



Lee County Historical Society
P. O. Box 206
Loachapoka, AL 36865
Return Service Requested

TRAILS IN HISTORY

Official Newsletter of the Lee County Historical Society

Volume 44, Number 1 January 2011 Published Quarterly

Winter Meeting of Lee County Historical Society
January 9, 2010, 2:30 pm
LCHS Trade Center Museum, Loachapoka, Alabama

“East Alabama Male College During the Civil War Era” Speaker: David McRae

The East Alabama Male College, Auburn University’s earliest predecessor, was a Methodist college founded in 1856. Beginning operations in 1859, but closing for most of the Civil War, it resumed operations after the war and continued until 1871. The college served a variety of aims, including intellectual development and preparation for careers in the professions. Its primary aim, though, appears to have been evangelistic, seeking both to evangelize those students who were not yet converted and to train ministers and missionaries to preach the gospel. The antebellum curriculum of the college focused on the classics and mathematics as means of developing mental discipline. After the war, though, perhaps in order to attract more students, the college introduced several curricular innovations, including giving upperclassmen limited choice in their course of study, and adding several more practical courses to the curriculum, such as engineering and business. Strict rules governed student life and morality at the college, but some students at least still managed to enjoy their time in Auburn. The college prospered before the Civil War, but the South’s economic difficulties after the war brought grave financial troubles to the East Alabama Male College. These difficulties eventually forced the college to sell its property to the state of Alabama, to be used for the state’s new agricultural and mechanical college.



David McRae was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, but spent his early years living in a variety of places, ranging from southern Florida to northern Illinois. He received his B.A. in history and political science in 2005 from King College in Bristol, Tennessee, and his M.A. in history from Auburn University in 2009. He is currently working on a Ph.D. in history at Auburn, where he is studying church colleges in Civil War-era Alabama.

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Auburn, AL
Permit No. 202

LEE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 206
LOACHAPOKA, AL 36865

web address:

www.leecountyhistoricalsociety.org

e-mail: lchs1968@hotmail.com

Organized October 25, 1968, chartered as a non-commercial, non-profit corporation under the laws of the State of Alabama, Charter filed with Probate Court, Lee County, Alabama, November 8, 1968.

OFFICERS

President: Jeannette Frandsen
Vice-President: Charles C. Mitchell
Treasurer: Marty Hoerr
Secretary: Deborah McCord
HCC Delegate: Ann Pearson
Trails Editor: Janet Sugg

TRUSTEES

Term expires December 31, 2012
Barbara Ervin
Doyle Keasal
Charles H. Mitchell
Betty Patterson
Dr. Ann Pearson
Peggie Webster

Term expires December 31, 2011
Ruth Ann Bond
Kay Campbell
Pat Conover
Sheila Eckman
Zack Sprayberry
Carl Summers, Jr.

Term expires December 31, 2010
Dottie Marcinko
Arvle Marshall
John Rice
John Ross
Deena Rowell
Jim Witte

MUSEUM CALENDAR

January 8 - Second Saturday
10am - 3pm - Baking Heirloom
Cakes and Pies

January 9 - Regular Meeting
2:30pm - Speaker David McRae
"East Alabama Male College during the Civil War Era"

February 12 - Second Saturday
10am - 3pm - Making Hominy the
Old-Fashioned Way

March 12 - Second Saturday
10am - 3pm - Stuffed Sausage

March 13- LCHS Board Meeting
2:30pm

April 9 - Second Saturday, All Day
"The Battle of Loachapoka"

April 10, 2010 - Regular Meeting
2:30pm - Speaker Dr. Kenneth Noe
"Reluctant Rebels"

April 28th - May 1 -
Third Annual Lee County Gathering, Old-time Music Festival
www.leecountygathering.com.

LCHS MEMBERSHIP

Due: January 1 of each year
Individual: \$20 per individual
Family: \$30 (spouse and children)
Additional Donations Appreciated

All memberships and donations to LCHS are tax deductible. Please send your check (payable to LCHS), your mailing address (and e-mail address if applicable) to

Lee County Historical Society
P. O. Box 206
Loachapoka, AL 36865

Meeting our mission of acquisition of historical artifacts:

- A new display of area Campfire Girl history and memorabilia was created with donations from Dr. Ann Pearson.

