

CAMPUS PLANNING

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Planning for the physical development of the college grounds and location of new buildings is not a new phenomenon at Iowa State University. The Board of Trustees, in January 1865, adopted a resolution presented by Peter Melendy, Farm Superintendent:

Whereas, The interests of the College and Farm demand that the operations on the same should be started right, and that to understand what is needed for the successful carrying out of the designs of the institution we should as a board meet on the farm at an early day. Therefore be it Resolved -- That the Executive Committee present to the board a plat of the farm showing the position of the buildings & C. ["C" referred to the "College" or main building.]

Just two years later Superintendent M.W. Robinson reported to the board:

I cannot close without urging you to have made at an early day, a Topographical Survey of the Farm, showing the location of the Buildings, Railroad, Springs, Streams, Timber & Prarie, also that the Farm be platted off, showing fields, ornamental ground, orchard, garden, building sites, experimental grounds, and all other usefull features, such as will be required to make this Farm a model in every sense of the word, so that hereafter we can have a system to work upon and finally make a harmonious whole. After carefully reading the reports of other institutions of this kind I have found that there has been no regular system adopted in regard to these matters hence their partial unpopularity among those whom they were designed to benefit and the public generally.

Let us establish a system, for by so doing we will economize the Funds at our disposal & have something worthy to show for them, as this enterprize is a new thing among us, and we have had no guide to follow, we have laboured under many disadvantages, hence the little progress made towards getting many things into proper working order.(1)

At the same meeting the Board adopted a motion to retain J.W. Williams "to make a Topographical Survey of the College Farm & he in connection with the Architect be instructed to prepare a plat for the future improvement of the Farm & submit it to the Executive Committee for Adoption." It was later reported that Hon. J. Wilson Williams made the survey about April first.

(1) Board Minutes, Jan. 14-15, 1867. Spelling and punctuation as in original.

In May 1868 the Building Committee was instructed to employ "a first class landscape gardner to lay out the grounds of the College Farm with a view to the exact location of the Professors residence and the beautifying of the grounds." Apparently the man selected was not "first class" because in November he was discharged for "having failed to furnish plans in proper time". Instead, the Board adopted a resolution "That the President Elect & Profs. of Agriculture be & they are hereby authorised to proceed and layout the farm College grounds upon such plans & in such manner as may be determined by them and to superintend & direct all improvements relating to the grounds."(1) The concept of the open central campus must be credited to Dr. A.S. Welch, first college president. "He planned a unique campus. It was his idea to have a road circle the campus, around which the buildings were to be located....Doctor Welch studied the landscape problem carefully and decided that the trees should be planted in groups, each species by itself."(2)

That basic concept has been generally followed in later planning, although adjustments and modifications have been made in the road patterns and extent of the open area, resulting from growth entirely unpredictable in the 1870's.

All planning of grounds changes and building site selection remained in the hands of the president and faculty, with Board approval, from 1869 until 1902 when Mr. O.C. Simonds, a Chicago landscape architect, was retained to "advise the Board as to location of buildings, roads, walks, and make suggestions as to general ornamentation of the college campus."(3)

During the nineteenth century land use was of prime consideration as indicated in the 1886-87 charge to a committee "to systematize the Agricultural and Horticultural Departments, assign land for garden to Capt. Lincoln, the Steward, and replan the farm and public grounds in a systematic manner." That committee was composed of President Chamberlain, J.L. Budd and Herman Knapp.

Mr. Simonds recommendations to the Board are recorded in the Minutes of the Dec. 31, 1902 meeting:

After looking the situation over it seems to me that the proposed Main Building should be placed substantially on the site of the old building, the only change being to move it a little further

(1) Board Minutes, Nov. 19-21, 1868

(2) L.H. Pammel: 1930

(3) Board Min., Nov. 21, 1902

west....The "circle" which was planted years ago and has since been developing by the growth of trees until it is the most beautiful feature of the grounds should not be encroached upon. This feature is one of the pleasant things that students will remember in after years with great satisfaction. It also impresses visitors most favorably, and makes an admirable foreground for the various college buildings.

His services were continued for another year and in September 1903 he submitted a new report which included drawings of the campus. That report stated:

I send you a plat of the college grounds, showing the present buildings, and sites for proposed buildings; also location of the drives and the location recommended for the dummy line.

