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Historical Sketch of Georgetown College

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HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF

Georgetown College

AN ADDRESS READ AT THE
ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT
JUNE 7, 1904. ❧ ❧ ❧

BY

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HISTORY OF GEORGETOWN COLLEGE.

A College may be defined as an organized society of teachers and students, meeting together for purposes of study, in buildings maintained and equipped for these uses, by a corporation chartered for the purpose. There is sometimes some confusion in the popular mind as to which of these three things is the real College—the chartered corporation with its Board of Trustees, its legal powers, and property rights; or the buildings and apparatus with their romantic associations, redolent ever of the dreams and fancies of youth; or, finally the constantly assembling and dissolving assembly of professors and pupils—the College itself with its ever changing personnel, but an unchanging spirit.

Surely all these things, and more besides, are essential to a College. The organized society which constitutes the vital principle of the College must be controlled and supported and guided, and the material equipments must be provided and maintained by a corporation of wide powers and large means, in order to make possible an educational institution of permanence and power.

THE CHARTERS AND CORPORATIONS.

The history of Georgetown College has centered about three charters, each of them creating a distinct corporation, and yet all of them closely interwoven in their legal relations with each other, and the College.

First—Charter of 1829.

First, there's the charter of 1829 creating a corporation called the "Trustees of the **Kentucky Baptist Educational Society**," a corporation which is still the kernel and governing body of the whole institution. These Trustees were named in the charter, were given the power to perpetuate themselves by filling vacancies in their own body—and in general all the powers and privileges granted to any other academy of learning in this State. Their right to own property, however, for some reason was limited to an amount, the annual income from which would not exceed \$50,000. According to this charter, these Trustees were themselves the corporation, or rather they were made the agents of a fictitious educational society which had not yet come into existence.

Second—Charter of 1851.

In 1851 an amendment was secured to the charter of 1829, which was in effect a new charter, and created a new corporation, called the Kentucky Baptist Educa-

tion Society, composed of all who have paid, or shall hereafter pay, into the treasury of the College as much as \$100.00, and gave to this new corporation the exclusive power, if they choose to exercise it, to elect the Trustees who constituted the earlier corporation. This amendment, therefore, sought to create a Kentucky Baptist Education Society which seemed to be only presupposed in the earlier charter, and yet it did not alter or abridge, in any way, any of the powers conferred on the Trustees by the original charter, save only the manner of their election.

Third—The Students' Association.

The third charter about which the life of the College has grown is the document which created the Students' Association of Georgetown College. This charter was secured in 1876, and formed a corporation of old students who may hold and control property quite apart from the College corporation, but who may use their property for no other purpose than to endow professorships and otherwise assist education in Georgetown College.

WESTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

This is the proper place to mention that in 1853 Georgetown College became closely connected with an entirely separate corporation called the Western Baptist Theological Institute, of Covington, Ky. This institution had been running for several years at Cov-

ington under a charter of its own, as a Theological Seminary, with some sorts of College work attached, for the purpose of preparing its students for their theological studies. It had good buildings and grounds at Covington, and other funds besides, but its Board and Faculty became hopelessly and bitterly divided on the slavery controversy, and in 1852, having split into two irreconcilable camps, the anti-slavery party moved over into Cincinnati, carrying with them all the movable funds. The other party took possession of the grounds and buildings, which, under the provisions of their charter, could not be used for any institution outside of Kentucky, but they were compelled to suspend operations for several months. In 1853 they moved the institute to Georgetown, and for more than thirty years it was operated in connection with the College. Finally, in 1886, under the tactful leadership of Doctor Dudley, the Trustees decided to go into voluntary liquidation, and turn over to the College the remnant of their property, together with their rights and obligations.

THE GROUNDS AND BUILDINGS.

The buildings of the College, like its chartered copanies, have gradually grown and expanded, as its needs and its means increased.

For the first ten years of its life there were no buildings save the old Rittenhouse Academy, which occupied the site of the present Academy building, and

which, with the western half of the campus, seems to have come into the possession of the College partly by a sort of consolidation with the old Rittenhouse Academy, and partly by donation of a site by the citizens of the town to secure the location of the College. In 1840 the present Recitation Hall was commenced, the first building ever erected by the College. Paulding Hall, that is, the old part of it which constitutes the rear of the present edifice, was erected very early, but I have been unable to discover the date. It was mentioned in the first catalogue—1845-46—and may possibly have been built before the death of Issachar Paulding, which occurred, according to Spencer's History of Kentucky Baptists, in 1832. In 1839 the eastern half of the campus, nearly ten acres, was sold to the College by Alexander Offutt for one hundred dollars per acre.

