

Investigating and Correcting a Federal Depository Library Designation Date

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Discovering a Discrepancy

It began with an automated reminder from the Government Publishing Office (GPO) about Colorado State University Libraries' approaching anniversary as a Federal Depository Library. According to the reminder, 115 years had passed since the Libraries' designation in 1907. This seemed an achievement worthy of recognition, so an official certificate commemorating the event was asked for and received. But when the new certificate was compared with the 100th anniversary certificate already on display, a problem was discovered. The 100th anniversary certificate stated the Libraries' designation date as 1903.

Investigating the Date

This prompted a dive into the Libraries' archives. The first stop was a book by a former Libraries faculty member, entitled *Agricultural Frontier to Electronic Frontier*, which placed the designation date in 1903 and pointed to a historic newspaper article as the source.¹ The newspaper article corroborated the date.² Additional confirmation came from a 1904 document, "Annual Report and Inventory of the Library," which said that "beginning with the last session of the latest Congress we [the State Agricultural College library] became 'a designated depository'."³

Correcting the Record

With this information in hand, the process began to update the Libraries' designation date in the official record. The Libraries emailed the archival documentation to the GPO, with a request that the date be corrected. GPO staff then consulted an additional source from 1909, the *Official List of Depository Libraries*. Interestingly, this document listed 1907 as the date that the Libraries became a designated depository,⁴ but also showed that the Libraries had become a geological depository in 1888.⁵ At the time, these were different types of federal depository libraries.⁶ Ultimately, the GPO offered a choice of designation dates based on the Libraries' records and the *Official List*: 1903 or 1888. The Libraries chose to remain with 1903 since it matched the institution's archival documents as well as the 100th anniversary certificate.

Tips for Other Libraries

What was learned from this experience? First, a formal written history of the library is an invaluable resource. If one exists, start the investigation there. Second, other potential sources include library newsletters, annual reports, or archived correspondence, as well as locally relevant publications such as newspapers. Third, institutional name changes can complicate a search, and it may be necessary to determine the various iterations. Lastly, a few broader resources to consider are historic editions of the [Federal Depository Library Directory](#), as well as the previously mentioned [Official List of Depository Libraries](#).

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Victoria Lopez-Terrill at Colorado State University Libraries for performing the essential work of locating archival documentation and to Ashley Dahlen at the Government Publishing Office for assistance in correcting the official record.

References

1. Douglas J. Ernest, *Agricultural Frontier to Electronic Frontier: A History of Colorado State University Libraries, 1870-1995* (Fort Collins, CO: Colorado State University, 1996), 27, <http://hdl.handle.net/10217/1553>.
2. "College Notes," *The Weekly Courier*, November 25, 1903, 6, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/>.
3. Joseph F. Daniels, "Annual Report and Inventory of the Library," in *Twenty-Sixth Annual Report of the State Board of Agriculture and the State Agricultural College* (Denver: State Board of Agriculture, 1904), 71.
4. Office of Superintendent of Documents, *Official List of Depository Libraries: Consisting of Designated, Geological, and Official Gazette Depositories* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1909), 7, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.b99654>.
5. Office of Superintendent of Documents, 50.
6. Office of Superintendent of Documents, 3.

