
Jackson County Historical Society News

VOLUME FIFTEEN, NUMBER ONE

OCTOBER 2007



On Sunday, October 14th at 2:30 p.m. Jackson County Historical Society will meet at Old College, the first structure built at the University of Georgia in 1806.

Jackson County Historical Society

P.O. Box 1234, Commerce, Georgia 30529

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Newsletter

The Jackson County Historical Society News is published quarterly and mailed before the next meeting. Back issues can be obtained for \$3.50 each plus postage. Some of the past newsletters can be viewed online at: rootsweb.com/~gajackso/

Dues for 2007–2008 year

The dues year runs from July to July. Checks can be mailed to:

Jackson County Historical Society
P. O. Box 1234, Commerce, GA 30529:

Individual –\$15
Family –\$25
LIFE member –\$100

JCHS Officers 2007-2008

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Query

SOLOMAN DAVID KERBO (1776-1848) died in Jackson County GA in 1848. He married CELIA WITT (1780-1862) about 1797, in Jackson County. Who were their parents? My great-great grandfather, Doc Singleton Kerbo (1823-1863), was one of their children. contact: Kay Kerbow Gregory, #3 Hillside Ct., Austin, TX, 78746, kkg@austin.rr.com, (512)327-0104

Cuts from Jackson County

The original Jackson County contained 1800 square miles. The south-north extremes were from Farmington in Oconee County to Cornelia in Habersham County, and the east-west extremes from near Carlton in Madison County to Dacula in Gwinnett County.

The first slice taken from Jackson County was in 1801, to form Clarke County. An Act of the Legislature approved December 5, 1801, states in part:

...A line beginning on the Appalachian River at the mouth of Marbury's Creek; thence on the direct line to Richard Easley's Mill (Talasee Shoals) on the middle fork of the Oconee River; from thence on a direct line to where the Oglethorpe line crosses the north fork of Brush Creek; thence down the Oglethorpe line to the Appalachian River; thence up said river to the beginning.

This county was named for General Elijah Clarke and included most of the present Oconee County.

Franklin College

Although the college existed on paper from 1785, it was not until the summer of 1810 that five horsemen (two of whom were Abraham Baldwin, future first president of the University, and John Milledge, future governor of Georgia) arrived to select a permanent site for the "seminary of learning." On July 25, 1810, John Milledge purchased 633 acres of Jackson County land from Daniel Easley, and the Senatus Academicus (the organizing committee for the new Franklin College) soon contracted with Captain John Billups for the "expedient" erection of a "Collegiate building there."

Prelude to Cobbham

In 1834, Colonel John Addison Cobb subdivided his farm and advertised 80 lots for sale as "Cobbham, a village in the woods." Except for the earliest settlement of Trail Creek on the east side of the Oconee, everything in Athens at this time – Franklin College, the businesses, public buildings, churches and residences–faced Front (now Broad) Street in what is today the downtown district. Cobb had purchased this farmland several years earlier, when an Athens schoolmaster, the Reverend John F. Wallis, was widowed and decided to sell out and move west. But Cobb's grandfather had first begun speculating with adjoining land hereabouts as early as 1792. This first old John Cobb, of Virginia stock but living at this period in

Jefferson County, Georgia, was quick to notice the cheap Piedmont acreage that was becoming available near the upper reaches of two Oconee River branches. Archaeologists claim that the land on which Athens would one day sit seems never to have sustained any long-lasting Indian settlements, though native Americans traded and hunted here, between the domains of Chief Tallassee to the west and the Scull Shoals villages some miles south. The early United States government had wrested from the native tribes this rich upcountry territory, by treaty or by trick, and white settlers from Savannah and the coast – but mainly down the Great Wagon Road from the Carolinas, Virginia and Pennsylvania – poured in. With the few indigenous Indians left, some transplanted Africans, and enough Yale graduates to start a university, Athens was launched. On page 335 of a 1914 volume, “The Early History of Jackson County, Georgia “ by Gustavus J. N. Wilson, the author cites early Clarke (formerly Jackson) county deed records information:

...Mr. John Cobb of Jefferson County and a Mr. Benning bought at Tax Collector’s sale 14,123 acres of Jackson County lands for the aggregate amount of 71 pounds and 1 shilling, English money, about \$344.59 1/4 (reckoning the (1914) English pound at \$4.85)...These sales took place in 1792-4-5. Our friend, Mr. Cobb must have become “land poor’ as he sold in 1799, 7,025 acres of this land for \$10.00 (U.S.)”

