

## A History of Farmland Owned by the Committee for Agricultural Development at Iowa State University

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### **Introduction**

In 2018, the Committee for Agricultural Development (CAD), an affiliate organization of ISU's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. As part of the anniversary, a history of CAD was written and organized into four articles. The articles cover CAD's origins, objectives and leadership, foundation seed, and farmland. One of the articles follows.

*Context.* Iowa State College became Iowa State University in 1959 and President James Hilton, who became president in 1953, had a vision of growth. Campus enrollment had grown rapidly and intercollegiate athletics were expanding. Passenger rail traffic was declining and there were more cars on campus. All of these trends—new facilities, more residence halls, new recreational fields, expanded athletic facilities, and more parking lots—required more land for the campus.

ISU President Hilton and later President Parks envisioned a world class university of “science and technology.” The barns, livestock pens, farms, and plots on the edges of campus probably did not fit with that vision. ISU undertook a comprehensive effort to relocate livestock facilities and crop plots to locations more remote from campus. Specifically, the Beef Nutrition Farm was moved from Beach Avenue to North Dakota Avenue in 1954; the Agronomy and Ag

Engineering Farms were moved from South State Avenue west to Boone County in 1964; the campus-based swine, beef, and sheep teaching herds were moved to the former Agronomy Farm on South State Avenue in 1966; crop fields were moved off of Beach Avenue bottom; the Poultry farm was moved from south Welch and Hayward Avenue in early 1960s; and the Horticulture farm was relocated from Sheldon and Knapp to a farm 8 miles northeast of Ames in 1967. These moves created space for the Iowa State Center (1969-1975), Kildee Hall (1966), Agronomy Hall (1952), Towers Residence Halls (1965-68), Southwest Athletic Complex, recreational fields, numerous parking lots, greenhouses, and the Maple/Willow/Larch residence halls (1967-71).

*CAD's role.* In the 1960s, CAD began a new role in support of the ISU College of Agriculture. CAD acquired and managed farmland on behalf of the college. This role increased with the College's need for agricultural land to expand its research and teaching programs. The needs for land by college programs grew for several reasons. In addition to the university growth, which was pushing the agricultural activities off of central campus, the College of Agriculture needed more land for its programs. The scale and mechanization of field research increased. College livestock herds were generally larger requiring more land for better use of manure nutrients and to supply forages, especially corn silage, plus a need to buffer the livestock farms from neighbors. Later, some field researchers began doing studies as whole field scale involving hundreds of acres with GPS instrumentation and analytics that could handle vast data sets.

To meet this new role, CAD needed financial resources and management expertise. After about 20 years of a successful seed enterprise, CAD had acquired the adequate finances. Also, about that time Ralph Bean became CAD's business manager. Bean had keen negotiation, financial, and land management skills. Bean of CAD and Homer Larsen, realtor, Madrid, began a strong relationship that resulted in acquiring land for the ISU College of Agriculture. A good example is the Pritchard Farm, 8 miles northeast of Ames, purchased by CAD in 1967, transferred to the ISU Research Foundation, and eventually purchased by ISU in 1973, is the site for the current Horticulture Research Station.

Land acquisitions and transactions in Story and Boone Counties under Bean's leadership include the Milliken and Littlefield tracts adjacent to the Curtiss Farm in 1966-67; the Animal Resource Station and Bates tract on South Highway 69 in 1967-70; the Bruner, Burkey, and Boyd farms near the Agronomy Research Farm in 1969-79; the Kelley and Lippert farms in Boone County in 1965-69; the Hinds Irrigation Plots north of Ames on the Skunk River in 1974; the Fick Observatory tract in Boone County in 1973; and the Finch Farm on County Line Road in 1973. He also coordinated the Haas Farm gift in Pottawattamie County and the Seeck Farm gift in Benton County to CAD and the Coles Farm gift in Hamilton County to ISU in 1974.

Bean masterfully arranged resources from the ISU Research Foundation, the ISU Achievement Fund, the Board of Regents, the Iowa Crops and Soils Research Association plus CAD to build the land framework CAD would use in years that followed to expand the college's land base. In 1976, Bean was awarded the Superior Service Citation by the ISU Alumni Association for being "the guiding hand which has engineered the orderly expansion of the University land facilities..."