Goals for the coming year include:

- adding storm windows to the Trade Center to assist in reducing humidity and light damage
- improving the electrical service to the cookhouse, bandstand, and blacksmith shop
- making improvements to the cookhouse
- placing an historical marker to mark the site of the first Rosenwald school, which was built in Loachapoka
- creating an Endowment Fund to ensure that the facilities will be around for future generation.

With your continued support these goals will be accomplished in 2011. Please use the coupon below to renew your annual membership or make a donation. It is our hope that you will consider including a generous donation for our Endowment Fund.



Membership / Donation

Lee County Historical Society
P. O. Box 206
Loachapoka, AL 36865

I want to support the work of the Lee County Historical Society.

All contributions are Tax deductible.

Federal I.D. No. 23-7227476

- Individual - \$20 Family-\$30 Friend - \$50 Patron - \$100
- Support - \$250 Blue Ribbon - \$500 Benefactor - \$1,000

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E-Mail _____

The year 2010, and Looking Forward to 2011

Last year at LCHS was very productive, thanks to the hard work of our members and volunteers and the generous support of many in the community. Below is a summary of our successes, and an outline of our plans for the coming year:

Meeting our mission in the areas of preservation and restoration:

- The Trade Center main floor joists were repaired/replaced, strengthening the building.
- Heat and air conditioning was added to the Trade Center to assist in maintaining the building and priceless artifacts which were deteriorating due to exposure to humidity and extreme temperatures.
- The Trade Center received a new entrance and the Trade Center and log cabin received handicap access ramps.
- The outdoor restrooms received the addition of shower stalls to improve our camping facilities.
- The Master Gardeners moved Grandma's Garden and created walking paths and gardens around the McLain building.

Meeting our mission in the areas of education, presentation, and publication:

- LCHS and volunteer demonstrators hosted four area school fieldtrips, providing educational experiences for approximately 400 children.
- Second Saturday re-enactments occurred every month, with an average attendance of 100.
- Heritage Pine-Straw Basketry classes were held twice during the year.
- Hand spinning on drop spindle and high whirl spindle, wool processing, wool carding, and other heritage textile and weaving demonstrations were held.
- A five-week mountain dulcimer class was held, with continuing instruction most Saturdays throughout the year.
- Our resident Whistle Stop Pickers, old-time music group recorded a CD of traditional old-time music, which is for sale at the Trade Center. In addition this group has represented our society at more than 20 senior citizen/civic organizations or festivals.
- The Lee County Gathering, Old-Time Music Festival was held in April with more than 200 attendees each day.
- LCHS was chosen as the host site for the American Rainwater Catchment Systems conference in September.
- Various civic organizations utilized our facilities for their meetings.
- LCHS hosted our three annual history programs.
- Our publication, *TRAILS IN HISTORY*, was published quarterly, for the 43rd consecutive year.
- The Blacksmiths maintained the forge and trained several new apprentices.
- Dr. Charles C. and Peggy Mitchell created and maintained the crops garden and herb/flower garden for a spectacular display in both areas. Many of the "fruits of their labor" were enjoyed during Second Saturdays.

LCHS President's Report by Past President Deborah McCord

Our Mission: to relate the history and traditions of Lee County, Alabama (and the surrounding areas) through preservation, restoration, education, presentation, publication, and acquisition.

The LCHS has much to be thankful for as we enter the New Year. Great improvements have been made to the Trade Center and to the grounds. Many Board members put in long hours of volunteer work to accomplish our goals. The Master Gardeners have done a magnificent job of transforming the area around the McLain Building into our new "Grandma's Garden." The Historical Fair was a great success. The weather was perfect and the hard work of Charles H. Mitchell and the many other volunteers ensured an enjoyable day for all. Last year's Lee County Gathering—Old Time Music Festival brought in visitors from as far away as Michigan, with an attendance of approximately 200 each day. The LCHS grounds were used as the site of the American Rainwater Catchment Systems conference. Second Saturdays continue to bring in local people to enjoy the many displays and classes we offer. Last year's classes included: weaving/spinning, pine straw basketry, and beginning dulcimer lessons. We

hope to add to this list with more classes and attractions soon.

