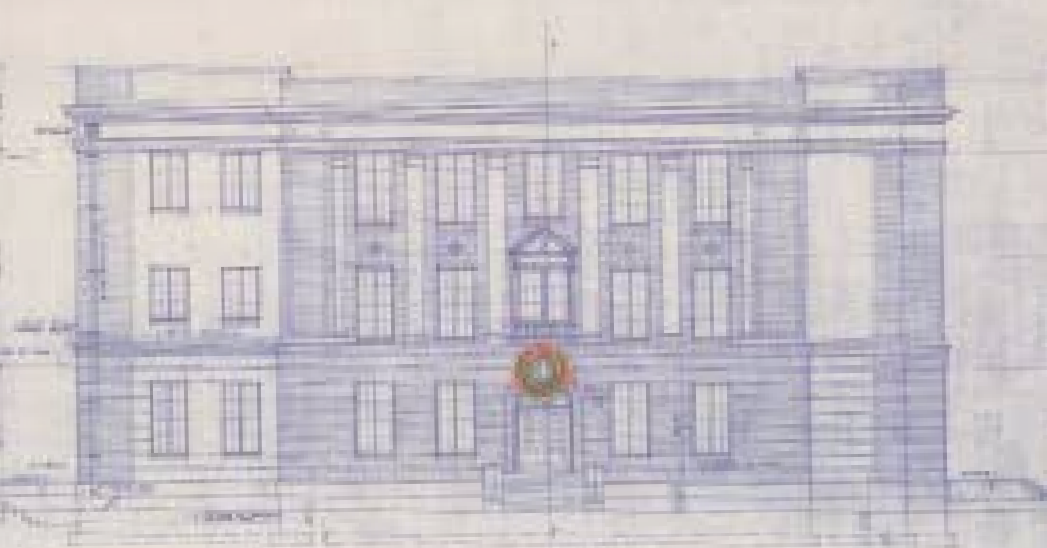


*It's
Time
for a
Change*



WT Then and Now



Dear WT Family,

Hope and reflection surround Christmas and the holiday season is a time for hope and reflection. It is both a look back and a look ahead. During this time, we are especially grateful for West Texas A&M University family and friends as 2020 marks our University's 30th anniversary as a member of The Texas A&M University System. This season allows us to commemorate the significance of our partnership with The Texas A&M University System and to celebrate what makes us strong in our own right. Additionally, this year WT has demonstrated the true strength of a buffalo through the unforeseen challenges of the pandemic.

WT was solely comprised of the Administration Building, which housed not only the University's classes but also the demonstration school with students from kindergarten through 12th grade. It was not until seventeen years after the doors opened at WT that the State of Texas granted \$300,000 to build a second academic building on campus, the Education Building, which officially opened Oct. 19, 1928. The building housed the demonstration school until the school was discontinued in May of 1951. College classes were housed there beginning in the fall semester of 1951 through the building's closure in the fall of 1988. The Education Building is now unused by the campus, awaiting its rebirth as the hub for 21st-century students as a launching pad for distance-education offerings.

Throughout the history of the University, our eternal flame has been a symbol of growth and service to the Texas Panhandle which is central to the University's long-range plan, **WT 125: From the Panhandle to the World**. The reinvigorated Education Building, will increase our online enrollment, fortified through excellence in digital production and outreach, while maintaining our on-campus students at near, or slightly above, current levels. Our greatest opportunity for growth lies in distance education offerings.



As outlined in **WT 125** vision, the primary mission of the University is to serve the people of Texas, and our first responsibility is to the people of the top 26 counties of Texas—the Panhandle. Focusing on the aspirations and needs of the citizens that the University serves creates value beyond the borders of the Panhandle by first attending to rural community life. This effort embraced regionalism as both a fundamental value and differentiating characteristic, and a commitment to a region is a strength and foundation on which to build without limiting vision, opportunity or accountability. Together, we will fulfill the vision outlined in the long-range plan by offering intellectually challenging, critically reflective, and regionally responsive academic programs that provide students keen insight and vocational vitality. We intend to show the nation what it means to be a regionally responsive research university that has global impact — leading for the future and capturing the Panhandle spirit to ensure we provide first-rate educational opportunity in servicing the region, state, nation, and world is paramount.

Throughout the University's history, the true grit of the Panhandle people has shown through diligent efforts, drive, and dedication to WT. Our region's residents truly represent the pioneering spirit and are the central foundation of the University's generational aim. Every new venture brings challenges, but I have no doubt that West Texas A&M University can reach maximum acclaim through the **WT 125** plan.