Cobb’s and Benning’s grown offspring began to settle on various parcels of the Piedmont land, and after the University was established at Athens some members of the next generation relocated here permanently. It is of interest that old Cobb and Benning were cousins and were both grandfathers of Confederate generals: Howell Cobb and his younger brother Thomas Reade Rootes Cobb and Henry L. Benning, for whom the Georgia Army fort is named. John Cobb’s son (another John) continued to “square up the corners” of the Cobb land holdings at any opportunity. Cobb property extended from Attica (still a district of south Jackson County) to present-day Watkinsville, where old John Cobb donated land for the first Clarke County courthouse. Only a small number of other settlers held “warrants” (as land grants were called in those days) to interrupt the contiguous property of the acquisitive Cobbs. One such parcel was that awarded by a grateful American government to William Few, a signer of the U. S. Constitution. The Cobbs gained control of much of this Few land grant, but other parts

were purchased by another eagle-eyed speculator, the local grist mill operator Daniel Easley. This Easley squared up some corners of his own and turned right around in 1801, reselling 633 acres to one of the five horsemen who arrived for the state capital, Louisville, Jefferson County, in search of a suitable site for a college. John Milledge bought Easley’s site on a high hill above “the Cedar Sholes” and generously donated it to the state for a “seminary of learning” Milledge took a personal loss on this transaction. Thirty-three years later, John Addison Cobb did not actually make a fortune – but certainly sustained no loss – when he shrewdly subdivided his farm for Athens’ first suburb. He named the neighborhood for his own house, “Cobbham,” old-style English for “Cobb home.” But old-style Athenians always pronounced the name not in the British way, practically swallowing the last syllable, but with equal stress on “Cobb” and “ham.”

North Campus

excerpt from “A Walking Tour of Old North Campus”

The Arch

A wooden fence once protected the university from cows and other livestock. In 1856, the fence was replaced by the Arch and an iron fence, modeled after the great seal of the state of Georgia. Freshmen were forbidden by campus tradition from walking beneath it and were forced to climb over the fence to leave campus.



The Academic Building

The building is actually two antebellum buildings. In 1831, a two-story classroom and library building were constructed. The structure was called the Ivy building because of the green foliage covering the front. To the north, was a Presbyterian church built in 1820's. In 1862, it was demolished to make way for a new larger library.

Professor Charles Strahan, who taught civil engineering and mathematics on campus for sixty-two years, formed a plan to unite the two old structures. In 1905, the Ivy building and Library were connected by constructing a large Corinthian portico in the front and rooms across the back.



Demosthenian Hall

Literary and debating societies played a major role at antebellum colleges like Georgia. The Demosthenian Literary Society was founded in 1803, and in 1824 Demosthenian Hall was constructed at a cost of four thousand dollar. The university and the Demosthenian Society combined funds recently to restore both floors of the building to their original appearance.



The Chapel

Built in 1832 to replace a temporary wooden structure, the Chapel is one of the most aesthetically pleasing buildings on campus. In the early days, the Chapel was a center of campus activities. A daily religious service, which students were required to attend, was held there, as were assemblies and commencements.

A bell tower originally crowned the roof, but in 1913, it was found to be rotten and was removed. The bell, which rang for chapel, for the beginning and end of class and in emergencies, was placed at the top of a wooden tower behind the chapel. Now the bell is rung only to mark athletic victories or other special occasions.

The sundial in front of the Chapel marks the site of the legendary Tombs Oak. A famous senator and Confederate general, Robert Toombs, began his distinguished career by being expelled from the university in 1825. As the story goes, he reappeared at commencement and spoke so eloquently under the oak tree that the audience left the Chapel to hear him. The incident, first recounted in a speech by Henry W. Grady, class of 1868, actually never happened. Toomb's love for the university did cause him to return many times to the campus, however, and he served on the board of trustees from 1859 until his death in 1885.

The Chapel contains an oil painting purported to be the world's largest. Painted by George Cooke, the 17 x 23.5 foot, "Interior of St. Peter's Rome," was presented to the university in 1867. The painting endured a wagon ride from Alabama, two fires and 128 years of heat and humidity before undergoing restoration in 1995.



Phi Kappa Hall

The first building on the east side of the quadrangle is the home of the Phi Kappa Literary Society, organized in 1820 to compete with the Demosthenians. This classical structure, which faces Demosthenian Hall across the quadrangle, was not built until 1836. Immediately after the Civil War, Union troops briefly occupied this building, using the ground floor as a stable and the top floor for parties.

The Administration Building

Built as a library at the turn of the century with funds given by George Foster Peabody, for whom the prestigious Peabody Awards are named, this building later served as the Georgia Museum of Art.

