

James Thomas Davis Office of the Dean Records, 1909-1952: A Guide

Descriptive Summary

Creator: James Thomas Davis (aka J. Thomas Davis)

Title: James Thomas Davis Office of the Dean Records, 1909-1952

Inclusive Dates: 1909-1952

Abstract: The collection documents the activities of James Thomas (J. Thomas) Davis, the Dean of John Tarleton Agricultural College from 1919 to 1945, including the activities of the college departments and their faculty and students. The records also document acts of the Texas State Legislature in relation to John Tarleton Agricultural College.

Identification: UA35

Extent: 19 cubic feet

Shelf location: 7:G:5; 9:I:3; 9:J:1-5; 10:A:1-5

Language(s): Collection is predominantly in English.

Repository: Tarleton State University, Dick Smith Library, Archives and Special Collections, Stephenville, Texas

Biographical Note

James Thomas Davis (J. Thomas Davis; known to his family as Jim Tom) was born May 2, 1880 in Heard County, Georgia. His parents were W.J. and Elizabeth Smith Davis. Before moving to Grapevine, Texas in 1895, his family lived in Alabama.

Davis earned a two-year, undergraduate degree from North Texas Normal College (now the University of North Texas) in 1904. After graduating he taught for a year at Honey Grove School. He served as principal of Navasota School from 1905 to 1907 and as superintendent of Grimes County schools from 1907 to 1910. For the next nine years, he worked as the superintendent of Navasota schools. In 1919 Texas A&M College hired him as the dean of John Tarleton Agricultural College. The president of the college was called the dean at that time. Davis went on to earn a B.S. degree from Texas A&M College in 1919 and a M.S. from the University of Texas in 1921. He served as the dean of Tarleton from 1919 to 1945, the longest tenure of any Tarleton president.

When Davis arrived at Tarleton, there were 411 students enrolled, 11 regular teachers, and five buildings. The campus experienced tremendous growth during the Davis tenure with the construction of more class buildings, dormitories, and a new administration building. The campus's central heating plant was added in 1920. The Dining Hall was built and the poultry farm was established in 1926. Under Davis's leadership, Tarleton achieved accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) in 1926.

In order to help them financially, Davis hired many students for on-campus jobs. Some men performed janitorial or grounds-keeping duties while others worked on the school farm or with the poultry plant. The women worked in the dining hall, dormitories, or offices.

Davis established very strict behavior guidelines for the students, which were published in a student handbook titled the Purple Book. He set similar standards for himself and the faculty.

To obtain more publicity for Tarleton, Davis organized many public relations events. The Tarleton International Egg-laying Contest was held at the poultry plant from 1926 through the 1950s. In 1922 Davis arranged a "Tarleton Day" at the Texas State Fair. Students of the mechanical arts, home economics, agriculture, and music departments provided exhibits. The entire student body was transported to the fairgrounds by train in order to perform Tarleton's college yells. The Tarleton band and girls' glee club were heard across the nation when they performed live on the Fort Worth WBAP radio station in 1924. Davis invited many Texas A&M College and Texas state officials to a memorial celebration honoring John Tarleton in 1928.

In anticipation of World War II, Tarleton partnered with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to add pilot training to the curriculum in 1939. The Department of War designated Tarleton a training location for the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) in 1943. The Army sent five hundred trainees to Tarleton for nine months. The program was closed in 1944 when all the trainees were called to active duty.

Davis received several honors during his time at Tarleton. He was the first leader of a Texas college to be elected president of the American Association of Junior Colleges, served as an officer and president of the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, and was an officer of the Texas State Teachers Association. He served two consecutive terms as president of the West Texas Chamber of Commerce.

Davis strove to improve the North Central Texas region by working to get roads, schools, and cities improved. His civic mindedness led to the construction of the Municipal Airport at Stephenville as well as the establishment of the Stephenville Lions Club.

Davis retired as Dean of Tarleton in 1945, but taught a current events class until 1950. He married Uta Wilson in 1904, and they had three children: Wilson, William, and Dorothy. He and his family were members of the First Baptist Church, Stephenville. Davis died on May 12, 1950 and was buried in West End Cemetery in Stephenville, Texas.

Sources:

Chamberlain, Frank. "The Presidency of J. Thomas Davis." Historic Images Project. Tarleton State University, 2017. Accessed 07/09/2020, <https://www.tarleton.edu/library/crosstimbers/collections/tsucollection/TAN00007P.html>

Chilton, Stuart. "The 'Grassburr' man from Georgia." *Stephenville Empire-Tribune* (Stephenville, TX), July 23, 2007. Accessed 07/09/2020. https://www.yourstephenvilletx.com/news/article_7835c427-36c4-5cd5-b07e-b11dc136fd86.html

Muñoz, Beatriz. "Davis Hall to come down, history stands tall." *Texannews*. Texan News Service, February 22, 2019. Accessed 07/09/2020. <http://texannews.net/davis-hall-to-come-down-history-stands-tall/>

"Tarleton Opens Sept. 25." *The Baptist Standard*, September 10, 1942, page 16.

