

Establishing the ISU Horticulture Research Station

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Mark Honeyman, associate dean

Plans. Once the Pritchard Farm northwest of Ames was acquired, plans began in earnest for the new station. In January 1966, a building committee of horticulture faculty submitted a plan for the facilities. It included a residence, headquarters building, field laboratory (turf shed), pesticide shed, greenhouse plus interior roads, site grading, utilities, and an irrigation system. The total budget was \$211,400. The building committee consisted of A.E. Cott, E.L. Denisen, E.C. Roberts, J.L. Weigle, and F.H. Schulte (chair). The headquarters requirements were defined to include an office, a conference room, a classroom, restrooms/lockers, apple sales area, fruit and vegetable grading, cold storage (six walk-in coolers), loading dock, a large meeting area, and a storage area. Other facilities were similarly detailed. Interestingly, all the facilities in this plan, except the greenhouse, were ultimately built.

Once on site, the existing Pritchard farmstead was the base of operations while the construction was underway. Al Kemp, the first superintendent, moved his family to the old Pritchard house until the new residence was completed. The residence was the first building completed. From 1967 to 1970, the six primary buildings were constructed:

- Residence
- Horticulture laboratory (headquarters)
- Pesticide storage
- Shop/storage
- Machinery storage
- Field Service Building (turf shed)

Over time, the old farmstead buildings were demolished, except the “creamery” building, which was converted to storage.

Just as important as the buildings was the station layout and infrastructure. A new farm entrance, roadways to plots and around the lake, plots, orchards, vineyards, and irrigation lines were carefully sited and installed. By summer 1970, the station was fully in place and functional.

The building committee also reported on a visit to Rock Island, Illinois, to meet with the Army Corps of Engineers. Their purpose was to learn about the proposed Skunk River reservoir project. The project had been approved by Congress but not funded. The reservoir as planned would have taken “a considerable portion of the eastern part of the farm.” The reservoir was never constructed.

The framework of the ISU Horticulture Research Station was established. The primary buildings, modern and well-planned, were in place. The respective plot areas were designated. Extensive plantings were planned and executed, including major apple orchards featuring releases by Professor Beach. Other plantings included windbreaks, crabapple trials, a vineyard, and ornamental and shade tree plantings. The lake was tapped to feed an underground system of irrigation pipes. The old farm was gradually transformed into a remarkable setting to teach, learn, and research Iowa horticulture.

More recently, over the last 10 years, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the Horticulture Department have invested in extensive renovations and improvements to the Horticulture Station. Specifically, the original buildings were re-roofed, painted, re-insulated, and new windows and doors were installed. The water tower was sandblasted and painted. An 8-ft perimeter fence was installed with an automatic gate at the farm entrance to keep out deer. Rural water and

expanded tile drainage were installed. A new system with three variable speed pumps was installed to access and supply lake water to an expanded irrigation system. Numerous high-tunnel structures also were constructed.

The practicality and usefulness of the Station's layout has stood the test of time. In spite of major changes in horticulture due to adoption of mechanization, high-tunnels, trellis orchards, new cultivars and crops, and the application of computer technology, the

Station's buildings and arrangement continue to provide the foundation for intensive programs of research, extension, and instruction. The ISU Horticulture Research Station has served dozens of faculty and staff, thousands of students, and tens of thousands of visitors over the last 50 years. The careful planning and remarkable foresight of those who sited and planned the ISU Horticulture Research Station are a testament to the Iowa State University motto "Science With Practice."