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2016-12-01

### Article, "College Site Once Vegetable Garden"

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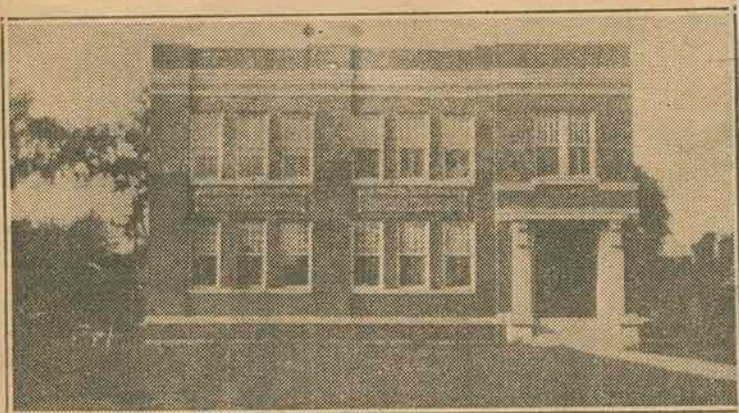
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## Mechanical Arts Building



## Geology Building



## College Site Once Vegetable Garden

The College, with its spacious buildings and attractive campus, has grown on a spot that was once a vegetable garden. This point is well recalled by Mrs. C. E. Sparks, better known around the campus as "Ma" Sparks.

Mr. and Mrs. Sparks once owned part of the site on which the College stands. The couple was successful with the gardening, but the tilling of the soil was restricted because part of the section was too swampy.

Mr. and Mrs. Sparks came here from Girard. Land in the area of the coal camp was less expensive than some of the acreage around Girard. Purchasing two lots, they built a home on one, where Horace Mann training school now stands and across what is now Cleveland, they started a vegetable garden.

"We had all kinds of vegetables," Mrs. Sparks recalls. "There were tomatoes, peas, beans, corn, potatoes and virtually very kind we wanted."

The land was purchased by the

state from the Sparks couple in 1906, she says. The swamp land was filled in soon after the purchase. The other site was not taken so quickly, and after the deal was made. Mr. and Mrs. Sparks were given two years in which to select a new home.

Russ hall was the only building on the campus for a while. Mrs. Sparks recalls the almost regular addition of other structures. Mr. Sparks at one time was a janitor at the school.

Next to seeing the educational institution prosper on the land she once owned, the strongest point in Mrs. Sparks' memory about the school is the fire which partly destroyed Russ hall in June of 1914.

"I awoke early in the morning and noticed an unusual light," she recalls. "I thought at first it was time to get up, then I noticed the building was on fire," she added.

Scenes of students in their night clothing wading around in water; the death of Rex Tanner; the electrocution of one fire horse by a live wire, all stand out in the memory of Mrs. Sparks.

Following the fire, classes were held in churches, tents and any available building.

Mrs. Sparks has lived in three houses about the campus. After the original home was sold, Mrs. Sparks moved into the house which is now the Alpha Sigma Alpha sorority house. Here she kept a girls' boarding house. Today she receives letters from former roomer-students. She moved to her present home at 214 East Williams several years ago.

Mrs. Sparks is 82 years of age. She retains her vivid interest in the College which she has seen grow from one building on her old garden spot.