
Jackson County Historical Society News

VOLUME TWENTY TWO, NUMBER TWO

FEB 2015



Jefferson School System Foundation, built in 1939, by a WPA project. Used by Martin Institute as the Home Economics Building.

The Jackson County Historical Society will meet at the Jefferson School System Foundation at 276 Martin Street, Jefferson GA. on February 15, 2015 at 2:30 p.m. Jerry Legg will present a program on the Martin Institute. Parking is in the back with a ramp on the left side. All interested all welcome to attend.

Jackson County Historical Society

P.O. Box 1234, Commerce, Georgia 30529

(706) 207-6889

Newsletter

Jackson County Historical Society dues run from September to September and can be mailed to:

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

Individual –\$15, Family –\$25, LIFE members –\$100

The Historical Society's collection contains research books on North Georgia counties, the Carolinas and Virginia, surnames and family files, and microfilm housed in the Heritage Room of the Commerce Public Library. A new microfilm scanner is available for the census, newspapers, Confederate pension records and various films. It has the capabilities to send images as an e-mail and copy to a flash drive. An index of the collection and past newsletters from 1997-2013 can be viewed on the library website:

<http://prlib.org/our-libraries/commerce-public-library/>

The Historical Society has been working on a document recovery project that will be archived in the old Historic Jackson County Courthouse. Your donation and membership help to pay for a quarterly newsletter and continue projects.

JCHS Officers 2014-2015

President:	Shirley Wilson
Vice-President:	Marie Parks
Recording Secretary:	Boniface McDaniel
Treasurer:	Tommy Benton
Directors:	James Mathis Jerry Legg
Past Presidents:	the late, Joyce Ethridge the late, Ann A. Jarrett the late, Richard Chambers the late, Jean H. Booth Betty Ann Mathis James Mathis Ralph Freeman Carol Tanner Marie Parks Tina Harris Charlotte Mealor Caine Campbell



MARTIN INSTITUTE

November and December 1801 Acts of the General Assembly of Georgia at Louisville passed that the two academies of Jackson and Clarke counties enacted to be consolidated into one academy. On 9th December 1811 Hugh Montgomery of Jackson County appointed commissioner of Jackson County Academy. On 18th day of July 1818, trustees of Jackson County Academy; Thomas Hason, Edward Adams, Willis Pope, and Hugh Montgomery purchased property from David Witt including the academy building, Jackson County Academy was incorporated 1818. English teacher was hired around May 4, 1819. Southern Banner on Oct 21, 1838 advertised a preproposal to build Jackson County academy building. The Unity Lodge #36 built the Jackson County Academy called unofficially Jefferson Academy with Lodge on second floor about April 1845. On December 12, 1854 William Aug 2, 1875—The Institution was first chartered about the year 1818. It was re-organized under a new charter, about the year 1859, and endowed by W. D. Martin. On December 12, 1854, William Duncan Martin deceased willed part of his estate to Jefferson Academy and Jefferson Methodist Church. Mr. Martin made his fortune in merchandising trading and credit business. If he did not receive his pay, he took you to Inferior court to get payed. He purchased land to grow grape and fruit from which he made wine and brandy. His half siblings sued the estate saying he was not in his right mind. The Superior Court ruled in favor of the will.

Around 1861 the building was remodeled into a ell shape with money from the Martin estate. The school name was changed and amended to Martin Institute November 1859. Tuition per term was \$8.00, \$12.00 and \$17.50 determined on the courses.

Through all those long years, it has presented supe-

rior advantages as an educational point, and has been conducted by some of the best teachers in the State, who were all graduates of Colleges or Universities; and it has sent out into the world or into higher institutions, hundreds of young men and ladies well drilled in English Literature and even in the higher grades of a classical education. During the last six and a half years, it has been under the management of the present corps of teachers, which period, considering the impoverished state of our country, has been marked by great prosperity. About one hundred and fifty pupils have been in attendance each year, and in the last two years eight young ladies have graduated after having completed the full course as prescribed by the best female colleges of the country. Some of the young men are prosecuting the higher studies at the State University and other colleges, while many others are engaged in teaching throughout Northeastern Georgia, as well as other portions of this State and in adjoining States. Some have entered the professions of law, medicine and the ministry; while large numbers have returned to the farms better prepared we trust, to restore and improve the exhausted plantations of our country.

July 10, 1875—The Senior Exhibition came off, the programme of which was as follows:

Prayer by A.J. Kelly.