With the adoption of a new logo, we are hoping to become more visible and also hoping people will be able to distinguish between LCHS facilities and other museums in the area. A new sign will be going up soon to display our new logo.

As we enter the New Year, I'd like to remind you that every member is needed. Please remember to pay your annual membership dues so that a budget for the year can be developed. Long range plans for improving the cookhouse will require special donations. If you are interested in supporting that effort, please let me know, or send your donations to the LCHS post office address, marked for Cookhouse Renovations.

It has been my pleasure to serve as the president of the LCHS for the past two years. I'm very proud to be a member of the society and also proud of the on-going work of the society. I ask every member to help spread the word about our facility and also to encourage those who may be interested in joining.



At the December Board of Trustees meeting of the Lee County Historical Society, the Board unanimously and enthusiastically adopted a logo for LCHS and officially named the grounds "Pioneer Park at Lee County Historical Society." The new, black and white logo, contains an image of the Ruth Purdy Speake log cabin and a boll of cotton linking together important aspects of our pioneer heritage.

Life During the Civil War Era

Special LCHS Programs for 2011

In cooperation with the Columbus (GA) Museum and the Historic Chattahoochee Commission, LCHS has planned four special programs in 2011 to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the beginning of the American Civil War in 1861.

- **Sunday, January 9, 2011. 2:30 pm.** (see cover) **“East Alabama Male College During the Civil War Era”** presented by Mr. David McRae, AU Libraries and doctoral candidate, AU Dept. of History.
- **Saturday, April 9, 2011. all day. Second Saturday. “The Battle of Loachapoka”.** You may be thinking, “I did not know there was a Battle of Loachapoka during the Civil War.” Officially, there wasn’t but there will be on the Second Saturday in April, 2011. There will be Confederate soldiers, camp cooking, period music, and maybe even a few shots fired. You might even learn of the 1865 skirmish that we are now calling, “The Battle of Loachapoka”.
- **Sunday, April 10, 2011. 2:30 pm. “Reluctant Rebels”** presented by Dr. Kenneth Noe, Alumni Professor and Draughton Professor of Southern History at Auburn and past president of the Alabama Historical Society (2008-09).
- **Sunday, July 10, 2011. 2:30 pm. “Alabama Women During the Civil War”** presented by Dr. Jennifer Trevino, Assistant Professor of History, Troy State University at Montgomery.

Whistle Stop Pickers

The resident Whistle Stop Pickers have recorded a CD of Old-Time, Blue Grass, and Gospel songs. The CD, titled “Meet Me at the Station”, features the old-time sound of mountain dulcimers, hammered dulcimers, autoharps, fiddles, banjos, guitars, and bowed psalteries. All performers volunteered their time for this project. With the special assistance of Loron and Mildred Holden, the recordings were made inside the Trade Center. All proceeds from the sale of these CDs go to the Lee County Historical Society. Please pick one up on your next visit. The cost is \$10 per



CD. Songs included on the recording are: Railroading on the Great Divide, Cold Frosty Morning, Wildwood Flower, Sugar Hill, Black Mountain Rag, Arkansas Traveler, Oh Susanna, Rosin the Beau, South Wind, Westphalia Waltz, Life’s Railway to Heaven, This Train is Bound for Glory, Reuben’s Train, New River Train, and Amazing Grace.

the Alabama Academy of Science by Cantrell, Bailey and Barker, *Fields and Pastures New* by Dr. John McCormack, and *First Presbyterian Church Auburn, Alabama 1850-2000*.

Virginia McLendon Crawford gave us a 1922 school book, *Government and the People* by Joseph Ragland Long, that all present day teachers and students would do well to learn from. It was her grandfather’s when he was 11 in a school in Opelika in 1928. After each chapter is a list of questions, about 250 in all. Do you remember these?