That plat showed the railroad on what is now Osborn Drive, where it was subsequently relocated. It showed the Library and Domestic Economy sites approximately in the locations where they were eventually built. Some of the other proposed sites were not adopted in accordance with that recommendation. The Simonds map proposed removal of the Farm House with the then proposed Agricultural Hall on its site. It showed a gymnasium west of the Library site and an auditorium south of the proposed gymnasium, with athletic fields farther west (and north of what is today Marston Hall). Faculty residence sites were shown in the area now used for the Richardson Court residence halls west of Wallace Road.

Two major decisions confronted the Public Grounds committee at the beginning of the year 1906: The location of the new Agricultural Hall (Curtiss Hall) and the route of the proposed interurban line to replace the old steam railroad across the campus. Upon the recommendation of A.T. Erwin, committee chairman, John Charles Olmsted of the Olmsted Brothers, the highly respected landscape architect, was employed "in order that satisfactory plans for general campus development for the future may be perfected."(1)

Olmsted came to Ames for two days in early May, and in June submitted a written report and recommendations to President Storms. The full report is reproduced as Appendix Four in Ross's "History of Iowa State College" and will not be repeated here. His proposals included locating Agricultural Hall due east of Central Building (Beardshear) and rerouting the rail line onto what is today's Osborn Drive. By action of the Board of Trustees at the September 1906 meeting Curtiss Hall was finally placed about 100 feet farther east than in the Olmsted recommendation.

(1) Minutes, Feb. 9, 1906

Other features of the Olmsted plan met serious objections from all sides. The rectilinear grid with formally aligned buildings was considered too "urban" in appearance and not in keeping with the desired informal and open prairie image of the campus.

The Olmsted plan was not adopted by the Trustees, but it did influence later thinking about how the campus should be planned and where buildings should be placed.

During the next decade numerous plans were prepared for proposed development of the campus, largely under the direction of Professor Erwin and the Building and Grounds committees. Some campus plans were made by Proudfoot Bird and Rawson in conjunction with their development of plans for specific buildings.

Through the generosity of LaVerne Noyes the services of O.C. Simonds were made available to the college, primarily for the development of the lake financed by and named for Mr. Noyes. Simonds also contributed to the development of landscape plantings elsewhere on the campus during the next three years.

An article by C.H. Schemann appearing in the Iowa State Student on December 14, 1916, provides an excellent statement of the planning as it appeared at that time:

....The Board of Education realizes the importance of having at hand a well thought out plan for future developments in order that no mistake may be made in the location of any of the numerous buildings which are now under consideration and it is with their approval that the recent studies for the future development of the campus have been made.

The general scheme of development of the campus provides for the housing of agricultural departments on the east side of the campus; engineering departments on the west side; veterinary medicine at the northeast of the main quadrangle; fundamental sciences on the north and in the central portion of the campus; and home economics can be provided for on the main quadrangle or in close proximity to the residential hall group as may seem best for the welfare of this rapidly growing and important division of the college. Eventually the main or central campus will be surrounded on three sides by stone buildings and it is planned to have it open toward the south except for the Campanile and the trees. The four corners of the main quadrangle will be marked by the present Central Building at the southwest, Agricultural Hall at the southeast, the Library at the northwest, and probably a Plant Industry Building at the northeast, one wing of this last named building already erected with extensive modern greenhouses attached. The north boundary of this portion of the campus will provide a location for a large building which may include an auditorium and with provision for college instruction as well.

The main campus will project to the west between Central building and the Library where it will be bounded on the west by the present Engineering Hall and a similar structure directly north and this extension will be bounded on the north and south respectively by additions to the Library and Central Buildings. A similar extension of the main campus is provided on the east side which will be bounded on the east and north and south by Agricultural Buildings.

Outside of the circle of stone buildings will be a larger circle of brick buildings including the Veterinary Buildings, Science Buildings, Chemistry Building, Engineering Shops, Animal Husbandry and other agricultural laboratories, barns, etc. Near the Heating and Power Station at the extreme eastern edge of the campus locations are provided for service buildings devoted to the upkeep of the entire plant.

Two large interests of the college are provided for at locations detached from the central campus, namely the Gymnasium and play fields for men at the extreme west side of the campus, and the group of Women's Dormitories which recently was established near the southeast entrance to the campus.

