

University of Georgia Historical Background

A Brief History of the University of Georgia

Et docere et rerum exquirere causas.

To teach, to serve, and to inquire into the nature of things.

– University of Georgia motto

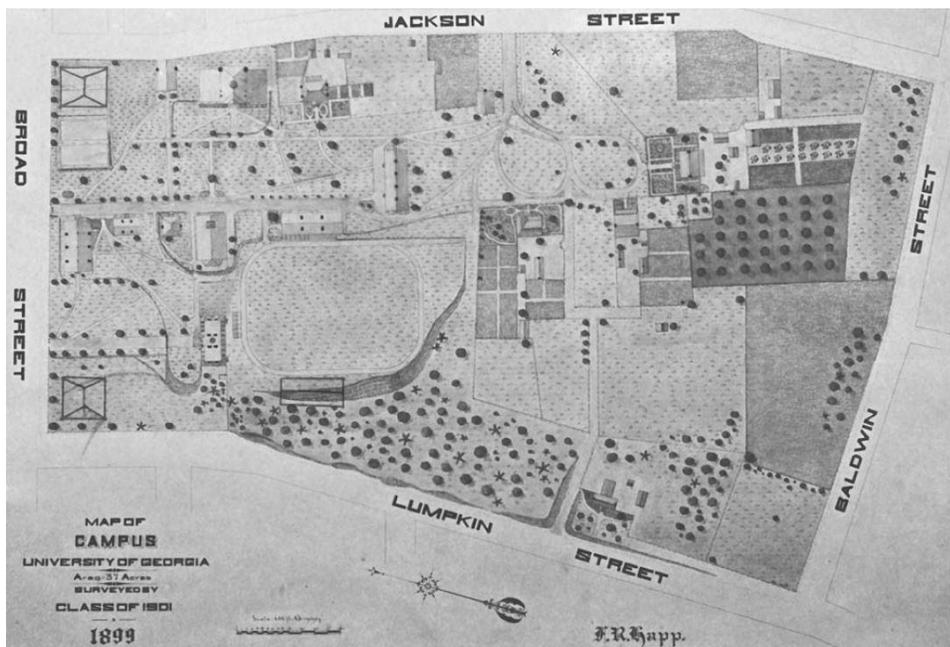


Figure 2. Campus Map, 1899. (Source: University of Georgia)

The history of the University of Georgia (UGA) generally parallels that of the State of Georgia itself. Georgia became the fourth state of the United States after voting to ratify the Constitution on January 2, 1788. Statehood closely followed the Georgia General Assembly's establishment of UGA in 1785, the first chartered state university in the nation. After approval of the charter, the legislature appointed governing boards and a president, Abraham Baldwin. It would take sixteen years to navigate the challenges associated with securing support, funding, and a location for the new school before students could be admitted in 1801.⁹ For much of its history, UGA has supported the evolving

9. F. N. Boney, *A Pictorial History of The University of Georgia*, second edition (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1984), 2–3.

educational and vocational training needs of the citizenry of the state of Georgia, over time becoming closely tied to innovation in agriculture and scientific research.



Figure 3. Abraham Baldwin, the University of Georgia's first President. (Source: Georgia Museum of Art)

The information provided below offers a brief overview of UGA's history, encompassing development of the Athens campus as well as the various other historic properties that support University programs and activities. It is followed by the identification of historic contexts within which the University's historic properties may be better understood. More detailed information is provided in subsequent chapters that describe the development of the individual historic properties addressed by this study.

UGA maintains property in nearly every county within the state of Georgia. Not all of these properties are addressed as part of this study. The overview history included below focuses primarily on the historic properties identified for inclusion in this study—the Athens Campus and its satellite supporting properties, including the President's House, Whitehall Mansion, Lucy Cobb Institute Campus, Chicopee Complex, Health Sciences Campus, and Iron Horse Farm; as well as the Griffin Campus; Tifton Campus; Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center; Skidaway Institute of Oceanography; Sapelo Marine Institute; Coastal Georgia Botanical Garden at the Historic Bamboo Farm; and the 4-H camps at Wahsega and Rock Eagle. Similar studies may be conducted for other UGA properties in the future to address the specific needs of historic properties.

The historical overview conveyed below is organized into five discrete time periods based on the events that shaped the University. The periods are as follows: Foundation Period, 1785–1865; New Approaches, 1866–1899; Maturing Institution, 1900–1945; Modern Era, 1946–1972; and Major Research University, 1973–present.

