue for many years. Whatever attraction the college farm had for students seemed to be due to the fact that it was a cheap place to live, and one could be furnished employment enough to pay at least a good part of one's college expenses.

The first agricultural courses offered in the College of Agriculture endeavored to strike a happy medium between a technical school and the arts college. There were, in fact, two courses of study, one a four years' course, running parallel with the scientific course in the University and leading to the same degree, and a shorter course which
could be completed in from three to six terms, according to the student's advancement. In the early days of the University there were three terms to each school year, a fall term, a winter term, and a spring term.

The four-year agricultural course, as announced in the catalog printed in 1874, was as follows:

**Freshman Year**

First term—Geometry, bookkeeping, anatomy and physiology of domestic animals.
Second term—Geometry, stock breeding, English literature.
Third term—Vegetable physiology, botany, entomology.

**Sophomore Year**

First term—Trigonometry and surveying, inorganic chemistry, farm economy.
Second term—Organic chemistry, analytical geometry, farm economy.
Third term—Analytical chemistry, physiology, surveying (field practice), horticulture.

**Junior Year**

First term—Mechanical physics, French or Latin, logic or Chaucer.
Second term—Chemical physics, French or Latin, English literature.
Third term—Astronomy, rhetoric, French or Latin.

**Senior Year**

First term—Intellectual philosophy, zoology, agricultural jurisprudence.
Second term—Moral philosophy, meteorology, comparative physical geography, lectures on comparative anatomy.
Third term—Constitution of United States, landscape gardening, geology.

There was also a preparatory course of one year, evidently for those who were unable to enter the regular classes. It included:

First term—Arithmetic (commercial), algebra, English composition.
Second term—History of United States, algebra, elementary chemistry.
Third term—Elements of natural philosophy, arithmetic, elements of botany.

The two-year course in agriculture embraced:

**FIRST YEAR**
First term—Arithmetic, algebra, English composition.
Second term—Arithmetic (commercial), algebra or history of United States, elementary chemistry.
Third term—Elementary natural philosophy, vegetable physiology, elements of botany.

**SECOND YEAR**
First term—Bookkeeping, anatomy and physiology of lower animals, farm economy.
Second term—Meteorology, stock breeding, farm economy.
Third term—Tree culture, gardening, entomology.

Besides the weighty subject of agricultural jurisprudence, perhaps the most ambitious agricultural subject offered was that of farm economy. Farm economy did not resemble rural economics of the present day. In fact, in those days instruction in agriculture was divided into two main divisions, scientific agriculture, which included the application of the natural sciences to the business of farming, and farm economy, which seemed to include every subject that could not be classified under a head of its own. It included:

“Principles regulating the mechanical preparation of the soil, means of pulverizing the soil, of securing dryness in wet soils and moisture in dry ones; methods of seeding crops, of cultivating crops; adaptation of crops to particular soils, to market, to the condition of soil; use and care of farm implements; draining; laying out farms, construction of farm buildings, houses, barns, ice-houses, stables, henneries, piggeries, etc.; improvement of soils in chemical relations; animal, vegetable and mineral manures; methods of applying manure; succession of crops, rotation of crops, preparation of the soil for particular crops.”

But the fact that students were difficult to secure led to a great deal of discussion as to the future of the Agricul-
tural College. The question of the kind of instruction to be given in an Agricultural College was indeed a bothersome one. Chancellor Benton in his report for the college year ending in June, 1874, paid considerable attention to this problem. Two definite plans in relation to agricultural instruction were suggested. The first plan was to make the Agricultural College more strictly a technical school. "Schools of law, of medicine, or engineering, do not require of their students a knowledge of all branches of literature and science, but only such preparation as will enable them to profit by the instruction they seek," said Chancellor Benton. "Why not organize the agricultural work on the same general plan, and thus popularize it far more than is possible, where a full course of four years is required, with a year of preparatory study to enter on it?"

The second plan, known as the Cornell plan, was to require of all students in the University a certain amount of agricultural instruction, and more extended work for those desiring it. The former plan appears to have been adopted, for in the report of the Board of Regents is this notation: "At its last meeting, December 16, 1874, the Board reduced the length of time required to obtain a college degree in this department from four years to three years; thus making the instruction more strictly technical in its character." University catalogs of the day are a little confusing as to this three-year course, in two catalogs the course being mentioned in one place as three years in length, and in another place in the same catalogs as being a four-year course. A one-year agricultural course was also listed about this time. However this may be, the college was shortly to make the main course a four-year one, besides one year preparatory.