All the area at the west side of the campus has been given over to the gymnasium site and connecting athletic fields and the tennis courts and play fields across the road north of the gymnasium. It is planned to bring these play fields to a more uniform grade as soon as funds are available. In its present irregular state it is difficult to lay out baseball diamonds, football fields, etc., so as to use the space to the best advantage. The question of location of Men's Dormitories is occasionally discussed but as the policy of putting up these buildings has not been decided by the state, no definite location has been set aside for them. They might however, be placed adjacent to the play grounds near the northwest corner of the campus grounds unless a better location can be provided off from the campus on land to be purchased.

The final arrangement of the group of Women's Dormitories at the southeast corner of the campus is beginning to show up more clearly now that the third building of the group has been started. It is planned in the future to have a center of interest for the women of the college in this part of the campus with space for playfields in close connection with the dormitories. The Board of Education has not decided as to the best location for the Home Economics Building. The first steps have been taken however, to provide a commodious and well equipped building for this branch of work which will compare favorably with the principal buildings on the campus. A suitable location will be found in one of the different possible locations that are under consideration.

The experts that have been consulted and those who are interested in the development of a beautiful campus are in agreement that the south portion of the grounds between the Women's Dormitories on the east and the athletic field on the west should be developed as a park without large college buildings being placed in this area. The recent improvements made in this portion of the campus are in harmony with this idea. The lake donated by Dr. LaVerne W. Noyes of the class of 1872 and which has just been completed and the new road which follows along the easterly side, have done much to add to the beauty of this area besides furnishing the opportunity for healthful recreation on the part of the student body in the winter. When the planting which has been set out around the lake has had time to attain its growth the lake and its surrounding trees and shrubs will be an integral and attractive feature of the campus.

The entrances to the campus on the south side have proven to be most fortunately located. Especially are the natural progression from attractive landscape features to imposing college structures which unfolds before them as they enter upon the campus. As Lincoln Way, which is perhaps the most traveled transcontinental route in the country, passes along the south side of the college grounds and as it is possible to make a short cut through the college grounds. It is hoped that the state will see fit to provide funds for the paving of Lincoln Way which is also the main thoroughfare connecting community with the City of Ames.

The scheme for planting the campus, which is now being followed under the direction of O.C. Simonds of Chicago, is an elaboration of that which long as been followed -- namely a natural arrangement of trees and shrubs. This form of planting is today recognized as the best form of landscape gardening, especially in such an area as our college campus which contains at the present time 125 acres and will need to be extended somewhat in the future. Hundreds of different varieties of trees and shrubs which are adapted to this climate may be found among the plantings. Besides performing their function of beautifying the landscape, these trees and shrubs afford the best kind of a laboratory for work in Botany, Landscape Gardening and Forestry. During the spring and fall, classes of students can be seen studying the trees and shrubs on almost every day. The planting also serves as an excellent example to the state of how residence grounds may be beautified at small expense. In order to make the planting as useful as possible for the purpose of instruction it is proposed to label the most important types of trees and shrubs. Labels are now being placed on a limited number of trees in order to try out their lasting qualities over the winter before all trees are labeled in this manner.

Adjacent to the campus at the northwest corner is a considerable

area which it is also planned to develop as a natural park. Across the Northwestern tracks are the north woods still within the college grounds which are open to the college community.

Up to this time our campus has been sadly deficient after dark because we have not had a comprehensive system of lighting to properly illuminate the walks and drives. Recently a plan was worked out through the aid of the Electrical Engineering Department and funds were set aside by the Board of Education to cover the cost of installing the necessary wires and lights. The Superintendent of Grounds is now at work on a portion of the proposed installation and when it is completed a marked improvement will be observed in the appearance of the campus at night.

In developing the plans for the campus the older and non-fire-proof buildings are not being considered except that it is expected to use them as long as possible. In the natural course of events these buildings will disappear as is evidenced by our own misfortune in several cases and more extensive losses of the same kind by almost every university and college in the United States.

The responsibility for the planning decisions was shared by a number of people during the time preceding and following Mr. Schemann's account. The contributions of some are recognized by Professor Pammel in his account concerning planning of the campus in Horizons, Spring 1930:

....I think I was the first to suggest that all the Science Buildings be grouped together north of the [interurban] tracks.... Another problem which came up before the Grounds Committee was the location of the Women's Dormitory group. President Pearson suggested the little eminence from the valley near the present east entrance to the college at the "Knoll" (the President's residence) and I heartily concurred in this suggestion. The group was finally located here, and, I think, it was a well chosen site....