In 1852 the College bought the building near the campus, now occupied and owned by Rev. T. J. Stevenson, and turned it into a dormitory, called Judson Hall. This building, however, seemed to be ill adapted to the purpose, and in 1859 the property was sold to Professor Rucker, and was afterwards for a short time the seat of the Female Seminary.

In 1854 the corporation bought for the President's residence the grounds and southeast part of the building which is now known as the "Old Seminary," and in 1869, the larger and newer part of that building was constructed for the use of the Female Seminary of Professor Rucker. This building was not converted

to its present use until 1895. In 1869 the grounds to the south of the campus and the building now owned by Mrs. Dudley was purchased for a President's residence, and the present residence of the President was erected on a part of these grounds in 1889.

The present Academy building was built about 1861. In 1879 the new front was built to Paulding Hall with money secured by the ladies of the Baptist Church of Georgetown, under the leadership of Mrs. Sarah Thomas and the late Mrs. Jas. F. Robinson. This large Chapel Building in which we now meet was built in 1894, and the beautiful Rucker Hall, across the street, in 1895, transactions so recent that their history need not be recounted.

THE COLLEGE.

But charters and buildings, however essential and important, cannot, as has been said already, alone make a College. These are the shell—the vital part of the institution remains to be traced. The life that has gone on, in and around these buildings, and under the over-arching sphere of the legal documents—the ever flowing and ebbing tide of young humanity—the more permanent and yet frequently vanishing figures of presidents and professors, of trustees and officers that have given form and shape and substance to the work, and play, carried on upon the campus—these constitute the flesh and blood of my subject, the history of the College.

The first ten years of this story are wrapped in mystery—a mystery which my researches have been unable to dispel. It seems, however, that they were years of trouble and turmoil and confusion.

There was a contest over the location of the College between Georgetown and Versailles, and the former had secured the prize by a gift of \$6,000. This together with a generous donation of \$20,000 made by Issachar Paulding seems to have constituted the entire property of the institution during the first decade of its existence. The young corporation was confronted by foes without and within. There was litigation in the courts over its property, there were faction and strife in the Board itself. These were the years of the mighty conflict and upheaval among the Baptists of Kentucky, caused by the preaching of Alexander Campbell, and there was a contest between the two parties for the possession of the young institution of learning.

During this contest there was founded here at Georgetown, in 1836, by the Disciples party, an institution called Bacon College, named in honor of Lord Bacon, the purpose of which was to aid them in their struggle for this seat of learning.

During these ten years there were secured by the College three distinguished Presidents—Doctor Wm. Staughton, who died on his way to Georgetown: Doctor Joel S. Bacon, who served for only two years, and Doctor B. F. Farnsworth, who served only a few

months. For a part of the time the College was run as a private enterprise, and part of the time was in a state of suspended animation. At last, by the guiding hand of Providence, there came to the College, in 1838, duly elected as its president, a master spirit—a born leader of men—a man who, if opportunity had offered, could have been famous as an empire builder, or founder of nations. This was Rockwood Giddings, a young pastor of Shelbyville, whose administration of the College lasted a little more than one year; and yet he, together with Issachar Paulding, were really the founders of Georgetown College as far as that honor can be awarded to any two men. Frail of body, delicate, almost effeminate of countenance, he possessed a soul that seemed in some strange way to gain the ascendancy over all with whom he came in contact. He undertook great things—and yet he undertook nothing that he did not accomplish. As soon as he became acquainted with the discordant elements of the College, under the influence of his ardent spirit, the voice of discord was hushed—one faction of the Board resigned, and a harmonious reorganization was effected.

The litigation was settled. The followers of Alexander Campbell gave up the struggle for a College at Georgetown, and in 1839 removed Bacon College to Harrodsburg. Doctor Giddings then turned his attention to the further needs of the institution, and saw that with all the harmony in the world, he could not make a College without endowment and buildings. He

threw himself at once into the great task of raising an endowment, and asked the faction-torn and discouraged Baptists of Kentucky, only about 40,000 in number, for \$100,000.