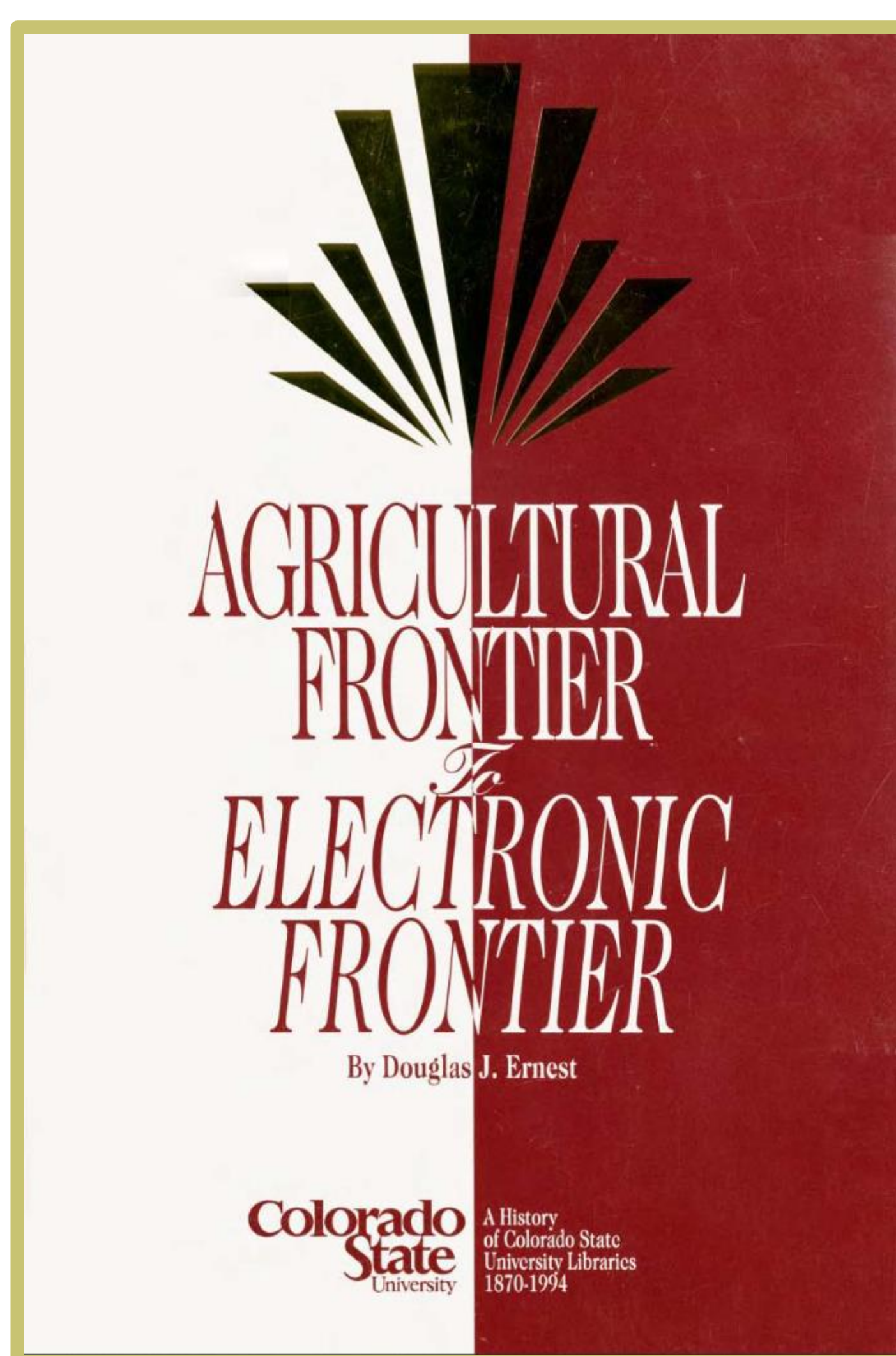


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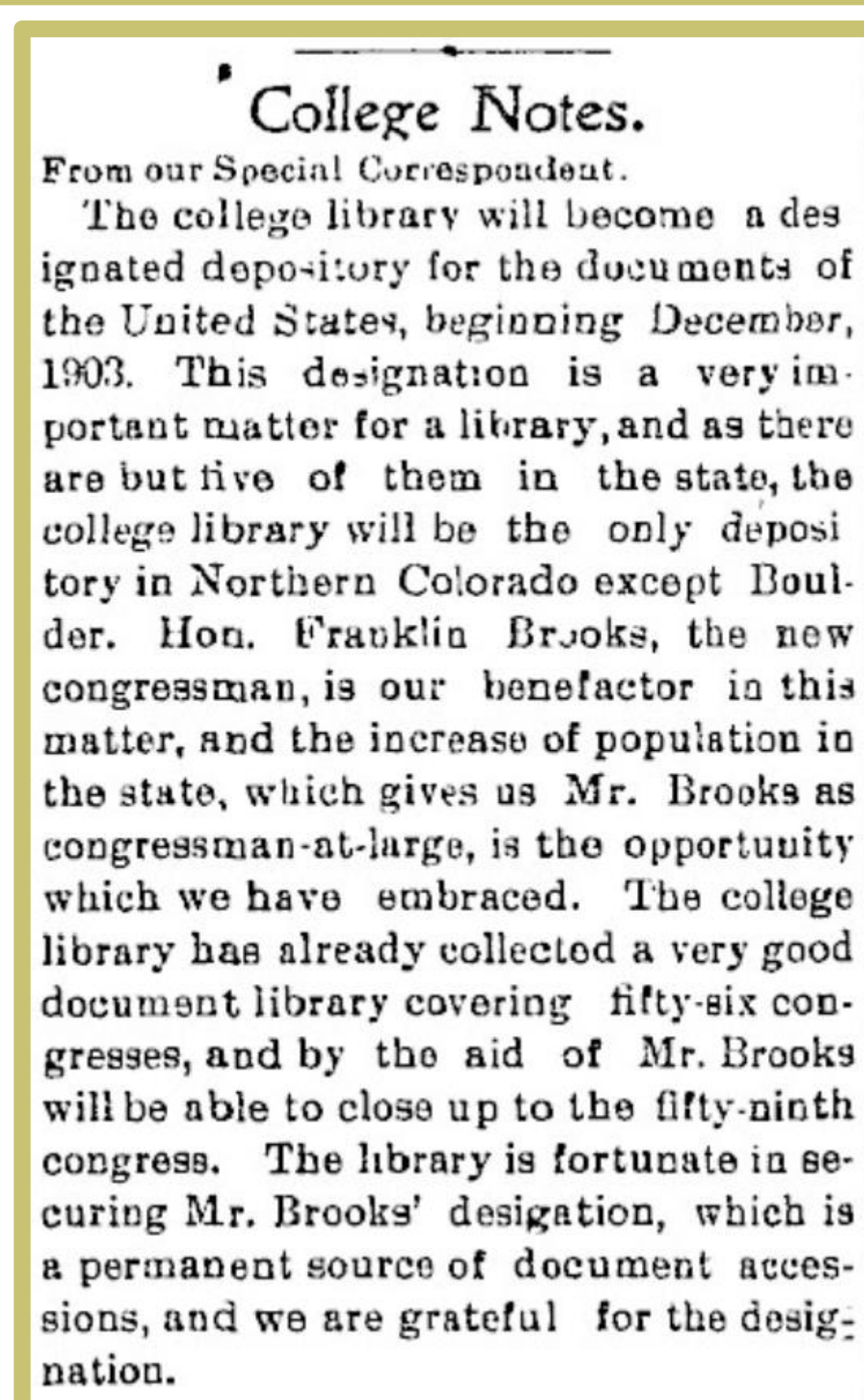