- Can democracy be successful if the people take no interest in public affairs and will not vote?
- Is the government democratic when the people vote but do not know

anything about the candidates or the questions voted for?

- Is the right to vote to vote a right belonging to every citizen?
- Did the right to vote granted to women make the government more democratic?
- Is a man catching a fish in a river with a net belonging to himself a laborer or a capitalist?
- In the last national budget 93 per cent of the public funds was given to wars, past, present, and future. Discuss what might be done with this money if nations would cease preparing for war.

Peggy Mitchell made several large, beautiful wreaths for our Christmas Second Saturday. They will continue to be beautiful through out the season.

Old Trading Center Colleen Pippin

Reprinted from Opelika Daily News April 3, 1969

The three men eyed the old building with interest.

“Well, it’s certainly a unique landmark in the county”, said one man to his companions.

“I’d say it has about 8,000 square feet of floor space, so that would be large enough,” another speculated.

Just what we need,” agreed the third man “so lets get to work.”

The building in question is known to most Loachapoka residents as the old “Trading Center” probably built after the Western railroad reached the town in 1845. The men were members of the Lee County Historical Society. Their decision—to convert the vacant building into a museum.

Why a museum? “We need a museum” said Dr. Alexander Nunn, Historical Society Board of Trustees Chairman, “because no where in East Alabama can an organized public collection and display of tools, artifacts, documents, books or records of our forebears be found.” He went on to say, “Since this area was a leader in the railroad we hope in time to be able to find an engine or a caboose for the museum.”



Trade Center, Loachapoka, Alabama, circa 1850, photo taken about 2000

Museum Report

Jessie Summers, LCHS museum Curator

From our kind members and friends we have recently received these splendid donations:

Anna Louise McKown added a Woodgatherers Notebook to our Campfire Girls exhibit in honor of Mrs. Pearson. It includes all the requirements for a Camp Fire girl to attain the rank of Wood Gather. She also gave two glass vases which we will enjoy using often.

Kay Campbell donated one tiny medicine bottle of Jiffy toothache drops, a man's change purse, and two German made cigarette machines for rolling your own.

Ann Draughon Cousins and Ralph Draughon representing the Draughon family donated twin child size beds that once belonged to the Petrie family. One of them was used by Dr. George Petrie in the late 1800's. He was on the AU faculty and dean of the AU History department, which he founded in 1891. He also introduced tennis and football to AU, and wrote the Auburn Creed.

Jeannette Frandsen gave two small toy rocking chairs which are just right for the toy case upstairs.

Ann Pearson added to our Camp Fire girl collection with a very valuable note book kept by the leader Miss Elizabeth Duncan (later Mrs. Pearson). It is filled with hand written programs for 1927-28 and printed instructions for earning awards. She also gave four framed photos of Camp Fire girls ready to go on trips, a copy of their 1924 charter and a copy of a pledge - *The Fireman's Desire*. Added are several pieces of jewelry awarded the girls, one piece for a leader and one for winning a national award for having the best troupe in the U.S.!

Robin Governo donated several old pieces of farm tools, and one large iron pot and a skillet for the log cabin.

Charles Fugrel donated several medicine bottles for the drug store in Dr. McLain's office.

Mike Garrett gave three books for Dr. Dugger's book case. *A History of*

From the Gardens...

Sweet Potatoes in the Crops Garden

Charles C. Mitchell

Vice President, Lee Co. Historical Society

This year was the fourth year that we've planted sweet potatoes in the Museum's Crops Garden in Loachapoka. This seems to be the most popular crop for the children who visit the garden. I can always find help in planting the sweet potato slips in May. During the Historical Fair in October, there is a line of children waiting to help dig the potatoes. The look of wonder on a child's face when he or she discovers a huge potato just underneath the soil surface is priceless.

In the past, we've always let the children take their treasured potatoes home to Mama. This year, the potatoes were collected and donated to the Community Market. Children seemed to understand that helping to feed those in our community who had no food was the right thing to do.

