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Historical Records Of Austin And Waller Counties - 1969

Prairie View A&M College

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HISTORICAL RECORDS OF
AUSTIN AND WALLER COUNTIES

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First Edition 2397

Premier Printing & Letter Service, Inc.,
2120 McKinney Avenue,
Houston, Texas. 77003

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CORRIE PATTISON HASKEW

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A compilation of significant studies, authentic records, documents, early history text books, genealogies of families, newspapers, documentary material arranged to make a reasonably continuous narrative of the history of Austin and Waller Counties. Much of the material has not hitherto been published and will be of inestimable value to persons doing research in these counties for authentic records.

Prairie View University

Prairie View had its beginning in 1876, the first year of the constitution and of the common free school system, and at the dawn of public education in Texas.

Texas' first state institution of higher learning was the Agricultural and Mechanical College, established in 1876. Corresponding with its establishment under the provisions of the Morrill Land Grant College Act, the 15th Legislature authorized a similar school for Negro youth to operate under the management of the A. & M. College Board.

A three-man commission was appointed to locate and build the "Agricultural and Mechanical College for Colored Youth". With the \$20,000 appropriation for this purpose, the commission bought the Alta Vista plantation of the late Jared Ellison Kirby in Waller County, east of Hempstead.

The commissioners spent \$15,787.67 in purchasing the land and buildings and making the necessary repairs. The property was then left in charge of the Honorable Edwin Waller at a salary of \$100 per month, and his representative, Ashbel Smith, on January 21, 1878, turned the affairs of the college over to the A. & M. College Board of Directors at its regular meeting in Austin.

The first Principal of the new College was L. W. Minor, a native of Mississippi, who was selected by Thomas S. Gathright, the first president at College Station. The succession of Principals included: E. H. Anderson, (his brother) L. C. Anderson, E. L. Blackshear, who served twenty years and was followed by I. M. Terrell, the fifth principal. In 1918, J. C. Osborne, a medical doctor, was selected as the sixth principal.

W. R. Banks, a Georgian who had known Booker T. Washington, was asked to come to Prairie View by the officials and by the General Educational Board to execute the program which the Rockefeller foundation had in mind for Prairie View. Many needed buildings were added. Since the salary scale was low, Rosenwald and General Education Board Scholarships made it possible for selected members of the staff to continue professional improvement. (Brochure: The First Seventy-five Years, 1876-1951, Prairie View, Agricultural & Mechanical College of Texas.)

On December 6, 1934, Dr. Fred McCuiston wired Principal Banks that the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools had granted Prairie View a class "A" rating. Before Banks' retirement in 1946, the 49th Legislature authorized calling Prairie View a "University", to offer, as the need arose, all of the courses offered by the University of Texas.

W. R. Banks was succeeded on September 1, 1946 by Dr. E. B. Evans, who served twenty years, from 1946 to 1966. The executive

head of Prairie View was changed from Principal to President, thus Dr. Evans was the first President of Prairie View.

These first seventy-five years have been a period of amazing progress. Most heartening of all is the knowledge that in this three-quarters of a century Prairie View has earned a place of respect and trust in the minds of all Texans. The steady development of plant and facilities comes at a time to meet the needs of a long session and summer enrollment, which soars above 4,000. The new budgets are providing the where-with-all to get technical trained personnel. The agricultural program, long hampered by the "teacher" emphasis, now spurts ahead with an experimental sub-station, a blooded herd, technical personnel, and increased facilities. (Brochure)

Dr. E. B. Evans, Prairie View A. & M. College president, in 1961, went to the Republic of Liberia in West Africa, where he evaluated programs sponsored jointly by Prairie View and the United States Government. The veteran Texas educator also visited France and Portugal on this assignment to observe rural life and living. In Liberia he appraised the work that has been done by Prairie View technicians in the technical education project operating at Kakata since 1955. Dr. Evans has made other trips to foreign lands in the interest of international cooperation.

Since 1955, Prairie View has loaned twenty five technicians to the Liberian project who have constructed modern shops and training laboratories for teaching industrial education, agriculture, home economics, and secretarial science. Dr. Evans has been advisor to the International Cooperation Administration and is now a member of the American Council on Education's committee on Leaders and Specialists, and the commission on Education and International Affairs. (The Tri-County News, Hempstead, Texas, January 26, 1961.)

Dr. Evans retired from Prairie View as president in August of 1966, and a testimonial and appreciation dinner was held for him with Governor Connally and many other state and college educators honoring him. The Governor stated: "As Governor of Texas I felt that I should be here, because the man we honor tonight has contributed so much to the state for so long. The citizens of Texas are profoundly grateful that Almighty God sent you our way."

Dr. Evans began his long tenure of service at Prairie View in 1918, when he became the College Veterinarian. In 1946, he established the first and only school of Veterinary Medicine for Negroes in the nation at Tuskegee Institute. He was the first Negro graduate of Iowa State College's school of veterinary medicine and one of the first Negroes to be selected for Phi Kappa Phi, a national honorary scholarship society.

His record of service as president of the college (1946-1966) is highlighted by tremendous growth of the institution. The enrollment

tripled during this period, and the physical plant, valued at \$2.5 million in 1946, is now worth \$16 million. After his retirement, Dr. Evans will continue to live in the Prairie View community. He is continuing to act as president as the new president is ill. They have worked together for twenty five years at Prairie View. (The Brookshire Times, September 9, 1966. The Houston Chronicle, August 21, October 17, 1966.)

In a letter from Dr. Evans in reply to one asking for information to use in this history, he stated, "In compliance with your letter, we are enclosing a brochure which will furnish you some information concerning this institution. May I say to you that I have lived at Prairie View for forty-two years and have known the Pattison family during my entire tenure at this institution. Yours is one of the finest families that I have ever known. During the time that I was veterinarian for the College, I used to do considerable work for your family. Also, may I say that your son, Dr. L. D. Haskew, and I are personal friends. He is one of the great educators of Texas and the nation. All of us are proud of his accomplishments. Wishing you every success with your book." E. B. Evans, President Prairie View Agricultural And Mechanical College, January 5, 1961.