I am honored to share this moment in history with the entire WT family as we continue to move forward with the long-range plan, **WT 125**. As we ring in the New Year, let us reminisce on the past and welcome the transforming future with open arms and new ideas. It truly is a time for change — change that is predicated on the promise of the season.

“Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable Gift.” – 2 Corinthians 9:15

We wish you a very Merry Christmas and a holiday season that is filled with joy, love, hope and happiness

On, On Buffaloes!

Walter and Mary Waudler





Christmas and Education: Then and Now

Dr. Ruth Lowes was a faculty member at WT for 50 years. She attended school and taught through several name changes—West Texas State University, West Texas State College, West Texas State Teachers College, and West Texas State Normal College. Born in Nebraska, her family moved to Panhandle, Texas, and lived there until she came to Canyon to go to school in the Education Building. Carson County at the time offered open, nearly treeless spaces, on which people could scratch out a living. They became tough, hard, and durable, but never without passion and soul.

Then, and now.

Christmas then was simple. “At Christmas time, my grandmother who lived with us got a book from my mother, my mother got a book from my father or from my grandmother, and they always gave us books, so there were always books in our house.”* A simpler time. Reading, Dr. Lowes recalled, was “something we desired to do because we were getting so much pleasure from hearing the stories. Mama always read one chapter at night, and sometimes the stories would be so good. Have you ever noticed, Beverly, that when a book is real good that the exciting part stops at the end of every chapter?”*



Ruth Lowe's Kindergarten Free Period Class, 1927

School was simple, too. When asked how long her school day was, Dr. Lowes responded, “9 o’clock in the morning until 4 in the afternoon, and we had recess in the morning and a recess in the afternoon. It was just principally unorganized play. ... And then there was a program called the Chautauqua which came in it and it brought cultural programs – sometimes it would be a person who spoke on certain subjects which could be a spellbinder. Of course, he memorized his speech because he did them so many times, but

I thought he was wonderful. And sometimes there would be trios or duets or maybe short plays. But the Chautauqua went from one place to another and it was really about the only touch the small towns had with the outside world.”*

That was then. Now, with generally available broadband access, cell phones, and laptops, the “only touch the small towns had with the outside world” has been radically altered. It’s with the promise of the internet that the Education Building will become a launch pad for our growing digital course offerings.

Back to school.

Dr. Lowes graduated from high school in 1919 and, that fall, began teaching at a rural school in Carson County. “Then you could get a certificate by taking an examination over basic work that you would have in eighth grade or under. And then I took the examination for the first-grade certificate which included geometry and algebra and literature — well, courses like that, high school courses. ... And see, all I knew about teaching was what I had observed as I had been taught. No college work at all. And that was a real interesting year. A wonderful year.”*

“I decided if I was going to teach very much longer I better get a permanent certificate. That meant two years in college. ... As I walked out of the auditorium with this wonderful piece of paper — this certificate in my hand — the President’s wife said to me — this was Mrs. Hill — she said, “Now, Ruth, I hope you will go ahead and get your degree.”*



But her plans changed: “By spring I had done my student teaching in the kindergarten in the training school, and during the course of student teaching, my supervisor decided she wanted a leave of absence to get her master’s degree. So President Hill asked me to substitute for a year — take her work for a year — and he made it very clear to me that this was a substitute only. See, I didn’t even have my degree, and they were working hard to raise the standards and get degreed people in all of the staff positions. So then in the spring of the following year, she decided to go back to Ohio, which was her home, and so they asked me to take it and keep it, and I stayed on for 50 years. I guess they didn’t know what to do with me.”*



EDUCATION BUILDING
WEST TEXAS STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE
DENTON TEXAS
BENSENKY & CARPER ARCHITECTS
AMARILLO TEXAS

Even in WT's earliest days, intellectual life thrived. "When I came to Canyon in 1921, there were four literary societies on campus – no sororities because sororities were not allowed," Dr. Lowes said. "The administration felt there was too much discrimination involved and that some people would like to belong but couldn't. After I started teaching, we went to local sororities. I think the administration felt they could control them a little better. One thing they were totally against was sorority and fraternity houses. ... I belonged to one of the literary societies, the Elapheians. 'Elapheian' is the Greek word for female deer. The young men were called the Antlers. The other two groups were known as the Sesames, another group for girls, and the Cousins Society for Men, named after R. B. Cousins, our first president."**



Ruth Lowe's Kindergarten Orchestra Class, 1927

Dr. Lowes goes on to describe the intellectually rich campus which challenged students. From then to now, WT still strives to provide academically rich opportunities to students. To outsiders of the Panhandle, the campus may have been perceived as a bleak place with little culture. How unfortunate that view was then. To some extent, for people from major metropolitan areas, that same perspective is still held.