The *Foundation Period, 1785–1865*, is associated with the establishment of the University in Athens, and the creation of its first permanent buildings between 1801 and 1834: Franklin College (now Old College) (UGA 130), Philosophical Hall (now Waddel Hall) (UGA 41), New College (UGA 30), the Chapel (UGA 22), Demosthenian Hall (UGA 21), and Phi Kappa Hall (UGA 20) in the area now known as “Old Campus.” During this period, University administrators struggled to keep the school open due to low enrollments and limited state funding. By the 1860s, conditions had begun to improve. However, the University was forced to suspend operations in September 1863 due to dropping enrollment and funds resulting from the Civil War.¹⁰



Figure 4. Moore College, home of the State School of Agricultural and Mechanic Arts. (Source: Boney, 68.)

The *New Approaches Period, 1866–1899*, marks the rise of the importance of agricultural education in the United States and at UGA. In 1866, the school reopened. Conditions continued to improve after the war as a result of a federal program passed by the U.S. Congress in 1862—the Morrill Act—that provided funding for the establishment of agricultural colleges. This funding, coupled with support provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), helped the University avoid bankruptcy when it was designated a federal land-grant

10. Boney, *A Pictorial History*, 45; Thomas G. Dyer, *The University of Georgia: A Bicentennial History, 1785–1985* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1984).

institution in 1872. Under the Act, land-grant designation required the University to teach agriculture and mechanical arts.

In 1872, the Georgia State College of Agricultural and Mechanic Arts, a department of UGA, opened on the Athens Campus.¹¹ By 1873, UGA and the Georgia State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, which shared faculty, facilities, and a Board of Trustees, together had an enrollment of more than 300 students. Of these, more than half were specifically enrolled in the new agricultural college, indicating statewide need and interest.¹²

The role of agricultural education and research within the University was further strengthened in 1887 with passage of the Hatch Act. This federal legislation provided for the creation of agricultural experiment stations used by state agricultural colleges to conduct research on topics related to the practical concerns of farmers. In 1889, the Georgia Experiment Station in Griffin, which now includes the UGA Griffin Campus, was established.¹³

It was also during the late nineteenth century that sports, namely football, became popular at UGA. In 1892, Georgia played its first football game against Mercer University. Later that year, the team played against Auburn University, initiating one of the oldest sports rivalries in the Southern United States and what was, to many, the birth of college football in the South.¹⁴

The *Maturing Institution Period, 1900–1945*, encompasses the Progressive Era of American education, politics, land planning, and economics, a period during which UGA established rigorous educational standards and multiple new avenues of study.¹⁵ In addition, between 1905 and 1908, the University expanded the campus associated with the Georgia State College of Agricultural and Mechanic Arts by 390 acres, added a Forestry School, and built Conner Hall (UGA 1011) to house the agricultural college.

It was also during the early twentieth century that the USDA became a partner in state research and education programs related to agriculture. In 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt signed into law the Adams Act that provided federal funding for original scientific research and attempted to establish a pattern of formal relationships between the USDA, agricultural colleges, and state experiment stations.¹⁶ As part of the growing need for agricultural research, and coordination between state and federal activities, the USDA began to further the introduction of more robust varieties of standard agricultural crops, fruits, vegetables, and ornamental plants. In support of this effort, the USDA engaged intrepid “plant explorers” that traveled all over the world seeking plants that might prove beneficial to farmers and commercial growers within the United States. In order



Figure 5. The 1892 University of Georgia football team. (Source: University of Georgia)



Figure 6. Conner Hall, constructed in 1908. (Source: University of Georgia Extension)

11. Boney, *A Pictorial History*, 50.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Bascombe Britt Higgins, Edna H. Olson, J.G. Futral, J.G. Woodroof, and A.H. Dempsey, *The History of The Georgia Experiment Station 1889-1975* (NPP, 1975).

14. Matt Bowers, “UGA Football,” *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, February 20 2018, <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/sports-outdoor-recreation/uga-football#History>.