Herty Field

From 1892 to 1911, Herty Field served as the main athletic field for the university. All of the early intercollegiate football and baseball games were played here.

The university mascot was a goat before it was a bulldog. Herty and his team paid homage to the surrounding livestock and labeled the team “Goats” before their second football game, February 22, 1892.



Terrell Hall

Built in the Renaissance Revival style, 1907, Terrell Hall is of architectural significance because it confirmed the tendency to avoid any set architectural pattern on the campus. For many years, Terrell Hall housed the chemistry department and pharmacy school.

Old College

Completed in 1806 and modeled after Connecticut Hall at Yale, Old College was constructed as an all-purpose building, but soon was used mainly as a dormitory. The building was originally called Franklin College; during much of the nineteenth century, the name was often applied to the university itself, even though the official name of the school has always been the University of Georgia.

Alexander H. Stephens, vice-president of the Confederacy, and Crawford W. Long, a pioneer in the use of anesthesia, shared a room in Old College when they were students in 1832. The room is marked by a plaque on the northwestern corner of the second floor. In front of the north side of the building stands a large marker honoring Abraham Baldwin, the father of the University of Georgia. Baldwin, a native of Connecticut, was a Yale graduate and a veteran of the Revolutionary War. In 1785, while a member of the state legislature, he wrote the charter of the university.

New College

The original building burned to the ground in 1830. Rebuilt in 1832, the building has served as dormitory, library and classrooms.

Lustrat House

An antebellum faculty house, is named for native Parisian Joseph Lustrat, who was head of the Department of Romance Languages for many years. He lived here with his wife and three daughters until his death in 1927. Mrs. Lustrat continued to live in the house, renting rooms to students for several years.



Waddel Hall

Originally called Philosophical Hall when completed in 1821, Waddel Hall is older than any campus building except Old College. It was built in the federal style – austere and unpretentious.



Moore College

Moore College is located behind the Chapel, at the end of Herty Field. It is the University's only example of the Second Empire style architecture. Leon Henri Charbonnier, a native Frenchman and professor of civil engineering and physics, was the architect. The stuccoed brick exterior has a variety of decorative features, including quoins, arched windows, an ornate arched entrance, and a mansard roof complete with dormer windows.

Built from 1874 to 1876, the building was named for Dr. Richard D. Moore, who was instrumental in persuading the City of Athens to give the funds for its construction. This is the only structure built entirely with financing from the City of Athens. Moore College was the home of the physics and astronomy department.

It was also the dorm room of three Jackson county residents where the first murder on campus occurred in 1918.

excerpt from Athens Daily Herald January 30, 1918

Jackson County pair died in Moore College

Miss Belle Hill and Jamie Johnson of Jackson county, are dead as a result of the horrible tragedy occurring in the building on the University campus known as the "Road Laboratory," (Waddel Hall) this morning about 3:30. The coroner's jury decided immediately after the affair that Miss Hill, aged 18, met death at the hands of Johnson, age 20, while she lay asleep, and that he then turned the pistol on himself, both parties dying almost instantly.

Three University boys, Tom Holliday, Howard Dadisman, and Alva W. Pendergrass occupied the room in which the shooting occurred, all of them being students

from Jackson county, and acquaintances of the boy who committed the double murder.

About 8 o'clock last night the dead couple registered at the Holland hotel as man and wife and occupied room number 5. Later they took supper at the Manhattan Cafe and thence came back to the hotel.

A few minutes later, Johnson approached the proprietor of the Holland and said he wanted to bring Holliday and Dadisman to their room and he was told that he could not do this – that it was against the rules of the hotel and that police would not permit such.

It seems that Johnson had seen the boys, all of whom he well knew at and near Jefferson, and told them of the girl being in the city with him. On being told by the hotel clerk that no parties could be brought to the room at the hotel, Johnson stated that the college boys had a room in the road laboratory on the University campus and that he guessed he and his wife would go over there for the remainder of the night. Holliday, who had come to the hotel, left for his room first, and was followed by Johnson and the girl.

On arriving at the room of the boys, which is located on the second floor of the road laboratory, the only room of the building that is occupied, Johnson stated he would like to stay there a while and that he had "Belle" along.

Evidence states that both the dead parties were found undressed, the girl being in her night apparel and the boy in his underwear. It seems that they occupied what is known as a two-thirds bed at one end of what is an unusually long room and that the three school boys were sleeping on a double bed at the other end of the room, somewhat cut off from Johnson and the girl. They were awakened by the shots just in time to see both girl and boy in a dying condition.

