

Dowell's 'History of Mercer' Tells of School's Beginning

Ed. Note: The following passages are excerpted from *A History of Mercer University* by Dr. Spright Dowell, and are reprinted here by permission.

The fourteenth of January, 1833, was an eventful day for Georgia Baptists and the Commonwealth of Georgia. The opening of Mercer Institute at Penfield, Green County, on that day marked the culmination of hopes, dreams, prayers, sacrifices, and achievements of imperishable influence and of inestimable worth. These were given form and expression in the founding of an institution that was destined to play an increasingly important role in forming and fashioning the lives and the affairs of men and women in Georgia, throughout the nation, and to the ends of the earth.

Jesse Mercer had been untiring in his efforts to advance the cause of missions and education and to help those who were antagonistic to these fundamental services and needs view them for their real worth.

At the annual meeting of the Georgia Baptist Convention in Milledgeville in 1829, announcement was made that Josiah Penfield, a layman of Savannah who had died during the year, had made a bequest of \$2,500 in his will to the Convention for education, provided a like sum should be raised by the Convention

for the same purpose . . . At the opportune moment he provided the spark that generated the spirit that flamed forth as Mercer Institute in the village that was given the name Penfield in his honor.

A committee . . . was appointed, and submitted the recommendation that the convention promptly proceed to raise the sum required to match Penfield's gift. The necessary subscriptions to meet the terms of the will were secured almost immediately . . . Some of the subscribers made outright gifts. Others redeemed their pledges by their personal gifts and contributions from others. All the subscriptions were paid in due time.

Adiel Sherwood had drawn a resolution proposing the establishment of a manual labor school which he planned to offer at the annual meeting of the Convention in 1829, but withheld it in deference to the wishes of some of his brethren on the Executive Committee. At the annual Convention which met at Buckhead, Burke County, in 1831, he offered this resolution: "That as soon as the funds will justify it, this convention will establish in some central part of the state a classical and theological

school, which shall unite agricultural labor with study, and be open for those only who are preparing for the ministry' Jesse Mercer, James Armstrong, and Billington Sanders did not favor the proposed resolution at that time, although they were strong friends of Christian education, but with the active support of Thomas Stocks, Jonathan Davis, Absalom James, and others, a favorable decision was reached.

The Executive Committee was asked to provide a plan to raise \$1500 before the first day of December following and to open the school as soon as practicable . . . (At the meeting of the Convention in Powelton in 1832) It was also reported that several eligible sites in different counties for the proposed manual labor school were available on favorable terms. The Executive Committee was directed by the Convention to purchase a tract of 450 acres seven miles north of Greensboro from William Redd at a cost of \$1450 and an adjoining tract of 14 1/2 acres for \$65, and to adopt the necessary measures for putting the school in operation in January, 1833. It is significant that this proved to be the first permanent institution established by Georgia Baptists for nearly fifty years.

The first rules for the government of students at
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CENTRAL EDIFICE.

THE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

At its completion after WMAZ left



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-RALPH EUBANKS, Executive Vice-President

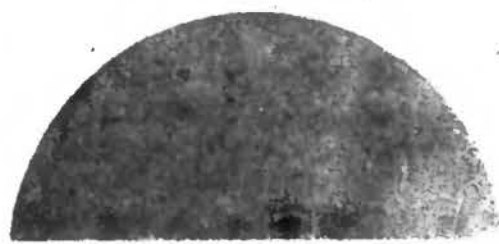
The First National Bank & Trust Company In Macon

-TOM E. GREENE, President

City Bank & Trust Company

-THOMAS B. HARRELL, President

MEMBERS: F.D.I.C.



Macon's three banks have enjoyed a long record of service and mutual acquaintance with Mercer University and the many Mercer students who have found it convenient to open accounts in this city. The executive staffs of all three banks include a number of Mercer alumni.

The organization now known as The Citizens and Southern National Bank was chartered in 1891. What is now the First National Bank and Trust Company was established in 1912, and the City Bank and Trust Company was founded in 1931.

We congratulate The Mercer Cluster on this anniversary of 40 years of service to the campus of Macon's historical Baptist Institution, and we look forward to many more years of acquaintanceship between the Macon banks and Mercer University, to the benefit of each.

