

Iowa State University
College of Agriculture

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ISU AG ENGINEERING 100TH CELEBRATION INCLUDES HISTORICAL SYMPOSIUM

AMES, Iowa - A historical symposium at an international meeting is the next step in the centennial celebration for Iowa State University's Department of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering.

The department's roots are traced to 1905 when Jay B. Davidson arrived in Ames from the University of Nebraska to take a position as assistant professor-in-charge of farm mechanics in the agronomy department. He organized the Department of Farm Mechanics, creating the world's first agricultural engineering department.

Davidson is recognized internationally as the "father of agricultural engineering." Not only did he found the world's first academic program in the field, he was the creative force behind the formation of the American Society of Agricultural Engineers (ASAE). Davidson was elected in 1907 as the first ASAE president.

So it's fitting that a special symposium honoring Davidson be held at this year's ASAE annual meeting in Tampa, Fla. The symposium, titled "Agricultural Engineering - Its Creation and 100-Year Service to Humanity," will be July 18 from 9:30 a.m. to noon.

Seven speakers will participate, including four past presidents of ASAE. Davidson's role in the development of the agricultural engineering profession will be discussed. Symposium speakers also will review how the profession has enhanced the status of the agricultural industry in the world economy, how mechanization has changed agriculture and how people in both rural and urban areas have benefited from the agricultural engineering profession.

A poster that includes 60 historical photos and a timeline of Iowa State's agricultural and biosystems engineering department has been created and will be on display at the ASAE meeting. Some key items in the timeline:

- 1905 - Farm Mechanics building constructed as an addition to Agricultural Hall; program in Agricultural Engineering initiated within the agronomy department
- 1907 - American Society of Agricultural Engineers founded with Jay Davidson as president
- 1910 - Agricultural Engineering listed as a separate department under the College of Agriculture; W. A. Waggoner granted first Agricultural Engineering degree; First Agricultural Engineering extension engineer appointed
- 1913 - Agricultural Engineering Department jointly administered between Colleges of Agriculture and Engineering
- 1918 - First master's degree awarded to Edward J. Stirniman
- 1923 - Agricultural Engineering Laboratory constructed
- 1934 - Agricultural Engineering Research Farm purchased
- 1936 - First doctorate awarded to Eugene McKibben
- 1941 - Agricultural Engineering Lab destroyed by fire; present building constructed on site
- 1946 - Jay Davidson retires; Hobart Beresford appointed department head
- 1953 - First model watershed using similitude principles constructed
- 1962 - Clarence Bockhop appointed department head
- 1966 - Large round baler designed by Virgil Haverdink and Wesley F. Buchele
- 1972 - A second program, Agricultural Mechanization, established within the College of Agriculture
- 1975 - Agricultural Engineering Building named Davidson Hall
- 1980 - H. P. Johnson appointed department head
- 1984 - First computers enabling design within the department purchased
- 1988 - James Gilley appointed department head
- 1991 - Agricultural Engineering program title changed to Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering (ABE); Agricultural Mechanization title changed to Agricultural Systems Technology (AST)
- 1993 - Stewart Melvin appointed department head
- 2000 - 2,085 ABE students have received bachelor's degrees; 249 have received AST degrees; 450 master's and doctorate degrees have been conferred
- 2001- Ramesh Kanwar appointed department chair
- 2004 - Department of Industrial Education and Technology moves from the College of Education to merge with the Department of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering
- 2005 - 144 ABE students, 138 AST students, 227 Industrial Technology students and 75 graduate students enrolled

The historical poster is being displayed at events throughout this centennial year. Besides the July 18 symposium at the ASAE meeting, upcoming events include an alumni gathering in Ames Oct. 6-8. Activities will include the Iowa Section ASAE meeting and banquet Oct. 6; several tours, a barbecue lunch on the Davidson Hall front lawn prepared by student groups, an evening of reminiscing Oct. 7; and tailgating under an ABE centennial tent before and after the Oct. 8 football game.

More details on the ABE centennial celebration are online at <http://www.abe.iastate.edu/abe100/>.

The department is administered jointly by the College of Agriculture and the College of Engineering. Its original mission was to mechanize agriculture. That mission has evolved to encompass a global view of the entire food production system - the wise management of natural resources in the production, processing, storage, handling and use of food, fiber and other biological products.