Such was his enthusiasm, his almost hypnotic power over the hearts and pockets of his brethren that in eight months he had gathered together, in good notes, \$80,000—a truly wonderful achievement considering the time at which it was accomplished. As far as I have been able to ascertain, it was to Doctor Giddings also that we are indebted for the general plan of the old College building now called Recitation Hall. Together with Doctor J. E. Farnam, his classmate at Waterville, Maine, whom he had induced to come with him from Shelbyville to Georgetown in 1838, he drew the plans for this noble old edifice, so simple and sincere in its architecture—so pure and classical in its outline—that it stands now, and I hope will stand for another hundred years, a beautiful monument to his memory. This is not the place for suggestions, but I will venture to remark that I hope some day to see built to the south end of Recitation Hall an Ionic portico like the one at the north end, and then the old building rededicated and renamed “Giddings Hall,” in honor of the first really effective President of the College.

But these consuming labors destroyed the frail body of the eager young President. In October, 1839, he fell in the pulpit while preaching, and was carried back to his old home in Shelbyville, only to die in a

few days. The one year of Doctor Giddings' administration had transformed the College. When his successor came to Georgetown he found an institution with a harmonious Board, with no competition in the town, with a commodious building under construction, and with a fairly ample endowment for those days, in the form of notes and subscriptions. This successor was Doctor Howard Malcolm, one of the most distinguished and eloquent preachers who ever labored amongst the Baptists of Kentucky. A man of versatile mind, of splendid scholarship, widely known as an author and a preacher, Dr. Malcolm was an ideal college president. But the panic of 1840 swept away a large part of the endowment, by destroying the solvency of those who had promised it, and Doctor Malcolm, in spite of his broad culture and brilliant intellect, was greatly hampered by lack of funds.

Nevertheless, the College did steady and efficient work. The annual catalogues, which began to be published in 1846, show a small but efficient and capable Faculty, consisting mainly of Professor J. E. Farnam and Professor Danford Thomas and the President—a goodly number of students coming from various States, and a well organized course of instruction for that time. There is a general atmosphere of good, honest, wholesome work about the catalogue of this period that speaks well for the educational ability of the President and his Faculty. But the close of Doctor Malcolm's administration was marked, and his resigna-

tion caused by a recrudence of dissensions in the Board, and among the students and the public. This time it was political instead of religious, caused by the intense excitement attending the slavery controversy in those years. Doctor Malcolm was an Eastern man, and though he was a scholar and a gentleman and a Christian, he shared to some extent the uncompromising feelings of our Northern brethren on this great question. And so he resigned for the sake of peace. After a brief and uneventful interval under Doctor J. L. Reynolds, the College entered upon an epoch of great prosperity and expansion under the leadership of perhaps the greatest executive that ever presided over the fortunes of a Kentucky College. This President was Duncan R. Campbell, who came to Georgetown in June, 1852, from Covington, Ky., where he had been a professor in Western Baptist Theological Institute. He was a most potent personality, full of energy, tact, and enthusiasm, and in a few years he had pushed the College into the front ranks of the institutions of learning in the whole West and South. Its halls were filled with young men, the flower and cream of the educational material of a half dozen States. Under the aggressive and powerful influence of Doctor Campbell, there passed through Georgetown College scores of notable men who afterwards became leading preachers, lawyers, doctors, judges, statesmen and soldiers of their respective States, and had much to do in shaping the destiny of Kentucky and the South.

In 1855 the patronage of the College had far outgrown its facilities, and Doctor Campbell threw his mighty resources into an effort to increase the endowment. In about two years' time he had secured an addition to the endowment in good collectible notes of about \$106,000. These notes however, were as usual payable in annual instalments of five or more years; and before half of them had been collected, the great catastrophe of the Civil war had swept over the land and wrecked the business, and the fortunes of those who had promised them. As the panic of twenty years before, so the war of 1860 played havoc with a great work, almost achieved.

Doctor Campbell lived only long enough to carry the College through the trying ordeal of the Civil war, dying suddenly in 1865.