Sweet potatoes have always been an important food crop in the South. Although commercial sweet potato pro-

duction has never challenged traditional field crops such as cotton and corn, it was always a staple crop on Alabama farms. Sweet potatoes are relatively easy to grow. They do not require a highly fertile soil and are attacked by few insects and disease pests. They store well throughout the winter and most importantly, they are delicious and nutritious.

Sweet potatoes require a long, hot growing season much like cotton. They don't grow as well north of Kentucky. Here in the Deep South, pumpkins and winter squash don't do well. I suppose if you like Fourth of July jack-o-lanterns, you could be successful with pumpkins and squash, but by the time autumn arrives in the South, diseases and insects eat up our pumpkins and squash unless we use lots of pesticides. Our ancestors in the 19 century didn't have these pesticides. So,

Potatoes continued on page 6



In September 2010 LCHS Second Saturday guests were surprised to find a Scaech Owl had taken up residence in the Taylor Whatley building. He was a delightful mascot for the proceedings.



Ms. Dani Carroll, with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, supervised the children digging potatoes during the 2010 Historical Fair.

Potatoes continued from page 5
 here in the South we traditionally eat sweet potato pies instead of pumpkin pies for Thanksgiving. Further north in the U.S. pumpkins and winter squash are used in much the same way we use sweet potatoes in the South. In the South, we traditionally add molasses (or brown sugar) and pecans to make a sweet potato casserole for the holidays. (Note: For three years, I've tried to grow pumpkins and winter squash in the Crops Garden for the Historical Fair and failed all 3 times. We've never had a failure with sweet potatoes.)

Today, sweet potatoes are making a comeback throughout the U.S. and abroad. The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) ranked the sweet

Nutrition "Rank" of Vegetables	
Comparison of dietary fiber, naturally occurring sugars, complex carbohydrates, protein, vitamins A and C, iron and calcium in vegetables	
Sweet potato baked	184
Potato, baked	83
Spinach	76
Kale	55
Mixed Vegetables	52
Broccoli	52
Winter Squash, Baked	44
Brussels Sprouts	37
Cabbage, Raw	34
Green Peas	33
Carrot	30
Okra	30
Corn on the Cob	27
Tomato	27
Green Pepper	26
Cauliflower	25
Artichoke	24
Romaine Lettuce	24

The Center for Science in the Public Interest, Washington D.C. copyright 1992

potato number one in nutrition of all vegetables. With a score of 184, the sweet potato outscored white potatoes by more than 100 points. The reasons the sweet potato took first place? Dietary fiber, naturally occurring sugars, complex carbohydrates, protein, vitamins A and C, iron and calcium.

The sweet potato (*Ipomoea batatas*) is in the same plant genus as morning glories. In fact, its vining habit and attractive flowers look a lot like native morning glories. The species that we grow is tropical and rarely produces seed in Alabama. Its origin has been traced to Central and South America but native Alabamians were growing it long before European settlers arrived. Modern varieties range in color from white and yellow to orange and red. We've grown several varieties in the Crops Garden, but the modern variety, 'Beauregard', a Louisiana introduction, seems to do best and has a wonderful flavor.

While some folks use the terms yam and sweet potato interchangeably, these are really two different vegetables. The yam is a tuber of the tropical vine *Dioscorea batatas* and it not generally grown in Alabama.

In 2009, Alabama farmers planted 2,600 acres into commercial sweet potatoes which were valued at over \$8 million at harvest or about \$20.50 per 100 pounds. In the late 1800s, just about everyone grew a sweet potatoes because supermarkets didn't exist. Visit the Crops Garden at the Museum next summer and keep a check on our 2011 sweet potato crop.

SECOND SATURDAYS

On the second Saturday of every month, volunteers and re-enactors gather at the LCHS Museum in period attire to demonstrate their arts and crafts. Blacksmiths are usually working at the forge, spinners and weavers are upstairs in the Trade Center, and someone is always cooking up a meal in the log cabin over the open hearth or outdoors over an open fire. The Trade Center Museum and other museums are always open on Second Saturdays, and local dulcimer players gather to practice at 1 pm. What a great opportunity for LCHS members and visitors to visit the museum!

