

2. HISTORY

The history of TAMU-CC includes the natural history of its home, Ward Island, and the cultural history of its human occupants through the decades. The campus plan records the cultural history through the accumulation of buildings and facilities planned and constructed over time.

NATURAL HISTORY

An unusual thing about the Island is its geology. It is an island of clay formed by erosion, as contrasted to an island of sand formed by deposition, as are the more famous barrier islands associated with the Corpus Christi Bay area.

Little is known about the original vegetation of the Island. The stand of hackberry trees at the southwest edge of the Island is probably original. There is a type of sea grass in the bay near the bridge that may be original. It is believed that there were wetlands at the Cayo del Oso edge of the island before the Island's elevation was raised, probably by deposits of dredging spoils. The present mesquite trees are an invasive species here on the Island, as elsewhere.

The Island is on the migratory flyway. The mud flats south of the bridge attract the permanent bird residents — the roseate spoonbills and the piping plovers, as well as gulls and other shore birds.

PRE WORLD WAR II

Because there was no access to the island before the World War II facilities were constructed, there was no significant use of the land. *Illustration No. 2.1 WARD ISLAND BEFORE WORLD WAR II* suggests that in addition to the edge of Corpus Christi Bay, there were four distinct zones of vegetation: (1) west zone (perhaps largely hackberry trees); (2) the south zone; (3) the east zone (probably a large area of wetlands with a pond); and (4) the central zone. Inspection of *Illustration No. 2.1* also indicates a rectangular sub zone within the central zone. This sub zone appears to be a man-made installation of some sort.



Illustration No. 2.1 WARD ISLAND BEFORE WORLD WAR II

WORLD WAR II

Ward Island housed ancillary and support facilities for the adjacent Naval Air Station during World War II. Refer to *Illustration No. 2.2 WARD ISLAND SHORTLY AFTER WORLD WAR II*. The defensive limits to access of the peninsula and island undoubtedly influenced their choice for the site of the Naval Air Station. Only vestiges of the gridded street pattern of the WWII campus remain on the island in 2006.

The Facilities Management Department of the University is in possession of the original design and construction documents of the WWII facilities.

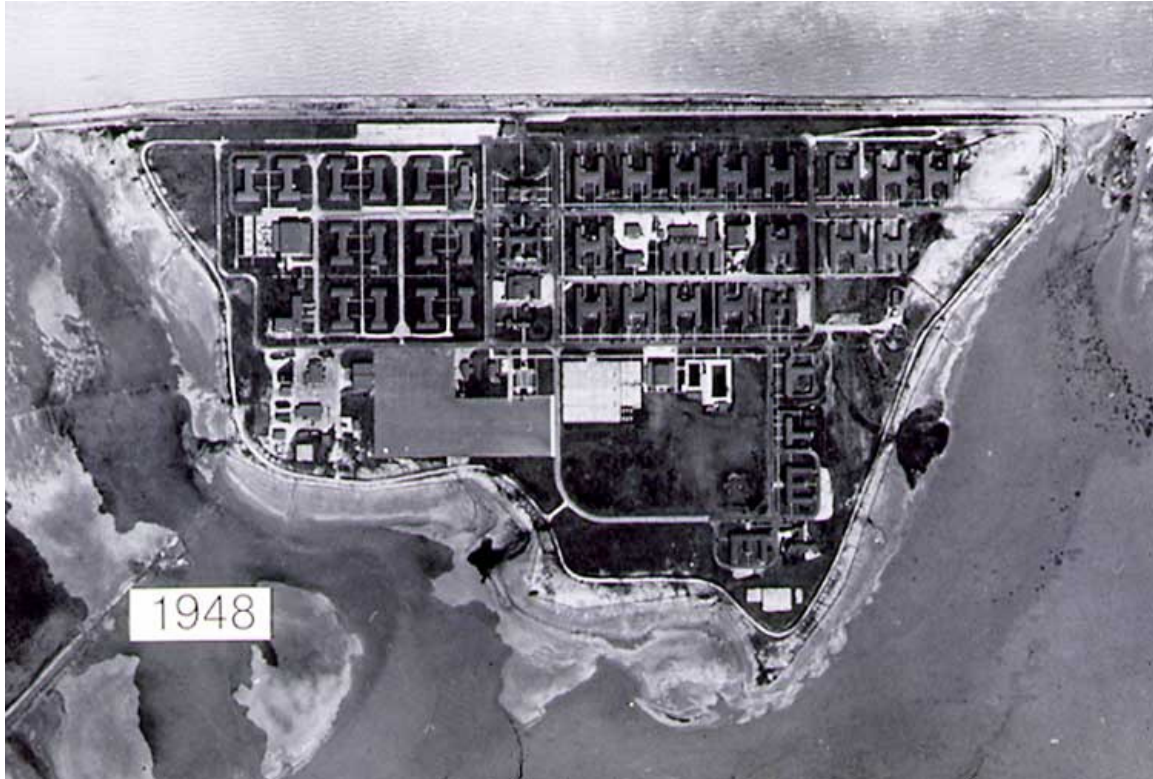


Illustration No. 2.2 WARD ISLAND SHORTLY AFTER WORLD WAR II

PRIVATE RELIGIOUS UNIVERSITY

The University of Corpus Christi was created in 1947. It was affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas. As was typical of many new educational institutions created immediately after WW II, This university was initially housed largely in facilities left over from the military installations after the war. Refer to *Illustrations No. 2.3 WARD ISLAND AFTER PARTIAL DEMOLITION OF WORLD WAR II BUILDINGS* and *No. 2.4 START OF NEW CONSTRUCTION FOR THE UNIVERSITY*. This initial campus was severely damaged by Hurricane Celia in 1970. Refer to *Illustration No. 2.5 CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY*. Only seven small buildings from this period remain on campus at present.