15. Dyer, 152–154.

16. Charles E. Rosenberg, “The Adams Act: Politics and the Cause of Scientific Research,” in *Agricultural History Society* Vol. 38 (No. 1, January 1964): 3.

to grow and test the plants introduced by the explorers, the USDA established experimentation stations throughout the country, including one on the site of a timber bamboo farm in 1919, which is now the Coastal Georgia Botanical Garden at the Historic Bamboo Farm administered by UGA.¹⁷

It was also during this period that women were admitted to the University, aided in part by the passage of the Smith-Lever Act in 1914. The Act established the Cooperative Extension Service, which would operate out of the Agricultural and Mechanic Arts schools and serve as a liaison between the experiment stations and the community they were intended to serve. As part of the service, the community was expanded to include the families of the farmers. The Cooperative Extension Service began to offer educational programs to farmers' wives through home demonstration projects, and to their children through the newly established 4-H program. In September 1918, the first women were admitted to UGA, in part due to the need for Home Demonstration Agents, leaders of 4-H programs for girls, and teachers in the burgeoning state public school system. The first woman to work for the federal Cooperative Extension Service, Mary E. Creswell, was also one of the first to graduate from UGA.¹⁸ Creswell eventually became Dean of the UGA Cooperative Extension Service.



Figure 7. Coastal Plain Experiment Station in 1921. (Source: University of Georgia Extension)

In 1919, UGA opened its second experiment station—the Coastal Plain Experiment Station at Tifton—followed by the establishment of the Georgia Mountain Branch Experiment Station in Blairsville in 1930. These two facilities were designed to support the needs of Georgia farmers in the two physiographic provinces not served by the Georgia Experiment Station, which operated in the state's Piedmont region. Today, the Coastal Plain Branch Experiment Station serves as the site of the UGA Tifton Campus, while the Mountain Branch Experiment Station continues to focus on research. Both have made important contributions to agricultural productivity, and played important roles in aiding Georgia farmers during the Great Depression.¹⁹ The Coastal Plain Branch Experiment Station is known for its work with grasses, particularly Bermuda grass. Historically, the station was also associated with internationally renowned plant explorer, J. L. (James Louis) “Cowboy” Stephens.²⁰

Despite the economic downturn associated with the Great Depression, enrollment remained steady at UGA, as job opportunities were limited. Federal funding and technical support associated with several New Deal programs helped the University to bridge a challenging period of diminished state funding during the 1930s. The Athens Campus was in fact able to expand significantly as a result of Public Works Administration (PWA) funds that were used to construct seventeen

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17. Allan Stoner and Kim Hummer, “19th and 20th Century Plant Hunters,” *HortScience* 42 (No. 2, April 2007):197–199.
 18. Thomas Wessel and Marilyn Wessel, *4-H, An American Ideal, 1900–1980: A History of 4-H* (Chevy Chase, Maryland: National 4-H Council, 1982).
 19. Elizabeth B. Cooksey, “Union County,” *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, September 3, 2013, <http://georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/counties-cities-neighborhoods/union-county>.
 20. Wayne Hanna, Bill Anderson, and Dennis Hancock. *The History and Development of Forage Bermudagrass, Parts 1, 2, and 3*, for 2011 Georgia Cattlemen by USDA Agricultural Research Station and UGA, http://www.caes.uga.edu/commodities/fieldcrops/forages/Ga_Cat_Arc/2011/GC1110.pdf, accessed April 10, 2016.

new buildings, including Baldwin Hall (UGA 55), Clark Howell Hall (UGA 290), and Le Conte Hall (UGA 53).

During World War II, UGA became involved in training with both the U.S. Navy and Army.²¹ Once male students began to leave the University to enlist, enrollment dropped precipitously, along with the teaching ranks. For the first time, female students outnumbered male students.²²

The *Modern Era, 1946–1972*, was for UGA a period of profound change and growth. At the close of the war, veterans returned to the University using the newly created G.I. Bill, and their presence brought about many changes to disciplinary codes and the campus itself.

In addition, the Research and Marketing Act of 1946 doubled the amount of federal support received for agricultural research, helping to support the work of the experiment stations. In 1949–1950, President Jonathan Clark Rogers worked with the Board of Regents to centralize control over the experiment stations, and assume responsibility for the College of Agriculture within the larger UGA structure.²³

The 1950s and 1960s were a period of political and social unrest within the country as well as the University. It was also a period during which the University undertook an unprecedented construction program, including building a new state-of-the-art library (UGA 54) in 1953, a School of Veterinary Medicine between 1949 and 1953, several dormitories in 1961 and 1963, Stegeman Coliseum (UGA 1654) in 1964, and a complex of buildings comprising the Science Center, completed in 1959 and 1960, that edged Conner Hall on South Campus.²⁴ Following the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, the University began to address the issue of segregated education, albeit incrementally and begrudgingly, as the state remained fiercely opposed to integration through the end of the decade. On January 9, 1961, under a court order, the University was forced to admit two African American students, Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes. Although the governor, S. Ernest Vandiver, Jr., threatened to withhold funding from the school if they allowed the two students to attend classes, their entrance into the University occurred without incident, ushering in a new era in the school's history.²⁵

