

**A Historical Analysis of the Kansas State Agricultural College and its Influence on the
Development of K-State Research and Extension**

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Introduction

With sporadic success and failures in agriculture endeavors in the latter half of the 19th century, Kansas farmers needed guidance and scientific and technical education. The creation of an agricultural college, research station and cooperative extension service were vital in advancing Kansas agriculture and paving a way for life on the prairie. In 1862, the Morrill Act was passed, thus appropriating millions of acres of tribal land to states for the purpose of founding colleges to promote agriculture and mechanical arts (National Archives, 2022). The Morrill Act provided opportunities to thousands of students seeking technical degrees and farmers who had previously been excluded from higher education (National Archives, 2022).

The purpose of this historical research was to document the influence the Kansas State Agricultural College had on the development of the KSU Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, in short, K-State Research and Extension. This research also sought to describe the history and role of the experiment station and identify the role of the cooperative extension service and how it has progressed. Exploring the inception of a land grant college, experiment station and extension service gives an understanding of the school's mission and helps to provide a context for the modern institution.

Conceptual Framework

Historical Research: A Guide explains the intrinsic value of writing about historical events as being both educative and entertaining (McDowell, 2002). This research project provided an avenue of learning about the history of a land grant college and the beginning of research and extension in the Midwest from a narrative. It is important to understand and explore the history and philosophies of land grant colleges through this investigation.

Methodology

Historical research methods were used to gather information for this paper. A key primary source for this research was the *History of the Kansas State Agricultural College* written by Professor J.D. Walters (1909), which narrates the founding of the college and the research station. Professor Walters, who was an instructor at KSAC from 1877 until 1917, provided detail regarding the underpinnings agricultural advancements in the early history of the college. Other history was derived from secondary resources through the K-State libraries, K-State libraries digital archives and K-State Research and Extension. Current information about and data relating to K-State Research and Extension was obtained directly from the organization.

Results and Findings

To be designated as the state's land grant college under the Morrill Act, the Kansas State Agricultural College (KSAC) was established in 1863 (Walters, 1909). The Hatch Bill followed in 1887 granting funds to establish an agricultural experiment station and KSAC was selected as the site (Walters, 1909). Cooperative extension was introduced in 1914 through the Smith-Lever Act which provided funds to further educate rural citizens about advances in agriculture practices and technology through outreach programs (National Archives, n.d.). At this time, research data

being conducted at KSAC and its experiment station had become easier than ever to get to Kansans to help them improve their farming pursuits.

The impact of KSAC on the Kansas agricultural community was not felt immediately. The founding president of the college favored the classics and agricultural and mechanics courses were not fully implemented until John A. Anderson was elected as president in 1873 (Walters, 1909). Under Anderson's tutelage, admission requirements were lowered, professorships were established, and construction was completed (Walters, 1909). Under the third president of the college, George T. Fairchild, the college began hosting college education outreach courses called Farmers' Institutes, which would grow in popularity across the country (Walters, 1909).

Inexpensive attempts at experiments were conducted during the Fairchild administration, but limited funds of the college prohibited progress (Walters, 1909). The passing of the Hatch Bill in 1887 provided better funding to conduct research, specifically by establishing the experiment station in Hays, two and a half hours west of the main campus (Walters, 1909). The station began experiments in seed and variety testing with a small building and greenhouses (Walters, 1909). The experiment station published five bulletins in its first year in 1888 (Willard, 1940). In addition to the original experiment station there are now research centers, stations and fields in 18 other locations across Kansas (KSRE, n.d.)

Ahead of the Smith-Lever Cooperative Extension Act, the college organized the Division of College Extension in 1912, which had been gradually developed from Farmers' Institutes, to present scientific and technical courses and lectures (Willard, 1940). What started as six Farmers' Institutes grew to more than 300 by 1919 (Walters, 1909). As a result of the Smith-Lever Act, KSAC established county agents for outgrowth work of the college (Teagarden, 1991). Fifty-nine counties had organized extension programs with county agents by 1920 and today all 105 counties have an extension office (Teagarden, 1991).

Conclusions

Kansas State Agricultural College (KSAC) played an important role in influencing agricultural progress in Kansas and abroad since its founding. The college was among the first to take advantage of the Morrill Act to establish a land grant college. Acknowledging the needs of the states' farmers and citizens, KSAC conducted research prior to the passing of the Hatch Act. The college also hosted Farmers' Institutes and employed extension agents well before the Smith-Lever Act to distribute data and information to Kansans.

Implications & Recommendations

Today, Kansas State University describes itself as "a comprehensive, research, land-grant institution serving students and the people of Kansas, the nation, and the world" (Kansas State University, 2022). After 160 years, serving the people is still at the forefront of the college's mission. With KSU's connection to the land-grant mission, students should be made aware of their institution. Students should recognize the storied past and conduct critical analyses of the key historical figures and events that took place in the college's history. Additional research on the impact of KSRE on local communities and counties is also recommended.

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