January 8 – Baking Heirloom Cakes and Pies

February 12 – Making hominy the old-fashioned way

March 12 – Stuffed sausage

April 9 – “The Battle of Loachapoka”

We're always looking for historically-related demonstration and activities to feature during one or more Second Saturdays. If you have ideas or a skill to demonstrate or just would like to help out on Second Saturdays, just dress up in 19th Century attire and join the fun. It's kind of like a mini-Historical Fair throughout the year! For more information on Second Saturday activities, contact: Charles C. Mitchell, email: mitchc1@auburn.edu or home phone: 334-844-5489.

December's Second Saturday event was Christmas Open House at the Museum. Mr. & Mrs. Claus were in attendance, listening to Christmas wish lists and reading stories. Visitors were served punch and cookies and entertained with Christmas music from our own Whistle Stop Pickers.



After the open house, LCHS reenactors, members, and their families enjoyed a covered dish dinner in the museum. Many thanks to all our volunteers for your help and participation during the year.

societies. In a letter to friends in February 1870, John Greene, secretary of the Wirt Society, would tout the number of new members in his own society, while belittling the accomplishments of the rival Websterian society.⁷

Students inevitably found ways to subvert the strict college rules and make mischief. Greene wrote in April 1871 that he and his friends “last night had some fun, filled six barrels of rocks and rolled them.” Unfortunately, this letter only exists in fragmentary form, so it is unclear what these young men were doing with the barrels of rocks, but it seems unlikely that it was anything innocent! By 1870 the college had acquired a physician, whose duty was to examine “all cases of sickness among the students of the College,” so that ill students could be excused from academic exercises “if really sick.” This would suggest that instances of students faking illness to avoid attending classes were fairly common. There was apparently at least one instance in which a student committed “so grave an offense as to render him amenable to the laws of the country.”⁸

Like most denominational colleges in the Civil War-era South, then, the East Alabama Male College during its short life as a Methodist school (it became a state school in 1871) had extensive rules and regulations designed to preserve order, discipline, and morality among its students. Despite all this regimentation, however, students at the college seem to have enjoyed life as much as could reasonably be expected. Individual East Alabama Male College students missed loved ones at home, made mischief when they could, and occasionally ate too much. It seems they were not so different from college students a century and a half later.

1 Minutes of the Alabama Conference of the M. E. Church, South, held in Talladega, Alabama, December 13, 1854, Methodist Archives Center, Huntingdon College Library, Montgomery, Alabama, 12, 39.

2 Catalogue of East Alabama College, Auburn, Alabama, 1869-70, [microfilm], Special Collections and Archives, R. B. Draughon Library, Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama, 22; Board of Trustees Minutes, East Alabama Male College, Auburn University Board of Trustees Records, [online at <http://diglib.auburn.edu/collections/bot/>], Special Collections and Archives, R. B. Draughon Library, Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama, 41, 43; Officers, Regulations, Statutes, &c., of East Alabama Male College, Auburn, Alabama, 1859, [microfilm], Archives and Special Collections, R. B. Draughon Library, Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama, 12-15; Catalogue of the Officers and Students of the East Alabama Male College, Auburn, Alabama, 1860-61, [microfilm], Archives and Special Collections, R. B. Draughon Library, Auburn, Alabama, 16

3 Catalogue of the Officers and Students of the East Alabama Male College, Auburn, Ala., 1867-68, [microfilm], Archives and Special Collections, R. B. Draughon Library, Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama, 14-15; Officers, Regulations, Statutes 1859, 12-15; College Catalogue 1869-70, 11-12.