Tarleton State University. "J. Thomas Davis, 1919-1945." Office of the President: Past Presidents.
Accessed 07/10/2020. <https://www.tarleton.edu/president/past/davis.html>.

Wright, Earl. "Late Dean Davis Was Giant Among Leaders in Education." *Stephenville Daily Empire* (Stephenville, TX), August 30, 1964.

Scope and Contents

The collection documents the activities of James Thomas (J. Thomas) Davis, the Dean of John Tarleton Agricultural College from 1919 to 1945, including the activities of the college departments and their faculty and students. The records also document acts of the Texas State Legislature in relation to John Tarleton Agricultural College. Some of the significant topics represented include Parents' Day, the May Pageant, how the institution was affected by the Great Depression in the 1930s, World War II correspondence with student and faculty military members, campus growth and improvements, the addition of new academic and sports programs, and rules and regulations pertaining to the behavior of students and faculty. Items of particular interest include Junior College Standards, 1934 (Box 4, folder 4); Purple Book, September 1, 1934 (Box 4, folder 5); John Tarleton Agricultural College Basket Ball Score and Record Book, 1927-1928 (Box 8, folder 6); a typed, carbon copy of the will of John Tarleton (Box 10, folder 12); a typed, carbon copy of an undated extract of the will of Will C. Hogg (Box 10, folder 12); a typed, carbon copy of the Enactment of the Legislature of Texas transferring the John Tarleton property to the State of Texas, February 29, 1917 (Box 10, folder 12); a map of Texas showing the Western Cross Timbers area and statewide locations of agricultural experiment stations, 1928 (Box 19, folder 10); and U.S. Civil Aeronautics Authority, Primary Ground Study Manual, Civil Aeronautics Bulletin No. 21, September 1, 1939 (Box 22, folder 3).

The collection also documents Davis' interest and involvement in local and regional improvements, particularly his participation in the establishment of the Stephenville Lions Club; and his leadership of the West Texas Chamber of Commerce, which led to the improvement of roads and highways in the Cross Timbers region and to the building of the Municipal Airport at Stephenville.

Materials are mainly textual including correspondence (letters, memos, telegrams, post cards, invitations, and announcements), handwritten notes, organization charts, notarized affidavits, reports, schedules, meeting minutes, resolutions, professional association applications, association constitutions and by-laws, convention schedules, trip itineraries, surveys and questionnaires, applications for federal aid, event programs, commencement programs, university publications, brochures and flyers, newsletters, financial statements and reports, budgets, inventories, certificates and diplomas, floor plans and blueprints, commercial catalogs, campus maps (Box 11, folder 1 and Box 20, folder 1), news articles, and ephemera. A list of John Tarleton Agricultural College publications and other educational institutions as well as local newspapers from the region found in the collection is on pages 17-20 of this finding aid.

The collection also contains some personal materials, including a few items of family correspondence and a physical description of Davis (Box 17, folder 3).

Rights and Access

Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Physical Access Restrictions

None.

Technical Access Restrictions

None.

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Reproduction Note

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Index Terms

Persons

Bizzell, William Bennett, 1876-1844
Davis, James Thomas, 1880-1950
Froh, Charles Wesley, 1880-1953
Hogg, William Clifford, 1875-1930
Howell, Eugene Jody, 1901-1977
Percy, Willie, -1923
Tarleton, John, circa 1808-1895
Walton, Thomas Otto, 1884-1961
Wisdom, William Jones, 1887-1981

Organizations

American Association of Junior Colleges
Association of Texas Colleges
Central Texas Conference
North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools
Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools
Texas Agricultural Experiment Station
Texas Education Commission
Texas Junior College Association
Texas Junior College Athletic Conference
Texas Power and Light Company
Texas State Board for Vocational Education
Texas State Teachers Association

West Texas Chamber of Commerce

Subjects

Administrators, College.
Aeronautics.
Aeronautics, 1900-1950.
Army Specialized Training Program (U.S.)
College administrators.
College officials.
College presidents
College sports.
College sports – Texas – History.
Faculty, College.
Great Depression, 1929.
John Tarleton Agricultural College – Faculty.
John Tarleton Agricultural College – Presidents.
John Tarleton Agricultural College – Sports.
Presidents, College.
Tarleton International Egg-laying Contest
Tarleton State University – Presidents.
Tarleton State University – Sports.
Universities and colleges – Administration.
Universities and colleges – Faculty.
University – Accreditation.
World War, 1939-1945.
World War II, 1939-1945.