Following Doctor Campbell's death, and the war, the College entered upon a period of quiet and painful readjustment to a changed environment. For fifteen years this process went on. The patronage fell off, the prestige of the school gradually declined. During this period two very distinguished and scholarly men served successively, as president of the College;—Doctor N. M. Crawford, 1865-1871, and Doctor Basil Manly, 1871-79. Eloquent preachers both of them, scholarly and vigorous teachers, widely known and honored men of God, it was in no way due to them that the College was not progressing and expanding,—the conditions upon which its former prosperity was founded had been completely altered. The whole organized social

fabric from which it had drawn its Students had been shaken to its foundations, by the great civil war, and when the new society was built up, it knew not Georgetown. They founded their own schools all through the South and Southwest,—and Georgetown had to depend upon Kentucky almost entirely both for students and endowment.. And Kentucky had meanwhile built up another College at Russellville.

So things had to settle down and the College make a new place for itself, and bide its time. The time was the longer coming because of another circumstance. About 1870 the movement to bring the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary to Kentucky from South Carolina, was inaugurated. This involved the raising of \$300,000 by Kentucky Baptists. This was a gigantic task and together with the additional calls upon them, made necessary by the presence and needs of this great and noble institution, completely absorbed their benevolence and attention for twenty years;—and in fact continues largely to occupy them to this day.

The College began to emerge from this period of comparative quiet and depression in 1879, when Doctor Richard M. Dudley was placed in charge of the institution. Doctor Dudley's administration covered a period of thirteen years,—from 1879 to his untimely and lamented death in January, 1893, a most notable and eventful period in the history of Georgetown College,—and one whose great importance is just now beginning to be clearly realized. Doctor Dudley's vigorous adminis-

trative ability, his clear, cool, sound judgement, his sincere straightforward Christian character, his admirable knowledge of human nature which made him so successful as a disciplinarian and manager of young men,—his self-sacrificing devotion to the institution,—his power as a preacher, and his constantly growing influence with the denomination,—all these and other qualities told powerfully for the good of the College in all directions, and the momentum gathered and headway gained, continued to carry the College forward for several years, after his death. His great work for the College may be briefly summed up under three heads: (1) His academic work, such as strengthening of the Faculty, improving the curriculum, elevating the standard of work, increasing the attendance, adding new departments and facilities—in short, the general improvement of the rank of the institution, as an educational force in our State. This was the work of the earlier years of his administration. One of the most important and far-reaching changes made under this head was the introduction of the co-educational system, adopted and entered upon experimentally the very year of his death—a step which will have a powerful effect upon the destinies of the College for all time to come. (2) Additional buildings and equipments. The new President's house, the new chapel and gymnasium building, and Rucker Hall were the direct fruits of his labors; for while they were not all of them built during his life, the funds that made them possible were provided, and the conditions of patron-

age and prospects that made them necessary, were created by him. Thus about \$90,000 worth of buildings were added to the plant of the institution. (3) The growth of the endowment. During Doctor Dudley's term of office, or as a direct result of his work, more than \$150,000 was added to the property of the College. This of course includes the buildings above mentioned.

The Students' Association fund was completed and made productive in 1884. The Bostwick fund was secured in 1889. The Georgetown and Scott county fund in 1888. The Maria Atherton-Farnam Professorship in 1893. The McCalla-Galloway Professorship in 1893. The Dudley Memorial in 1895. There were besides numerous smaller gifts during the years.

In all this work Doctor Dudley was ably and grandly assisted by many others—notable Doctor W. M. Pratt, President of Board of Trustees, in securing Boswick fund, and the lately lost and much mourned son of the College, Doctor J. S. Felix, in connection with the Newton and Dudley memorials, and Professor J. J. Rucker, in connection with the Students' Association fund and the Georgetown and Scott county fund, and many others who are now in this audience—but all joyfully and loyally acknowledge Doctor R. M. Dudley as their leader, and they looked to him for inspiration through it all.

With Doctor Dudley's administration it is proper that this hasty sketch should close. The more recent history of the College is too near to us to be under-

stood in its perspective and broader relations. But before closing, I want to seize this opportunity to emphasize some points of surpassing interest in this record.

(1) Educational institutions, like political institutions, are not made out of hand—they grow! It is a process of steady, gradual evolution. The charters are shaped by gradual amendments, the buildings are enlarged and added to, the departments of instruction are put in, one after another, the endowment is slowly increased—in fact, everything about a college must be slowly evolved and built up.