Illustration No.2.3 WARD ISLAND AFTER PARTIAL DEMOLITION OF WORLD WAR II BUILDINGS



Illustration No. 2.4 START OF NEW CONSTRUCTION FOR THE UNIVERSITY

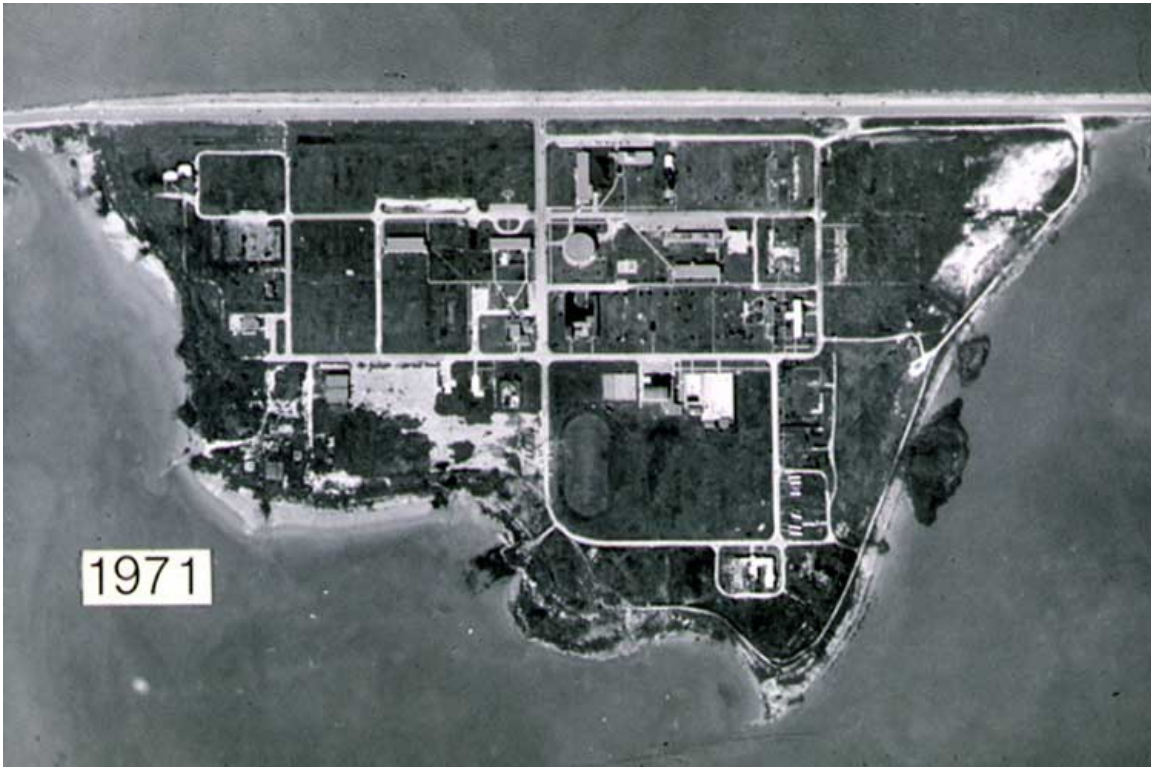


Illustration No. 2.5 CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY



Illustration No. 2.6 THE CAMPUS AS RECEIVED BY THE STATE OF TEXAS



STATE SUPPORT

TEXAS A & I UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

Area leadership sought local and state support for conversion of the private institution to a state-supported university with a larger curriculum. In 1971 the State of Texas authorized Texas A&I University

System to establish an upper level university at Corpus Christi; and on September 4, 1973, Texas A & I University at Corpus Christi began classes for nearly 1,000 students. Refer to *Illustration No. 2.6 THE CAMPUS AS RECEIVED BY THE STATE OF TEXAS*.

TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

In 1977 the University was transferred to the Texas State University System and its name was changed to Corpus Christi State University. Five major buildings and six smaller ones were added to the campus during this period.

TEXAS A & M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

The name of the University was changed once again after it joined the Texas A&M University System in 1989. Refer to *Illustration No. 2.7 THE CAMPUS AS RECEIVED BY THE TEXAS A & M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM*. In 1993 it became Texas A & M University-Corpus Christi. A year later it became a four-year comprehensive university. A campus plan was completed in 1991 with a major in-house update following in 1999. The campus plan recognized the axis that had taken form in the 1970's and called for its enhancement from Corpus Christi Bay to Cayo del Oso. During this phase of development nine major buildings were completed on the island, mostly reinforcing the axis or spine concept.



Illustration No. 2.7 THE CAMPUS AS RECEIVED BY TEXAS A & M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM



While being a part of the Texas A & M University System, the University has experienced growth directly related to the System's "capping" of enrollment at the main campus in College Station, as well as to the City's general growth in population. It has also grown in response to the System's plan for implementing the South Texas Initiative.

SUMMARY

The history of the University is greatly influenced by the geographical limits of its island location, by the grid pattern of streets largely inherited from its earlier use as a WW II military installation, and by the general growth of the City of Corpus Christi and its metropolitan area.