Places

Erath County (Tex.)
Stephenville (Tex.)

Administrative Information

Provenance

Transferred to the Dick Smith Library at Tarleton State University at an unknown date.

Preferred Citation

[Title of file or item], James Thomas Davis Office of the Dean Records, UA35, Box [no.], Folder [no.], Tarleton State University, Dick Smith Library, Archives and Special Collections, Stephenville, Texas.

Processing Information

Finding aid prepared by Phyllis Kinnison, 2020.

Related Collections

University Files, UA39

Tarleton State University Collection of John Tarleton Estate Records, 1897-1929

Flora Clarke scrapbook, 1924-1926

Lena Lewis Manuscripts

Leonard De Bennett scrapbook, 1923-1925

Tarleton State University Photograph Collection, 1899-

Edna Margaret Wolfe Collection of John Tarleton Agricultural College materials, 1925-1926

Note to the Researcher

The collection is processed, but advance notice is required with time allowed to retrieve the records from an offsite location before conducting research. There may be occasions when staffing or weather conditions delay or prevent retrieval of the records. For more information, contact Archivist/Librarian Phyllis Kinnison at pkinnison@tarleton.edu.

Container List

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		8	Associations, Educational – American Association of School Administration, 1939-1941
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10:A:4	42	1	Texas A&M System – Bizzell, W.B. (correspondence), 1918
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		7	Texas A&M System – Board of Directors, 1925-1931
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7:G:5	47	1	Teachers Load Schedules, 1920-1932 (removed from Box 27, folder 4)
		2	Financial Spreadsheet, 1925-1929 (removed from Box 28, folder 2)
		3	Budget Estimates Submitted...to State Board of Control, 1930-1931 (removed from Box 28, folder 4)

		4	Budget Estimates Submitted...to State Board of Control, 1927-1931 (removed from Box 28, folder 5)
		5	Student Distribution Map, 1931-1932 (removed from Box 28, folder 7)
		6	Budget Estimates Submitted by John Tarleton Agricultural College to State Board of Control, 1929-1933 [also a revised copy] (removed from Box 28, folder 8)
		7	John Tarleton Agricultural College, Stephenville, Texas [proposed salary reductions], 1931-1933 (removed from Box 28, folder 8)
		8	Student Distribution for Fall Semester, 1932-1933, [map], 2 copies (removed from Box 28, folder 8)
		9	Summer School Enrollment 1932 by Counties [map] (removed from Box 28, folder 8)
		10	[untitled chart – salaries by department, undated] (removed from Box 28, folder 8)
		11	Budget Estimates Submitted by John Tarleton Agricultural College to State Board of Control, 1929-1933, [salaries], 2 copies (removed from Box 28, folder 9)
		12	John Tarleton Agricultural College, Stephenville, Texas, [proposed reduction in salaries], 1931-1935 (removed from Box 29, folder 1)
		13	John Tarleton Agricultural College, Budget for 1935-1936 – Director's Appropriations, 2 copies (removed from Box 29, folder 2)
		14	Enrollment by Counties, Long Session and Summer Session, 1935-1936 [map] (removed from Box 29, folder 3)
		15	Budget Estimates Submitted by John Tarleton Agricultural College to State Board of Control, 1938-1939, (removed from Box 29, folder 3)
		16	Budget Estimates Submitted by John Tarleton Agricultural College to State Board of Control, 1935-1939, 2 copies (removed from Box 29, folder 3)
		17	John Tarleton Agricultural College, Budget for 1936-1937 – Director's Appropriations (removed from Box 29, folder 3)
		18	Federal Estate Taxes, 1935 (removed from Box 31, folder 2)
		19	Oklahoma Tax Cost Compared with Tax Cost of Bordering States, 1936 (removed from Box 31, folder 2)
		20	Student Distribution Map, 1931-1932 (removed from Box 33, folder 6)
		21	<i>The Granbury News</i> , Volume XLII, Number 32, Friday, May 7, 1926 (removed from Box 37, folder 5)

		22	Blueprints for Science Building, 1937-1938 (removed from Box 37, folder 22)
		23	Diplomas
		24	Blueprints: 2 maps of the College Farm and a floor plan of the house on the farm showing planned additions, 1940
7:G:5	48	1	Topographical Map of Proposed Airport on Scarborough Tract, Department of Engineering, J.T.A.C., Stephenville, Texas, June 1940. (removed from Box 22, folder 4)

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Box 1

Bulletin of the John Tarleton Agricultural College. Annual Report to the President and Board of Regents, Volume 3, Number 3, July 15, 1920.

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Box 8

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Box 11

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Box 17

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Box 21

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