FARMERS' INSTITUTES

"The Farmers' Institute stands for better farming, more comfortable homes, a higher degree of intelligence, and a more noble citizenship among the farming people. The Nation has always at
critical times in the past looked to the farm for many of her great men. She must continue to do so in the future. The Farmers' Institute seeks to assist in promoting larger agricultural production and higher standards of living, so that the boys and girls will love farm life, seek an agricultural education, and return to their homes upon the land, rather than be swallowed up and lost in the crowded cities. Any subjects that directly assist in this movement are proper for the Farmers' Institute. The main features must be crop production, soil tillage and fertility, livestock, poultry, fruit growing, road making, home economics, and other subjects of a similar nature."—From the first report on Nebraska Farmers' Institutes, 1906.

The farmers' institute was one of the great agricultural forces in Nebraska, and had its beginning in this period. Sponsored largely by the University in its earliest days, it was the first attempt to carry University instruction to the people of the state. For nearly half a century it was a vital force in hundreds of communities. The village church, or the village hall, or the schoolhouse was often packed to the doors by the people of the surrounding county, who considered the coming of the institute an event as great or greater than the county fair or the circus.

Today the institute is no more. It is practically obsolete, swallowed up in the tremendous expansion of agricultural extension. During the forty years that the farmers' institute enriched the country life of this state, it was an organization of ideals, as the quotation at the beginning of this section, from the University's first report on Nebraska farmers' institutes, published in 1906, indicates. But as time goes on people are going to wonder more and more what sort of an institution a farmers' institute really was, and something of its veriest beginnings, long before it reached its great culmination in the early 1900's.

The farmers' institute movement began before the Agricultural College was hardly in operation. In fact, the absence of students in this department seemed rather responsible for the idea of carrying education to the people, even if they did not exert themselves enough to come to
the college to get the education. It appears that it was Chancellor Benton, the first chancellor of the University, who conceived this happy idea. In the chancellor's annual report to the Board of Regents for the year ending June 25, 1873, the second year of the University's operation, there is this important recommendation:

"For the purpose of giving publicity to the work of the Agricultural College, and for promoting intelligence among the farming class, I would suggest the feasibility of holding institutes in various parts of the State, during the winter season. The Professor of Agriculture, aided by such assistance as he may obtain, can, I am persuaded, promote essentially the cause of industrial education throughout the State.

"I do not see why such an extension of our work would not be entirely legitimate; and if zealously and efficiently done it would undoubtedly redound to the advantage of the University, and confer lasting benefit on the localities where they may be held.

"There are organizations of farmers in various parts of the State, which would, without doubt, gladly make all the necessary arrangements for holding such meetings as I have suggested.

"There is prevailing in all the States an opinion somewhat adverse to theoretical farming, and a latent distrust of the utility of schools for the industrial class. This can be overcome in a large measure by the free interchange of views between our agricultural professors and the farmers of the State; and thus we can secure increased patronage to the classes of the agricultural school.

"As a beginning it might be profitable to have such an institute at the University building, sometime in the winter; and carefully prepared papers and addresses on the various topics connected with agriculture and horticulture might be presented from experienced persons from abroad, as well as by the professors of the University. The importance of having the Agricultural College possess the favor and confidence of the people at large cannot be too highly estimated, and whatever will contribute to this end should be promptly accepted."

Here apparently was the first mention of agricultural extension. It will be recalled by our readers that at this time the Agricultural College had not yet secured its first regular student, for in the same report Prof. S. R. Thompson stated that "a small number of students have entered
for the regular course in Agriculture, but for the present year have been pursuing preparatory studies chiefly." In the report for the next year, ending June, 1874, Chancellor Benton was obliged to state of the Agricultural College: "The special instruction belonging to this department has not yet been in demand, and no solicitation has been used to urge students into this course of study." But one of the duties of the "Professor of Agriculture" during the winter term had been the holding of agricultural institutes.

This indeed appears a rather remarkable bit of forethought on the part of the University's first chancellor. Most people, if one were to ask them, would say that agricultural extension has been a development of only the last few years, but here was a branch of agricultural extension actually in operation before the Agricultural College was having any regular students, and before the present Agricultural College farm had been purchased.

During the winter term of 1873-74, the third year of the University's operation, four farmers' institutes were held. One was held at Dorchester, Saline County; one at Palmyra, Otoe County; one at Seward, Seward County; and one at Lowell, Kearney County. "The last mentioned, coming after spring work had begun, had a small attendance," says Professor Thompson in the report to the regents. "The others were well attended and seemed to give excellent satisfaction. The day sessions were occupied in discussions on practical farm work, the evenings to more general work—essays, lectures, etc. At these meetings lectures were delivered by Governor Furnas, Hon. A. K. White, Chancellor Benton, B. F. Kinney, Hon. J. M. McKenzie, and by the professors in the Agricultural College. Valuable essays were contributed by H. K. Raymond, of Otoe County, Judge Gilmour, of Cass County, Hon. Uriah Bruner, of Cuming County, and others. These essays have been widely copied in the agricultural and other papers—a pretty good indication of their value. At Dorchester, the last evening, the large school room was so filled that not even standing room
SOME FORTY YEARS AGO

The college as it appeared nearly a half century ago. The two main buildings are the dormitory and the stone house.
was left, and many had to go away unable to obtain entrance. So satisfactory were these meetings to those in attendance that arrangements were made to hold others in the places next winter. Besides these farmers' meetings, I attended six teachers' institutes during the time I was not teaching in the University. . . . At each of them I spoke at least one evening on the claims of agricultural education and regarding the work of the Agricultural College.”