Miss Lula Burns, Jefferson, GA—The Poetry of earth is never dead.

Miss Alice Amis, Lexington, GA—Trifles make Perfection, but Perfection is no trifle.

Miss Lizzie Thompson, Jackson County, GA - Good times and bad times and all times pass over, then cheerily bend to the oar.

Miss Leila Long, Jefferson, GA—The Fancy that's touched by Reality's hand, ne'er soars on bright pinions again.

1876—no graduates

July 12th 1877—Graduates

Miss Mary Carithers, Jefferson—Off let me wonder hand in hand with thought.

Miss Rosa Poole, Hart Co.—Diving and finding no pearls in the sea, Blame not the ocean, the fault is in thee!

1878, 1879, 1880, 1881—no graduates

July 1882

Diplomas were given to Misses Lizzie Winburn and Eugenia Harrison.

Miss Eugenia Harrison, Jackson County, GA—Good Deeds Remain All Things else Perish.

Miss Lizzie Winburn, Jefferson, GA—Keep Thy Shop and Thy Shop Will Keep Thee.

July 1883

There were but two graduates, Miss Johnson chose —Nature's language and its object.

Miss Blanche Thompson's subject—Let there be light. We will make no individual reference to how the young ladies looked, for who ever saw a crowd of them on a stage that they did not become entranced and think of angels, regardless of the notorious fact that the sweet girl graduate of the present has a temper as well as her elder sister.

1884—no graduates

October 3, 1884

Martin Institute Building Burned—Last Monday night, between ten and eleven o'clock, the alarm of fire was sounded in this town. Upon investigation, it was soon found that the Martin Institute building was on fire. It did not take long for the citizens of the town to reach the house, and use their best endeavors to stop the rapid march of the devouring element. The building was a two story frame, with a one story ell. The fire was found to have started at the end of the ell, and it spread so rapidly owing to the dry condition of the timber, that it was impossible to save the house, so every effort was turned to saving the desks, chairs and furniture. The loss of the building is quite a severe calamity upon the school, although it would not have been used much longer than a year from now, as it is reasonably expected that the new building will be ready by that time.

Unity Masonic lodge #36 was on the second floor. The Lodge sold the lot to the Jefferson Baptist Church.

January 30, 1885

The building committee have at last selected a site for the new Martin Institute. The lot is the same one where they are now teaching, known as the Newton lot, and we are satisfied that the committee did the best they could under the circumstances. The price to be paid is \$1,500. which is not very large, considering that nine or ten acres of ground go with the lot and that a \$10,000 building is to be erected.

The contractor, Mr. M. B. McGinty, secured the contract for \$12,390. The building has 500,000 burnt brick for

building. Building was completed on 15th June 1886.

August 13, 1897

Reminiscences of Martin Institute—by Andrew Bell

The year 1859 opened with Rev. W. P. Harrison, a Presbyterian minister, and a native of this county, in charge as principal. Rev. Harrison was a learned man, with splendid attainments and excellent character and one who would have suited admirably as a professor in some theological seminary, but he was hardly suited either by nature or experience to manage successfully a gang of rollicksome boys and girls in a village school. Being a precise, nervous, and rather excentric bachelor of uncertain age, and having, never before, been brought in direct contact with children of any age, he really knew very little about their nature and in fact, nothing at all, as to the best modes for their government. For almost from the first establishment of the institution, it had been the custom at some period during the year, for the boys to demand a day's holiday, accompanied with a treat of confectionaries from the teacher then in charge, and in default of this request being complied with, they would bar out the latter from the building, and if still further extremes were necessary to bring obstinate teachers to terms, they would then proceed to duck him in the mill-race until he would finally be compelled to give in.

Knowing of this practice, the teachers who had preceded Mr. Harrison had all good-naturedly complied with this demand without any show of fight, and it had never before caused any real trouble in the school. But to the great surprise of the school-going youngsters upon this occasion, they found that they had run against a stump, and on about as obstinate as the rock of Gibraltar. Nothing daunted, however, they went on with their work and when Mr. Harrison arrived at the school house upon the morning of the notable event, he found the doors all barred against him, not a girl upon the grounds, and the boys all standing in grim battle array, not ten feet away. Flying into a terrible rage, the usually placid old professor reiterated his refusal to the time-honored custom of the school and defied the boys to do their worst.