(2) The splendid list of names found in the records, through all the years. We belong to no mean College! Our educational sires were men of mark. Whether we look at the Boards of Trustees and officers, or the presidents and members of the Faculty, or glance through the long lists of students, we constantly come upon names that count for much in the development of our State, especially of our Baptist denomination. Our first President of the Board was Silas M. Noel—one of the most eloquent, pious, energetic and forceful Baptist preachers in Kentucky during the early part of the last century. The second President of the Board was Rev. Thomas P. Dudley, who afterwards became the great exponent of our brethren of the Hardshell branch of our denomination. Then came Roger Quarles, and Gov. J. F. Robinson, David Chénault, W. M. Pratt, and lastly, the present incumbent, our own much beloved Doctor Jno. A. Lewis, splendid

and princely men all of them. The list of members of the Board is equally illumined by many names of men notable in Kentucky Baptist history. Turning to the Faculty, we are gratified by what we find there. The Presidents have all been able and distinguished men. The Faculty has been filled with men whose names are widely known and honored. It is interesting to observe, how through the earlier catalogues the names of Professors Farnam, Thomas, and Rucker continually recur together like a human clover leaf, on the page of the Faculty. Each of them served the College for almost or quite half a century; and now only one of them is left! Along with these, in the earlier years, comes the name of Professor Wm. Garth, who was the same man who established the truly noble charity called the "Garth Fund" for educating poor boys in Bourbon county. And there were Cadwallader Lewis and Henry McDonald, and scores of other names that shed luster on the annals of our State and church. And if we look over the records of the 600 graduates, and 5,000 students, the impression grows that if we were to take out of the history of the Baptists in Kentucky the deeds and achievements, the names and the work of all the Trustees, the Presidents, Professors and Students of Georgetown College—what a mutilated record would be left! In this connection it may not be amiss to remark that we have ample room for memorials here at Georgetown. We have our Paulding Hall, our Student's Chair, our McCalla-Galloway Chair, our Maria

Atherton-Farnam Professorship, our Rucker Hall, our Dudley memorial, etc., etc. All these are well—very well! But there are other names that richly deserve to be thus immortalized here upon this campus. There are Giddings, and Campbell, and Thomas, and McDonald, and J. S. Felix, and others who have lived and labored, and given of their money, and in other ways built their names into the fabric of this institution, in order that it might be the better for us, their children and successors. Some time we shall see, standing about upon these grounds, in some form, worthy monuments to their blessed memory.

(3) A word about the endowment! Georgetown College has lost more money than it never received—and less than it did receive—that any other institution, I venture to say, in the whole South. It has already been explained how half of the Campbell endowment, and perhaps more than half of the Giddings endowment, were never paid into the College treasury at all, but was swept away in the calamities of panic and war, while it was still under the control of those who had promised it. And yet all that which was actually paid into the treasury of the College is there yet, in spite of panics, and the Civil War, and floods, and disasters. None of it has been lost. It would seem that the safest place on earth for money is the treasury of the College—much safer than the pockets of the owners! For this remarkable financial record the College is indebted chiefly to two men, each of whom held the office of Treasurer for about thirty years. The

first of these was Major M. C. McCalla, who was Treasurer from about 1840 to 1866. With singular skill and devotion he served the institution without salary through all the early years of its poverty, and in addition made generous bequests in its favor in his will. The other great Treasurer is the present holder of the office, Judge George V. Payne, whose term of service began in 1873. It would be difficult to find in the annals of educational institutions more striking illustrations of faithful, long-continued and successful financial service than is shown in the records of these two Treasurers.

Lastly, let us note how the life of the College, like the life of an individual, ebbs and flows. There have been periods of great prosperity, of progress and expansion, and then there have been seasons of quiet readjustment, of settling down and pulling together.

The three great tides of advancement have come under Giddings, Campbell and Dudley; partly perhaps because of the conditions of the time, and partly because of the great qualities of these able men.

Between these epochs have come breathing spells and periods of waiting. It seems to me that we have just passed through to the end of a period of waiting—and that the clarion call of opportunity is now heard summoning us to another epoch of enlargement and unusual prosperity.

The College has survived the frightful dissensions which resulted from the work of Alexander Campbell, it has survived the super-heated political controversies

which preceded and caused the great Civil War, it has survived the war itself, and the wreck and ruin of our state and section which it produced, it has survived the panics, the dissensions and controversies of recent years, and it is today the strongest institution of learning of the Baptist people west of the Alleghany Mountains and south of the Ohio River. Let us all thank God for the noble past, and rise and go forward.