In the same report Professor Thompson forecasts the need for agricultural extension:

“We should not solely seek to discover new agricultural truth and to fit young men for illustrating its value in the community, but we should make a special effort to disseminate agricultural knowledge through the community. This we may do in several ways, as by publication of reports, and through the press, and by the public lectures of our teachers. There seems to be no good reason why the teaching of our professors should be confined entirely to the class room. The great public who support the University are certainly entitled to receive a share of the instruction the University may have to impart. If only knowledge is spread abroad and improvement stimulated, what matters it, whether all be done in the conventional way or not?”

Professor Thompson

There was one outstanding figure in this period of the development of the Agricultural College, and that was Prof. S. R. Thompson, the first professor of agriculture and first dean of the college. Professor Thompson was not only a dominant figure in connection with the Agricultural College but also prominent in educational affairs in the state. Perhaps not a great deal might be known about Professor Thompson were it not for a sketch contributed by Dr. Charles E. Bessey to the annual report of the Nebraska State Board of Agriculture for 1896. It in turn was partly from a sketch prepared by President Ferguson of Westminster College, Pennsylvania. The facts, as presented here, are from Professor Bessey's sketch. Professor
Thompson gave to Nebraska the best years of his life, from thirty-eight years to fifty-one years of age.

We learn that he was born in Crawford County, Pennsylvania, April 17, 1833. He graduated from Westminster College in 1863. Before graduation, he served as superintendent of the Crawford County schools. He was professor of natural science in the Edinboro State Normal School from 1865 to December, 1867. Later he was engaged in high school work at Pottsville, Pa., and then went to Marshall College, Cabell County, West Virginia, to reorganize it as a state normal school. After three years there he came to Nebraska.

Professor Thompson resigned from his position at the Agricultural College in 1875. For a year he was principal of the State Normal School at Peru, Nebraska, and state superintendent of public instruction in Nebraska from 1877 to 1881. He also filled out the term of Prof. W. W. W. Jones, as superintendent of the Lincoln (Nebraska) city schools, when Professor Jones succeeded him as state superintendent. He again resumed the professorship at the Agricultural College and from that he was called to the professorship of physics at Westminster College in June, 1884. Professor Thompson died October 28, 1896. Dean Bessey paid him this tribute on the occasion of his death:

"We need not go back to those early days and criticize the work of those who were compelled to make educational bricks without straw, and while we may readily admit that mistakes were made, we should none the less honor those who toiled and planned. Time has shown that those who once criticized Professor Thompson's work were themselves as far as he from having the true solution of the problems of that time. As we look back to those days of small things, those days in which the beginnings were made, we are led to honor the man who shrank not from the labor which was laid upon him. As I look over the country and compare the work done by Professor Thompson in this young University, with that accomplished by men in similar positions in other institutions I am constrained to say that Nebraska was very fortunate in having the services of so cultured a man."
“While in Nebraska Professor Thompson organized the State Weather Service, which with varying fortunes has existed to this day, growing in these later years into the splendid service with which almost every Nebraskan is familiar. This work might be honor enough, but to it we may add another. In the early days he began urging the people of the state to engage in farmers' institutes, in which he himself took active part. As I go about the state I frequently find a pleasant memory still lingering of the pleasant face and voice of the dead teacher.

“Personally, Professor Thompson was tall, of pleasant manner and with a scholarly bearing. In his later years his white hair and full beard of almost snowy whiteness gave him a venerable look. A kind face from which looked out the clear, soft eyes which betokened the sympathetic friend, completes the picture of the man who has gone from us.”

There was still another man, who, besides Chancellor Benton and Professor Thompson, was listed as a member of the faculty of the Agricultural College. That was Professor Samuel Aughey, professor of chemistry and natural sciences, who officiated in the Agricultural College as well as the academic department. Professor Aughey gave a course in elementary chemistry, inorganic and organic, and also took up the application of chemical science to agriculture. He also offered instruction in geology and botany to students of the Agricultural College. Professor Aughey graduated from Pennsylvania College in 1856 and from 1867 to 1871 was in the employ of the Smithsonian Institution. For several years during his connection with the University of Nebraska he taught the classes in German and “devoted his remaining spare time to the collection of an herbarium of the flora of the state.” He resigned in 1883, becoming territorial geologist of Wyoming.
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