During this period, the University also oversaw a rapid growth in the 4-H programs administered as part of the Cooperative Extension Service. By the 1950s, there was a 4-H program in every county in the state; at the time Georgia



Figure 8. Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes, 1961. (Source: AP/Atlanta Journal-Constitution)



Figure 9. The Rock Eagle effigy mound. (Source: University of Georgia)

21. Boney, *A Pictorial History*, 161.

22. *Ibid.*, 160.

23. *Ibid.*, 163.

24. *Ibid.*, 164.

25. *Ibid.*, 166.

had, and continues to maintain today, the largest 4-H program in the country.²⁶ Along with the growth of the clubs came the development of the Georgia 4-H camp system, culminating in the creation of the world's largest such facility at Rock Eagle in Eatonton in 1953. Rock Eagle, designed to accommodate as many as 1,000 campers at a time, was named for one of Georgia's great archaeological treasures, the Rock Eagle effigy mound, located nearby.



Figure 10.
Demosthenian Hall, Old
North Campus. (Source:
Historic American
Buildings Survey)

It was also during the post-World War II era that the UGA football team became a powerhouse. Between 1946 and 1968, the school succeeded in winning several Southeastern Conference championships, fielded nineteen All-Americans, including Pat Dye and Fran Tarkenton, and were led to play in twelve bowl games by coaches Wally Butts and Vince Dooley.²⁷

Recognition of the historic value of UGA's Athens campus first occurred in 1972 when the Old North Campus Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Buildings indicated as contributing to the significance of the district included the Academic Building, Chapel, Demosthenian Hall, Lustrat House, Moore College, New College, Old College, Phi Kappa Hall, and Waddel Hall.

The Major Research University Period, 1973–present, is characterized by new growth and the school's transition to a world-class research institution. Facilities such as the Skidaway Institute of Oceanography, which became a part of UGA in 1971, and the Marine Institute at Sapelo Island, established in 1953, added to the research capabilities of the University.

Even by 1973, the University had been recognized by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education as a "Research University I," its highest ranking. However, as the University focused more effort on providing facilities to attract notable research faculty, it also began to be ranked among the top U.S. universities on lists created by prestigious commissions for its research library, the number of faculty members on federal and peer-review commissions, the number of engineering and science faculty, and its research publications.²⁸

One of the notable faculty members and researchers at UGA during this period was Eugene P. Odum. Odum, a biology professor, began to work across several disciplines at UGA beginning in the 1950s as part of his pioneering work in ecosystem ecology. His work inspired a generation of scientists and contributed to the environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s. By 1993, the University



Figure 11. Eugene P.
Odum School of Ecology.
(Source: *New Georgia
Encyclopedia*)

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26. B. L. Walton, Jr., Project Coordinator, University of Georgia Cooperative Extension. *Georgia 4-H: Historic Past, Dynamic Future* (Virginia Beach, Virginia: The Donning Company Publishers, 2008).
 27. "Georgia Football," *NCAA Football*, <http://www.mcubed.net/ncaaf/teams/ga.shtml>, accessed August 4, 2016.
 28. Dyer, 357.

had established a separate Institute of Ecology, the world's first, based on Odum's work.²⁹

During the 1980s, the University marked the bicentennial of the school's founding with several events.

In response to the University's dramatic growth, the Athens Campus was expanded during the late 1990s and 2000s through the establishment of a housing complex referred to as East Campus

During the 1990s and 2000s, UGA began to systemically assess the value of its off-site holdings. As part of this effort, the Georgia Experiment Station became the home of the University's Griffin Campus, while the Coastal Plain Branch Experiment Station became the home of UGA's Tifton Campus.

Now in its third century of offering public education, the University continues to support its motto: "To teach, to serve, and to inquire into the nature of things."



Figure 12. Current President of the University of Georgia, Jere W. Morehead. (Source: University of Georgia)

29. Gary W. Barrett and Terry L. Barrett, with foreword by Eugene P. Odum, *Holistic Science: The Evolution of the Georgia Institute of Ecology (1940–2000)* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Sheridan Books, 2011).