No one could have told exactly how it was done, or who was the leader, but in the twinkling of an eye, the boys had the reverent gentleman in tow, and were proceeding slow, but surely, in the fatal direction of the mill-race. He finally, but with great reluctance, gave in, and as soon as released, darted with almost the speed of lightning in

the direction of his home in the country, three miles or so away.

He was back in town early the next morning, however, and with his war paint on clear behind the ears. He was also armed with a regular big Indian war club, and proposed to frail to a frazzle every one of the boys connected with the affair of the day before, as he came up with them. Level-headed friends, however, soon took him in charge, and by earnest persuasion, finally convinced him that lynch law was not exactly the thing, for a preacher to practice, and that the proper thing for him to do would be to expell from school all the boys that participated in the affair, and then rescue his school as if nothing had happened.

He pursued this course, but was here met by the expelled crowd in an appeal to the trustees, in which they demurred to his action in the premise on the grounds, that the crime alleged against them was nothing more than a common usage that had been practiced by the scholars in attendance for years, without let or hinderance from previous teachers or trustees, and that the plaintiff professor had no right to enforce such severe penalty under these circumstances.

The board of trustees, after much wrangling over the matter, finally sustained the demurer, but passed a resolution making such action upon the part of pupils attending the school in the future, a crime, punishable by instant expulsion.

When this had arrived, the old gentleman seemed to realize that he had landed in the wrong profession and hence renounced the duties of a school teacher for all time to come, and spent the remainder of his days in the pulpit, a position that he really adorned, and one, in fact, that he should never have left, even temporarily.

Editor's Note: Rev. William P. Harrison was the son of Rev. John Harrison who is buried at old Olney Church site on Jett Roberts Road, July 4, 1776—January 2, 1847. He moved to Uchee Anna, FL after leaving his position at Martin Institute.

MARTIN INSTITUTE 1885-1895

There are no graduates listed for the years 1885 through 1890. Commencement lasted for four days each year with music recitals, compositions and orations. Often the newspaper listed the visitors staying at the Howard House, The Harrison Hotel and private homes.

excerpt from The Forest News

July 8, 1887 A Great Panic at the Institute

Last Wednesday night the largest audience ever seen in this town met at the Institute Chapel. We think there were more than a thousand souls in this Chapel. The exercises had been in progress but a short while when, with a shriek, a child jumped from behind the curtains, and it was discovered that there was an unusual light there. Soon the vast audience was panic stricken and rushed frightfully toward the door and down the steps. It was soon discovered that the fire was not dangerous, but the excited men and women continued to make their exit. Finally, news reached the outer door that all was well, the people began to return to the hall, but the turmoil did not cease. Mothers and children were separated and calling at the tops of their voices, each fearing that the other had been trampled to death.

Mothers in the audience were crying for their children who were behind the curtains, and in that rushing, moving mass it was hard to find the lost ones. For half an hour the band would play and the choir would sing endeavoring to quiet the people .

After it was generally known that nothing was burned but a small portion of the stage paraphernalia and that no one was hurt during the stampede, order was restored and the exercises continued. Between the scenes the amusement was kept up by holding up to gaze the lost and found hats, wraps, slippers, stockings and so on.

Up to this writing we have not seen Col. J.B. Silman since his unorthodox descent of the Institute steps during the panic Wednesday night. We hope his injuries are not severe. The last we heard of him he lay prostrate upon the floor with Queen Carithers, a colored sister of 240 pounds, across his body, while shoes and slippers passed rapidly over his genial brow. We took no note of the extempore speech, made by the Col. under these pressing circumstances, but have been told that his utterances alternated between piteous petitions to Heaven and heart rending ejaculations of another nature. Col. Silman is a man of refinement and we know the mortification he has suffered on account of this rushing indignity.

June 26, 1891 Graduates were Grace Gilliam, Kingston; Pauline Howard, Jefferson; Myra Thompson, Jefferson; Beulah Williamson; and Mattie Holder

July 1,1892 Brilliant closing of the Spring Term with four graduates: Misses Mozelle Whitehead, Rosetta Rivers, May Askew, Mamie Thompson.

June 1893 Graduates were May Hancock, Lillian Martin, Kate Randolph, May McGarity, valedictorian.

1894 Graduates were Mattie Bell, Mary Lou Appleby, Selma Niblack, Montin Martin, Benta McGarity, Julia Bell, Mamie Webb, valedictorian.