On advice from Dean Snelling, all the boys left for their home at Jefferson on an early train this morning.

Both Johnson and the girl are said to be from prominent families and it is understood that Johnson stood well financially. Johnson is said to have been drinking for sometime and was probably in a half-crazed condition at the time of the horrible tragedy.

The affair is a shock to Athens and all students, occurring in the midst of the historic Georgia campus and in an old and historic building. This morning a steady

stream of people visited the undertaking parlor to scan the faces of the victims of the worst tragedy in the history of Athens.

The students notified Dr. A. C. Holliday and the police after they awoke and found the bodies. The coroner being absent from the city, Justice of the Peace Milton Thomas was called on to hold the inquest. The three students testified, and after other thorough investigations, the coroner's jury composed of Dr. A. C. Holliday, foreman, Messrs. C. M. Almond, R. W. Weir, Burke Betts, John M. White, and A. C. Edwards reached a verdict to the effect that Belle Hill came to her death from a pistol wound inflicted by Jamie Johnson, and that the cause of the death of Jamie Johnson was suicide.

Before the shooting occurred, Johnson obtained some paper and pencil from the boys and wrote to his mother, stating what he was going to do, saying he knew he had disgraced the family. It is said he did not state he was going to shoot the girl.

excerpt from letter:

"...the country is better off without such cattle (as myself). I just have the nerve to die before disgracing my good people. My burden is so great I can't go on with it any further. Well, goodbye dear old Mother, goodbye brother, goodbye dear little sister. Well, goodbye to all of my friends. ...don't lay this trouble on anybody but the ones that is going to ride the same train that I ride.

p.s. Tell all my friends goodbye for me, and tell them I am not crazy - it is nerve...I hope God will forgive me for doing this good deed for the country."

The girl was very beautiful, being strictly of a brunette type and having large eyes and long, dark eyelashes. The boy was light complected, had light, brown hair and was a little slender in his make-up.

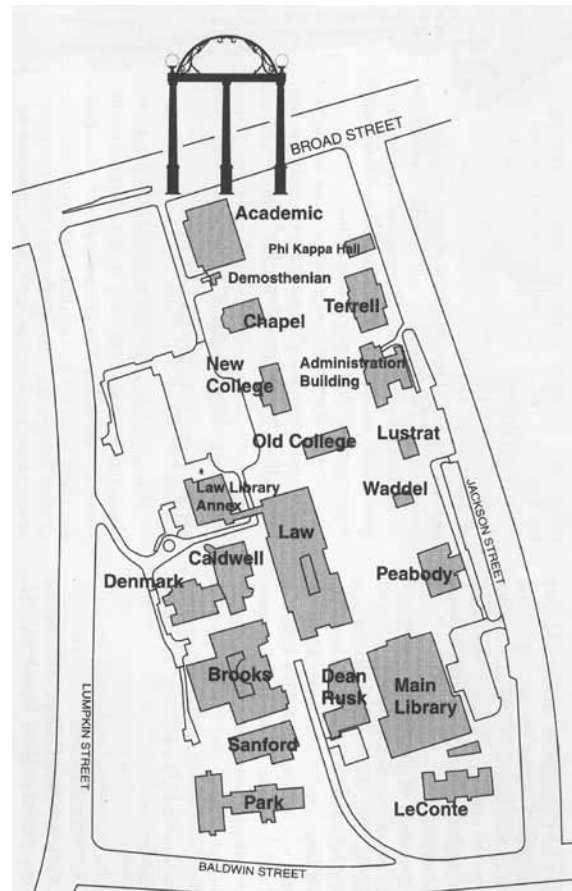
The girl is a daughter of Mr. Charles Hill, who lives two or three miles from Jefferson.

Jamie Johnson is the son of Mrs. Mamie Johnson, of Jefferson. His father, Robert D. Johnson, died two or three years ago.

The Jackson County Historical Society will meet at the Old College building on North Campus of the University of Georgia on Sunday, October 14, at 2:30 p.m. Members will enter through the main door facing Broad Street. There are no Sunday public parking fees in Athens.

Milton Leathers III will present a program on Abraham Baldwin and Franklin College. Linda Aaron will lead a ramble to the Hartgrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library on the third floor of the Ilah Dunlap Little (Main) Library. The Hargrett Library contains a wealth of Georgia material and many Confederate documents, including the original handwritten Confederate Constitution of 1861. This newsletter provides a self guided walking tour of North Campus.

For more information call Tina at 706-207-6889 or tina313@mindspring.com.



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