CAD also served an active role in establishing or expanding the ISU McNay Research Farm, Lucas County; the Southeast Experimental Farm, Davis County; the Treynor Watershed, Pottawattamie County; the Rhodes Farm, Marshall County; and others across Iowa.

*Consolidation of affiliates.* Consolidation of the College's affiliates took several forms. In the 1980s, tracts in the Ames area were owned by several affiliated groups in addition to ISU. These were CAD, Iowa Crops and Soils Association, and ISU Agricultural Foundation. In addition, land was owned by ISU Alumni Achievement Fund, the precursor of the ISU Foundation. After 1996, CAD owned all of the affiliate-owned farmland except that owned by the ISU Foundation.

In 1955, the Iowa Crops and Soils Research Association (ICSRA) organized to raise funds to purchase the farmland where the Agronomy Farm was located in Boone County in 1964. The membership and funds (never more than \$46,000) were used as political leverage to get funding from the Iowa General Assembly for the new agronomy farm. As other farms came up for sale near the Agronomy Farm, ICSRA purchased them and by the 1980s owned about 430 acres in eastern Boone County. In 1996, ICSRA dissolved and its assets were merged into CAD.

The ISU Agricultural Foundation was founded in 1937, when C.R. Musser, Muscatine, Iowa, donated a total of 12 farms to create the foundation. These farms across Iowa were managed with tenant operators as examples of good farm management. The farms were sold to the operators and the proceeds reinvested in other farms. James J. Wallace was an early leader of the Ag Foundation. In 1993, the board of trustees decided to sell all the farms and use the assets for scholarships and grants related to Iowa agriculture. In 1995, CAD purchased the 700-acre Uthe Farm in Boone County from the Ag Foundation for \$1.4

million. CAD added the Reynoldson and Hermann tracts in 2003 and 2007 to create about 1,100 acres in this area of Boone County north of Madrid, IA. In 2003, the ISU Ag Foundation changed its name to the ISU Agricultural Endowment.

In 2005, CAD purchased the 887-acre ISU Dairy Farm, 2 miles south of Ames in Story County from Knapp Properties, West Des Moines, Iowa. The land had been owned by the Black family for many years. They had sold to Knapp in 2003. Later in 2005, CAD resold the land to ISU for the purchase price of \$6.25 million for the new dairy farm, which was built in 2008. In addition, CAD made a \$1 million grant to ISU in support of the new dairy farm.

*Gift farms.* In 1966, Franz Haas, Shelby, Iowa, was killed in an automobile accident on his way to Ames for a seed meeting. Mr. Haas was a long-time leader in seed and crop improvement in Iowa. His will bequeathed his 160-acre farm to CAD in 1975 with proceeds to be used for graduate student assistantships in the ISU Agronomy Department. Later, in 2004, CAD received another farm, the Seeck Farm (200 acres) in Benton County for a similar purpose. These two farms have generated over \$1 million in funding agronomy graduate students.

*Current land status.* In 2016, CAD owned more than 3,000 acres in Story and Boone counties. There were 21 tracts (8 in Story and 13 in Boone) plus the seed plant acreage (Figure 1). About 34 percent of the land is rented to ISU College of Agriculture and Life Sciences for plot research. About 52 percent of the land is managed by CAD as bulk crops (corn and soybean). The remaining 14 percent of the land is in soybean for seed (6%), Conservation Reserve Program (6%), and buildings, roads, etc. (2%). The land cost was \$11 million with a conservative market value of about \$24 million. In addition, CAD owned

two gift farms of 350 acres in Pottawattamie County (Haas) and Benton County (Seeck) valued at \$2.5 million.

### Conclusion

CAD was formed to meet a need to distribute widely improved seed to Iowa farmers. That need created an affiliate corporation of ISU College of Agriculture, which was run as a business. This model was original and served the college well by increasing and marketing seed, developing and marketing other products of ag research, awarding grants, and stepping into a major role of land owner, manager, and trader for the college.