....The location of the curved paved road leading from Lynn Avenue into the campus was a suggestion from the committee on public grounds during the administration of Dr. Pearson. This was fully and heartily endorsed by Mr. Simonds.

The Agricultural Division has always had some representation on the Public Grounds Committee. Dean Curtis, Dr. Wilson, Professors Budd and Erwin have served on this committee at various times. Thomas Sloss, the superintendent of buildings and grounds, has always served on this committee.

Since my connection with the college, the Department of Buildings

and Grounds has always designated a man to look after the grounds. They are entrusted with the care and planting of the grounds according to the plans furnished by the Department of Landscape Architecture. Since the organization of the professional course in Landscape Architecture, the head of that department has served on the Public Grounds Committee, providing plans for the superintendent of buildings and grounds, giving advice and supervising the campus development generally. This includes location of buildings, roads, walks, plantings and other features.

Thus it is seen that the campus of Iowa State College from the first has had careful, intelligent and conscientious planning and guidance by men in full sympathy with or trained in the complicated landscape problems involved in a rapidly growing public institution....

Dr. Pammel unfortunately failed to credit the contributions of A.H. Kimball, head of architectural engineering during this period. Kimball was as concerned and as involved in the decisions on building locations and campus development as were those people more directly associated with landscape materials.

Kimball, together with P.H. Elwood, head of the department of Landscape Architecture from 1923 to 1951, were the dominant figures in campus planning during that period. They collaborated in the preparation of many studies on the locations of individual campus buildings and in over all planning of future development of roads, walks, landscaping and building siting. In the "Twenty-Year Development Program" prepared under the direction of President Hughes in 1935, the President wrote:

I strongly recommend that the policy of recent years be continued of allowing Professor Kimball about \$2300 to \$1500 a year to employ a graduate to work under him in developing plans for future buildings. From time to time funds should also be available for the study of our grounds and building locations under the joint supervision of Professor Elwood and Professor Kimball.

The head of the department of architectural engineering (and later, architecture) was designated the campus architect or supervising architect until the death of Leonard Wolf in the fall of 1962. Preliminary plans for new buildings were developed in that office and then given to the project architect for preparation of the construction drawings and specifications. That practice continued between 1962 and 1965 under the direction of Walter Hotchkiss who was employed then as Supervising Architect for the university when that office became separated from the academic administration of the department of architecture.

The Campus Planning Committee, with Leonard Wolf as chairman, was

established by President Hilton in 1955 with its function "to report and make recommendations to the administration concerning the best location of future buildings, as well as alterations in walks, drives or parking areas, and other physical aspects of the campus". Professor Clair B. Watson became chairman of the committee in 1963 and retained that position until his retirement in 1978. During his term the responsibilities of the committee were modified substantially. The principal charge to the committee became the determination of priorities for the many requests for new buildings or additions to or remodeling of existing buildings, and in 1976 this change was reflected in the new name, Capital Improvement Advisory Committee.

The Physical Facilities Committee was appointed in January 1971 by President Parks, with Burl Parks as chairman.

Its functions will include review of proposed physical developments on the campus, provision of communication among faculty and students concerning such proposed developments, collection of relevant comments and recommendations from among faculty members and students and transmission of such information as is appropriate to the university administration through the Office of Vice President for Business and Finance.(1)

With the appointment of H. Summerfield Day as University Architect in the fall of 1966 a basic change in planning procedure was made. Instead of preparing preliminary plans in his office he introduced the concept of preparing written programs for the project architects to use in their development of the designs for buildings.

The employment of a consultant for a long-range development plan for the campus had been discussed in the Campus Planning Committee in early 1965 but no action was taken until November 1966 when President Parks appointed a committee to recommend such a consultant. The firm of Johnson, Johnson & Roy of Ann Arbor, Michigan, was selected, and agreement entered into in April 1967. A Long-Range Development Committee with Day as chairman worked with the planners throughout the project.

The Johnson, Johnson & Roy study resulted in the publication of "A Guide for Continuing Physical Development" dated December 1968, but not actually completed and available until the following May.

That plan was never formally adopted or rejected by the university administration, but its basic concepts have been generally followed although with some modifications since its appearance.

In 1976 Everett D. Swagert replaced Day as University Architect. He has continued the same procedures as were then being followed.

(1) Faculty News Letter, Jan. 29, 1971