1895 Graduates were Miss Susie Thompson, Messrs W.L. and C.C. Baily (first young men graduates)

editor's note: It appears that bright young men were not staying at Martin Institute to graduate, but were going to the University to continue their studies. The graduates received equivalent of junior college educations.]

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MARTIN INSTITUTE 1896–1906

excerpts from The Jackson Herald

1896—No commencement. The Alumni Association met and laid flowers at W. D. Martin's grave.

1897—Commencement for 4 days, no graduates.

1898—June 27—Now that Dr. C. B. LaHatte has declined the presidency of Martin Institute longer, we do not think it improper to briefly review his two years administration.

Two years ago, when he was elected president, Martin Institute was a well nigh wrecked college. One president, who came from another state, left the college under quite a dark cloud, and still another not a success. In the latter instance, the diminution in number of pupils necessitated dismissing the school some two months before its advertised closing, without any commencement exercises, or other kind of entertainment. Martin Institute once held in proud esteem as the leading institution of learning in all this section of Georgia, became the laughing stock of the people. The president resigned. The school was left without an organized corps of teachers, without scholars, with only a few supporters, and its good name dragged from its proud and lofty position it once held among the educational institutions of learning to the humiliating dust of decay.

It was at such a time that the trustees, as useful and as noble a body of men as can be found in Georgia, elected Dr. C. B. LaHatte, who went vigorously to work to restore Martin Institute to its wonted place among the educational institutions of Georgia.

Prof. Ernest Neal has been elected principal of Martin Institute for next year. He has had charge of Maysville High School this year, and as far as we are able to find out is an able educator. He is a stranger to our people, but has been successful in his work at other places, and we hope will continue the good work which has been instituted by Dr. LaHatte this year, and bring Martin Institute another round up the ladder of progress.

1899—Two graduates—Eulalia Collier and Minnie Mae Randolph

1900—Two graduates—Miss Bonnie Brock and Mr. Jewell Vandiver

1901—no graduates

1902—Commencement exercises this year will be different from those of former years. I seriously object to commencements that are more shows where the literary side of school work is not shown. We have not had the time to prepare for a commencement that would be a true com-

mencement on account of the small pox trouble; and as we think promotion to the next higher grade more important than a show of drills and dances, we have used our time, talent, and greater efforts in helping pupils to advance to the next higher grade. So the exercises this year will be simple.

—Respectfully, G. E. Usher.

August 1, 1902— Martin Institute will have a new dormitory. That is a settled fact. The trustees decided that matter at the meeting held on last Tuesday. Pupils need have no uneasiness about not being able to get a boarding place after January 1st, for the dormitory will be completed at that time. There will be ample room for forty or more pupils.

The dormitory is a certainty. The contract has been let to Mr. W.C. Wills, and the price paid is \$2,500. The building will consist of seventeen rooms. The trustees will have each room neatly and plainly furnished. When the building is completed, pupils can procure board at a very low rate.

1903— Diplomas to Mr. Luther Elrod and Misses India Niblack and Susie McCoy.

1904—Eight beautiful girls and five manly boys to receive diplomas: Pearl Welchel – Valedictorian, Lilliam Brock, Georgia Rogers, Susie Wills, Clyde Hancock, Ruth Barber, Emma Hancock, Mamie Pendergrass, Phil Pendergrass, Worth Pendergrass, Joe Storey, Victor Bennett, Sumner Smith.

1905 Graduates—Hal Moore, Ulric Bennett, Misses Jessie Rogers, Mamie Moore, Russie Daniel, Mamie Ray, Susie Harrison, Ella Mae Venable, Lourine Brock, Gussie Johnson, Bonnie Ray, Norma Alexander.

1906 Graduates—George Appleby, Claude Arod, Misses Alice Blackstock, Rosa Ray, Eunice Boggs, Lottie Brock, Mamie Creighton, Clifford Head, Ruby Hancock, Addie Montgomery, Carrie McGarity, Irene Stevens, Jessie Storey, Blanch Appleby.



Martin Institute graduating class June 1910. Judith Alexander, Loui Mai Harrison, Ethel Stockton, Alva Appleby, Pansy Aiken, Latrelle Williamson, Runelle Dunnigan, Arlie Carter, Mrs. Ola Webb, Lurleen Collier, Nannie Ethridge, Judith Abraham



William Cohen was also in the 1910 graduating class

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Martin Institute circa 1910