Note: For the purposes of this article the terms experiment station, college, station, college of agriculture and IAHEES are used interchangeably and refer to the Iowa State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences including its research arm the Iowa Agriculture and Home Economics Experiment Station.

### Acknowledgements

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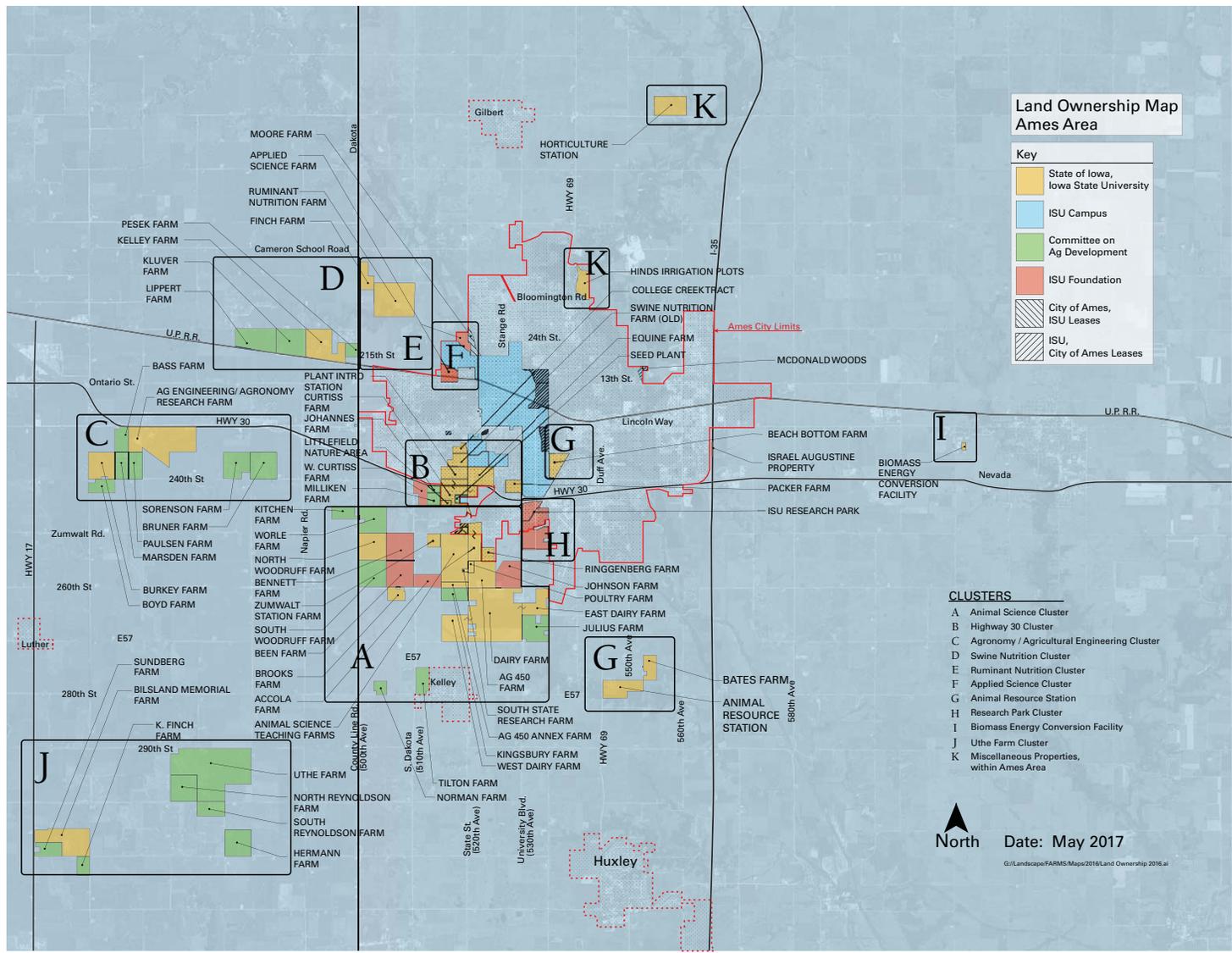


Figure 1. Land ownership map of Ames area showing CAD-owned farms, 2017.