Dr. Ruth Lowes



During the 1929-1930 academic year Dr. Lowes went to Columbia University and got her master's degree. She taught at West Texas State University until her retirement in 1972.

Dr. Lowes' lifelong love of reading, which began on those simple Christmas mornings a century ago, served her well throughout her career, as she impacted thousands of students over her remarkable 50-year

tenure. It is in honor of teachers like her and countless others that we want to revitalize the Education Building to serve as a modernized hub for students across the Panhandle and, indeed, the world.

**These quotes and following are from an interview with Dr. Ruth Lowes conducted by Beverly Plank on October 25, 1985, in Canyon as part of the course requirements for History 412. They were retrieved from the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum.*

***These quotes and following are from an interview with Dr. Ruth Lowes conducted by Rhonda B. Brown on November 19, 1982 in Canyon as part of the course requirements for History 412. They were retrieved from the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum.*



OLD ED HISTORY

Once upon a time, the WT Buffalos ran in an extraordinarily tightly packed herd.

For its first 17 years, the entirety of the then-West Texas State Teachers College was located in one single building — the Administration Building, now known as Old Main. Those pursuing higher-education degrees were housed alongside the demonstration school, where students from kindergarten through high school were taught by education students.

The mix could be combustible.

“Urchins run hither and yon in the hallways, and we scholars are forced to wend our precarious way through this maze of juvenile humanity at the peril of our shins and lives,” read an editorial in the March 2, 1926, edition of *The Prairie*.

Not everyone agreed: The kids, or at least their accoutrements, were welcomed by some: Playground equipment was provided for the youngsters, but repairs were frequent “because college students enjoyed swinging and sliding too,” according to one contemporary account.

Then, after several years of fruitless requests for state funding, \$300,000 was finally appropriated in 1927 for the construction of a new facility. The Education Building would open in 1928, offering the demonstration school its own home for the next few decades.

WT’s demonstration school was a role model statewide, educating between 200 and 400 young students a year and providing professional training for prospective teachers enrolled in its program, as well as observation opportunities for the region’s public-school teachers. The school offered its

students a full range of opportunities — a library, classes in music and the arts, athletics and more. At one point, half of Canyon Independent School District’s student population was enrolled in the demonstration school, with West Texas State paying the total cost, minus a small, annual tuition fee.

Eventually, WT could no longer bear the burden, and faculty came around to the idea that teachers-in-training would be better served by getting experience in the public-school setting. But when the demonstration school closed in 1951, the Education Building continued as a classroom building for WT students for another three decades, until it was finally mothballed as a cost-savings measure in 1988.

Though it’s now used for storage, the Education Building could one day be the hub for WT’s ever-growing expansion into online education, connecting one of the campus’ most historic buildings to WT’s wide-open future.



Citizens of Canyon and visitors at the dedication of the Education Building at the West Texas State Teachers College, in the fall of 1918.

1. T.B. McCarter 2. Mrs. Geraldine Green 3. Miss Linnie Babston 4. Miss Mary Morgan Brown 5. Mrs. Tommie Montfort 6. Miss Mary E. Hudspeth 7. Miss Tennessee Malone 8. R.A. Terrill 9. W. Warwick 10. Mrs. C. W. Warwick 11. L.A. Allen 12. D.A. Shirley 13. Wallace R. Clark 14. L.F. Sheffy 15. Dr. S.L. Ingham 16. Travis Shaw 17. Mrs. Travis Shaw 18. Miss Mattie Swayne 19. Dr. R.P. Jarrett 20. President J.A. Hill 21. Miss Edna Graham 22. Miss Jennie C. Ritchie 24. Mrs. T.V. Reeves 25. T.M. Clark 26. Mrs. J.A. Hill 27. Mrs. Wallingford



From all of the staff, students and faculty at West Texas A&M University,
have a blessed Christmas, happy holidays and a prosperous New Year.

On, On Buffaloes!





Funding for this publication provided by
the WTAMU Foundation.