

K-State's Sesquicentennial; Celebrating 150 Years!

34th in the Keepsakes series, originally published February 12, 2013



Bluemont Central College



February 16, 2013 marks the beginning of K-State's Sesquicentennial! On that date in 1863, the Kansas legislature accepted an offer from the Bluemont Central College Association to transfer its property and assets to the state and become a college under the provisions of the Morrill Act, agreed to by the state only 13 days earlier. The three story college building, constructed of native limestone in 1859, stood at the northwest corner of present day Claflin Rd. and College Ave. On March 3, 1863, the new institution was designated as Kansas State Agricultural College. It is reported that 52 students equally divided between male and female started classes on September 2 of that year under the instruction of four faculty; Joseph Denison, president and professor of mental and moral science and ancient languages; J. G. Schnebly, professor of mathematics and natural science; Belle M. Haines, preparatory department; and Mrs. Eliza C. Beckwith, music on melodeon and piano. Although the original charter for the college called for four departments--science and literature, agriculture, mechanic arts, and military tactics--it is not clear to what extent classes from the four areas were offered the first few years. After the original 155 acres of land were acquired where K-State's main campus is now located, classes were transferred to a renovated stone barn on the property in 1875.



Poyntz Avenue looking east 1863

From this humble beginning as the first public institution of higher learning in Kansas, K-State has evolved into a comprehensive land grant university. Under the leadership of Kirk Schulz, K-State's 13th president, the goal of becoming a top 50 public research university in the U.S. by the year 2025 has been established.



Anderson Hall, early 1880s

Last fall K-State announced a record enrollment of 24,378 undergraduate and graduate students at campuses in Manhattan, Salina, and Olathe, along with extensive distant education programs. With many academic programs nationally ranked in their disciplines, faculty and students winning numerous awards each year, and K-State embarking on landmark initiatives such as the National Bio and Agri-Defense Facility, the university is well on its way to achieving top 50 status.

The first college catalog in 1863-1864 concluded, "This is the first Institution the State has endowed and put in operation and it is destined to become an instrument of great profit to the Country." After 150 years, and generations of success, K-Staters and Kansans can celebrate and proudly hail, HAPPY BIRTHDAY, KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY!



Color aerial view of campus courtesy Photographic Services, K-State Communications and Marketing. Original painting of Bluemont Central College and photographs of early Manhattan and Anderson Hall, University Archives.