4 Officers, Regulations, Statutes 1859, 12; College Catalogue 1860-61, 19.

5 B. C. Lee to Mother, 11 November, 1859, B. C. Lee Letter, [online at <http://www.lib.auburn.edu/archive/findaid/198.htm>], Special Collections and Archives, R. B. Draughon Library, Auburn University; W. E. Horne to aunt, 29 January 1871, Boswell Family Letters, Special Collections and Archives, R. B. Draughon Library, Auburn, Alabama

6 Horne to mother; Letter to Friends, 1 April 1871, John Frederick Greene Papers, Archives and Special Collections, R. B. Draughon Library, Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama

7 John Greene to friends, February 4, 1870, John Frederick Greene Papers, Archives and Special Collections, R. B. Draughon Library, Auburn, Alabama

8 Letter to friends, 1 April 1871, Greene Papers; Catalogue of the Officers and Students of East Alabama College, Auburn, Alabama, 1870-71, [microfilm], Archives and Special Collections, R. B. Draughon Library, Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama, 19; Board of Trustees Minutes, 116

Student Life at the East Alabama Male College, 1859-1871

By David R. McRae

In December 1854, at a meeting of the Alabama Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Dr. A. H. Mitchell preached a sermon on denominational education. According to Mitchell, one of the advantages of Methodist denominational schools was that “in these institutions a high standard of morals is set up ... as a consequence of better order and discipline than generally prevail at other institutions of similar character.” Perhaps not coincidentally, it was at this same meeting of the Alabama Conference that citizens of Auburn, Alabama, and its vicinity petitioned the conference to establish a denominational male college in Auburn.¹ It should, therefore, be no surprise that when the Methodist

Morality was also a concern in finding lodgings for the students while in Auburn... Furthermore, if the president were to decide a certain family lodging was “of an unsuitable character,” he could forbid students from living there.

East Alabama Male College, predecessor to today’s Auburn University, began operations in 1859, “order and discipline” were major concerns for the trustees and faculty, both as a means of promoting morality among students, and as a means of promoting studiousness and keeping students subject to the authority of the faculty. Strict rules played a major role in the lives of East Alabama Male College students. What scanty evidence about student life exists, though, suggests these rules did not prevent students from enjoying life in college.

According to the East Alabama Male College catalog for 1869-70,

“discipline will be kind, but at the same time strict and decided, always looking to the proper training of the pupil, mentally and morally.” The trustees and faculty hoped that the moral quality of students entering the college would already be high, requiring “satisfactory testimonials of good character” for admission to the school. Just to be sure, however, they imposed a wide variety of rules designed to govern the morality of the students. The college rules

forbade “drinking intoxicating liquors,” or “bringing ... spirituous liquors of any kind, within the town of Auburn.” To make sure students kept this rule, the board of trustees was able to get the Alabama state legislature to

ban the sale of alcohol within five miles of the college campus. Other forbidden moral offenses included “striking a fellow student, associating with any person of notoriously bad character, or with any student dismissed” from the college “under censure, playing at cards or other gambling games,” or “attending any ball, theatre, circus, horse-race, or cock-fight.” On top of the aforementioned pleasures, other pleasures forbidden the student included keeping “for his use or pleasure any horse, carriage, dog, or servant,” other than a horse “for the purpose of healthful exercise.”

Student Life continued on page 8

Student Life continued from page 7

Students giving public speeches at the college could say “nothing indecent, or profane, or immoral,” and it was the president’s duty to approve all student speeches beforehand, to ensure students did not break this rule. Morality was also a concern in finding lodgings for the students while in Auburn. Students were to find lodgings “in private families,” and not in public houses. Furthermore, if the president were to decide a certain family lodging was “of an unsuitable character,” he could forbid students from living there. Violence was destructive to both order and morality. Hence, college rules banned “being concerned in any riot” or “making disturbances at night about the College” or in Auburn. No student was to possess “a pistol or other deadly weapon” during his stay at the college, under threat of immediate dismissal from school. Rules also forbade leaving the town limits of Auburn during the school term, no doubt at least partially to keep students from straying away from the eyes of the faculty to a place where they could break the rules without consequences.²

