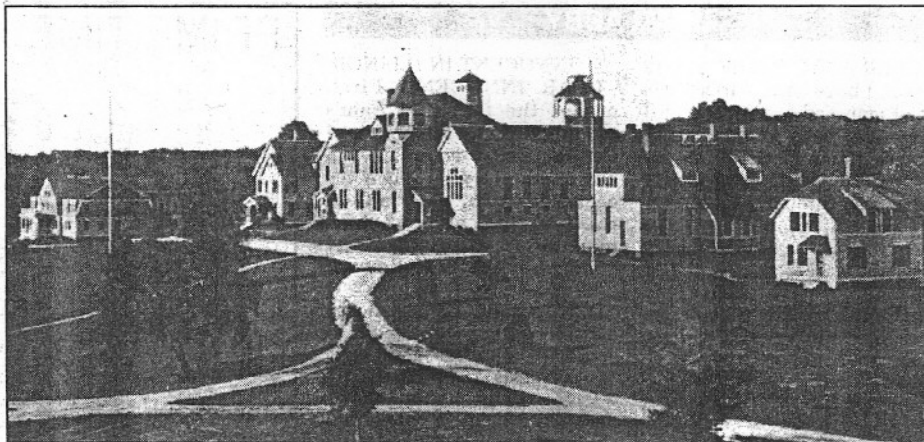


History



The Storrs Agricultural College pictured in 1898. From left are Grove Cottage, Gold Hall, Main Building, Chemical Laboratory and Experiment Station Office.

Grangers' political lobbying leads to funds for UConn's predecessor

Part Two

The Land Grant Act of 1862, or the Morrill Act, was designed to promote scientific and agricultural study in the United States. It donated public lands and funds to develop colleges of higher education. The Sheffield Scientific School at Yale became Connecticut's first land grant college, but practical agricultural studies were difficult to undertake in downtown New Haven.

In 1880, brothers Charles and Augustus Storrs deeded land and funds and founded the Storrs Agricultural School. It opened in 1881 but quickly ran into financial difficulties. The *Willimantic Chronicle* urged its closure, but the school struggled on. It was strongly recommended that the school be transferred to nearby Willimantic, but in 1886, Augustus Storrs expanded the original deed to ensure that the school stayed in Storrs.

In 1886, the school gained important support from the politically powerful Connecticut Grange. The Grangers were opposed to classical education, as practiced at Yale, and pro-



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duced figures that proved that Yale, despite its land grant status and financing, had graduated just seven agricultural students at a cost of \$25,700 per student. Why not, argued the Connecticut Grangers, transfer the land grant funds to the Storrs school, where many more students had graduated at much less the cost. The Grangers challenged the right of the private classical colleges across the nation to absorb the Land Grant's generous provisions.

The Grangers' political lobbying led to the passage of the 1887 Hatch Act, where Congress provided for the establishment of an agricultural experiment station at each of the land grant colleges. The federal funds were shared in Connecticut between Yale and

the newly formed Storrs Agricultural Experiment Station. The Yale-Storrs controversy had begun. Neighboring Rhode Island established a College of Agricultural and Mechanical Arts, later to become the University of Rhode Island, to prevent the Hatch funds being swallowed by Brown University.

In 1890, the Second Morrill Act provided further funds for agricultural education, and Yale decided that it would fight for these generous funds of \$25,000 a year, and went to court to ensure it, and not the upstart organization at Storrs, be awarded the funds. A lengthy legal battle ensued, and Yale lost.

A three-member special commission, voting 2 to 1, awarded Yale \$154,604 in damages. The Storrs school subsequently became the recipient of the 1862 and 1890 Morrill funds, and in 1893 the Connecticut General Assembly changed the school's name to the Storrs Agricultural College. This act enabled the new college to recruit women, despite some passionate opposition.

The state appropriated \$12,000 for a "girl's cottage," Grove Cottage, a combined female dormitory and instruction building, was dedicated on Sept. 8, 1896. The foundations of the University of Connecticut had been laid.

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