

# President Farmer: Weatherford College Celebrates Sesquicentennial Year

[Photo: Dr. Farmer.jpg] **12/17/18 — Weatherford College Sesquicentennial Year**

The University of Texas was founded in 1881. Texas A&M University was founded in 1871. Weatherford College was founded on July 5, 1869. As amazing as it sounds, our community college is older than our great state's two original land grant institutions. Dallas County Community College recently turned 50 years old. Tarrant County College recently turned 50 years old. In 2019, Weatherford College will be 150 years old! Weatherford College has changed tens of thousands of lives over the past 150 years and helped countless Texans realize the American Dream. This is a historic year for our college, a great era for Weatherford, and a fantastic time to be part of the Weatherford College community.

On July 5, 1869, the cornerstone of Weatherford College was laid by the Phoenix Masonic Lodge near what is now the intersection of Lee Street and South Main. The college struggled financially in the early years and barely clung to existence. However, Weatherford College proved to be a survivor by overcoming many financial hardships. Following the election of United States President Grover Cleveland in 1884, the institution was renamed Cleveland College in an effort to secure financial support. President Cleveland sent 1,000 copies of the Congressional Record, but no funding. The newly formed Granbury College also struggled financially. In 1887, Granbury College burned to the ground. Two years later in June of 1889, the President of Granbury College, David Switzer, relocated his faculty to Weatherford and the two colleges became one. That same year, the Masons sold the property to the Methodist Episcopal Church South, and the name was changed to Weatherford College. David Switzer would later become known as the father of Weatherford College.

After overcoming the early financial hardships, Weatherford College continued to grow and change. In 1917, the year the United States entered World War I, the first girls were admitted to Weatherford College. In 1923, the first Weatherford College yearbook, the Oak Leaf was published. The WC yearbook was named the Oak Leaf because of all of the oak trees on the Old Main campus. Many people may not be aware that Weatherford College was affiliated with the Methodist Church for much of its distinguished history. The formal affiliation with the Methodist Church began in 1885, and ended in 1949. From 1943 until 1949, Weatherford College was affiliated with Southwestern University, a Methodist institution. It wasn't until 1949 that Weatherford College became a public institution. This is an important point. Weatherford College is known for its caring culture and its commitment to improving the human condition. I believe that this is in no small part due to the fact that WC was a private Christian school for much of its history. Those historical Christian values remain the fabric of our organizational culture even today.

In the 1960s under the leadership of President Vernon Parrott, the college student population outgrew the Old Main facility. When efforts to purchase nearby land failed, a new location for the college was sought. In 1968, thanks to visionary leaders like Roy Grogan and others, Weatherford College made a monumental move from the Old Main location to our current hilltop location.

Much of the aforementioned Weatherford College historical documentation is directly attributable to the work of WC alumnus and local historian Jon Vandagriff. His forthcoming book, Weatherford College:

The First 150 Years, will be available for sale in January with proceeds benefiting the Weatherford College Foundation.

Weatherford is a truly amazing place, and Weatherford College is an amazing institution. There is nowhere on Earth that I would rather raise my family. The 2019 Weatherford College Sesquicentennial Year will be a unique opportunity to join in celebrating the heritage of our community college. We have a rich history, a bright future, and a Texas can-do attitude. Our people and our culture are our strengths. This is truly a once in a lifetime opportunity for the entire Weatherford College community to celebrate our past, and collectively prepare for our radiant future. Please join us in the Alkek Fine Arts Center on January 17th from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. for our Sesquicentennial Kickoff Reception.

**Tod Allen Farmer**

***President, Weatherford College***