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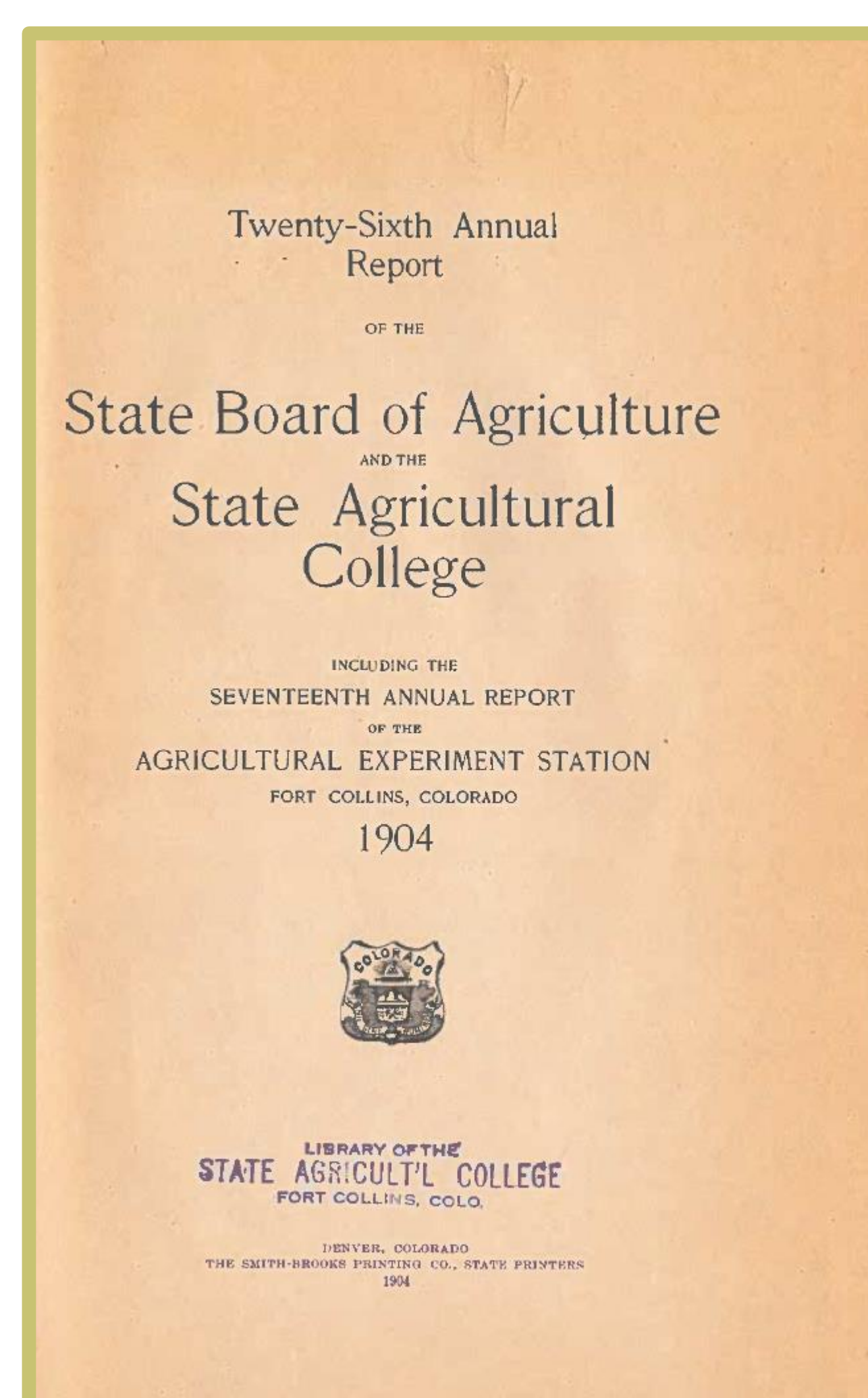


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