Maintaining order and the authority of the faculty was also important. A variety of additional rules governing the lives of students fulfilled this goal. Rules forbade “defacing the College building, or injury to College property,” for obvious reasons. The faculty were to “pre-

scribe the hours of study, recitation, and recreation.” During study hours students had to stay in their own rooms or in the college recitation room. They were “required to be in their rooms after 7 o’clock on nights of study,” or 9 o’clock on other nights. They were not to make any “unnecessary noise” during study hours, nor to visit “each others rooms without permission,” nor to gather “in the Halls, public rooms or elsewhere, for improper purposes.” Skipping recitations, arriving at them late, leaving them early, or failing to prepare for them earned

None of these rules governing the morality and daily activities of the students were atypical for a church college in the Civil War-era South. They were, perhaps, understandable as well, given the religious nature of these colleges and the well-known tendency of students from that period to engage in disorderly behavior.

demerits which could lead to suspension or expulsion from the college. To ensure that underclassmen were diligent in their studies, in 1869 the college established a Junior Department, in which students would study outside of recitations under the direct supervision of a professor in a single room in the college, “until [their] habits have acquired something of stability.”³

Violations of the rules could bring a variety of punishments. At their discretion, the faculty could punish offenses by “private admonition by any officer of the College, admonition before the Faculty, admonition before the [student’s] Class, admonition before the whole of the students, suspension from the privileges of the College for a limited time, suspension for an indefinite period, and expulsion.” In an effort to bring parental pressure on the students to conform to the rules and to be

diligent in their studies, the faculty sent “reports concerning the scholarship and deportment of students ... to Parents and Guardians three times” per session, and let them know if their children are “falling into pernicious habits.”⁴

None of these rules governing the morality and daily activities of the students were atypical for a church college in the Civil War-era South. They were, perhaps, understandable as well, given the religious nature of these colleges and the well-known tendency of students from that period to engage in disorderly behavior. Antebellum colleges could be rowdy places. The histories of these colleges abound with stories of students getting drunk, vandalizing college property, getting into fights, firing guns, and assaulting tutors and even faculty members. So, while they seem harsh by today’s lights, the rules imposed on students at the East Alabama Male College were in line with the moral standards of the Civil War era, and with the propensity of students to disorderly behavior.

Unfortunately, indications as to what life was like for students at the East Alabama Male College under this strict regimen are scarce. What little evidence there is, though, seems to suggest students did not suffer too much. B. C. Lee, at least, seems to have thrived under it. He wrote enthusiastically to his mother that Auburn “is a place calculated to ward off any thing that would foster wickedness, & conduce to the downfall & corruption of the young.” He found the citizens of Auburn “very sociable, & friendly,” the students “treated with the greatest courtesy, & ... warmly received into the families, of Auburn.” The room in which he lived, he wrote, was “second to none in Auburn.” He joined the Methodist church in Auburn, and enjoyed the

“large & flourishing Sabbath School” there. W. E. Home also appears to have had a reasonably good experience in his lodging and boarding situation, at least with regards to food. Writing to his aunt in January 1871, he reported that he had “fattened up considerably,” having gained seventeen pounds since arriving at Auburn, so that “even my sweetheart didn’t know me.”⁵

East Alabama Male College students do not appear to have been immune from homesickness. Home wrote his aunt that while “a few months only have elapsed since I saw you or heard from you; yet the influence of imagination’s dreams stretches those months into so many long years.” John Greene bemoaned his separation from his sweetheart, writing to friends that “there is only one thing to mar my happiness now. That Miss M. is going to school in Tuskegee.”⁶

One college-sanctioned extracurricular activity did exist at the East Alabama Male College, in the form of the Wirt and the Websterian literary societies. Pairs of literary societies were common in Civil War-era colleges, and frequently formed a vital part of student life. College literary societies would spend large amounts of their members’ money outfitting lavish society halls and accumulating large libraries for their societies, in the interest of outdoing their rival society. The activities of the literary societies included student orations and debates on historical and contemporary political topics. What limited evidence there is suggests the literary societies at the East Alabama Male College flourished in lively competition with each other. At the 1869 college commencement exercises, seven of the eight student orations came from members of one of the two