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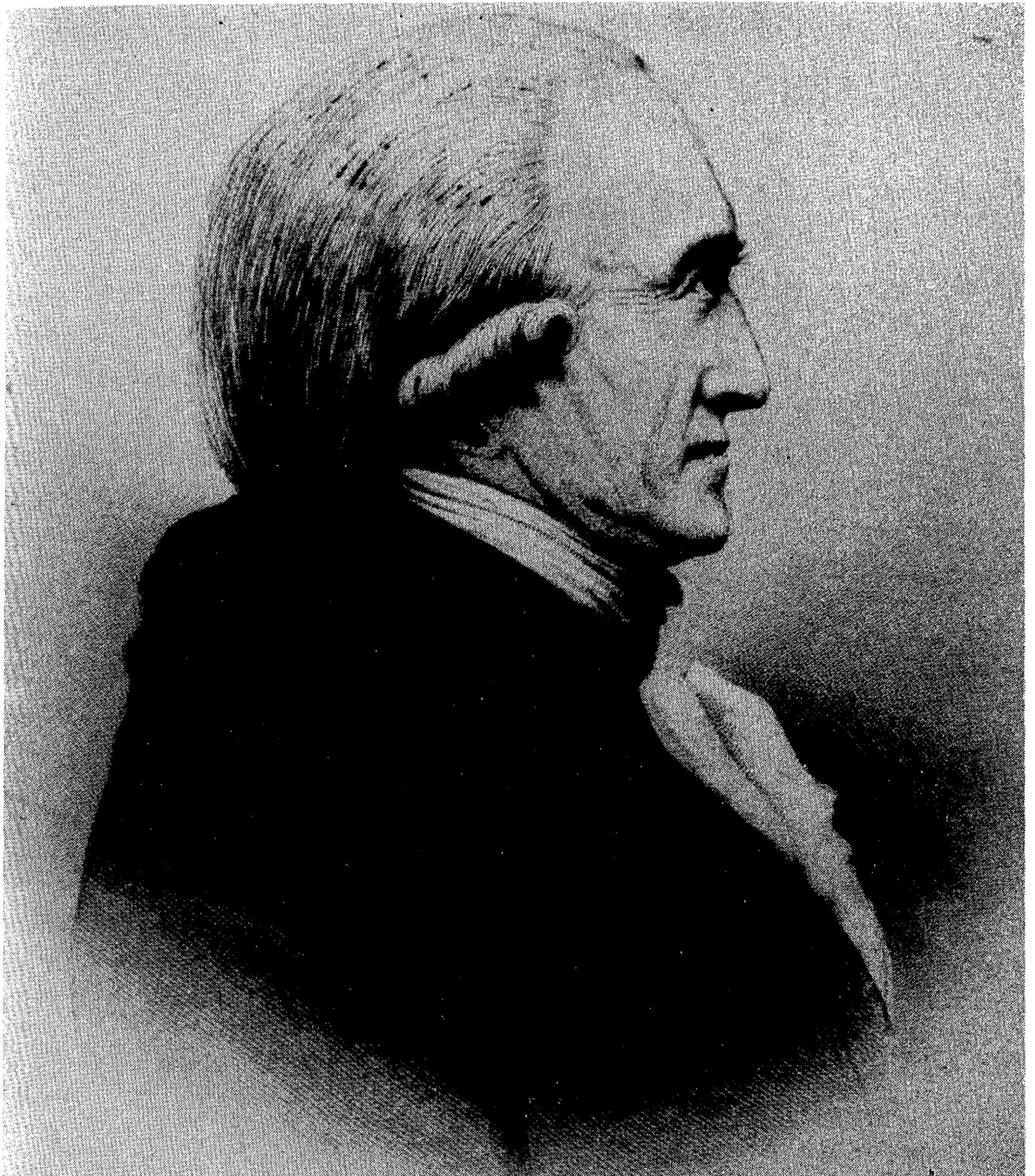
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Benjamin Franklin

BENJAMIN HAWKINS,
THE FIRST MODERN INDIAN AGENT

By

Frank L. Owsley, Jr.

The work of Benjamin Hawkins as agent to the Creek Indians probably did more to turn the Creeks toward the ways of civilization than any other single force affecting them. Hawkins, who was sincerely interested in the welfare of the Indians, used very modern techniques in assimilating them into the white man's society. When he went to live among the Creeks in 1796, they were perhaps the most savage of the four nations in the Alabama area; but by the time of his death in 1816, they were well advanced toward civilization.¹

Soon after he became agent, Hawkins spent several months traveling among the Creeks and observing their habits and needs. He saw that some of the half breeds had good cattle and were engaged in farming, but most of the Indians still existed in a very primitive condition. They obtained food and clothing principally through hunting and fishing, and their only agriculture consisted of a few patches of corn tended by the women. In addition, they had no knowledge of spinning or weaving or any other forms of domestic manufacture.²

In his conversations with the Creeks, Hawkins discovered that with a few exceptions the Indians were very anxious to learn the white man's way of farming and manufacture. They also seemed interested in trying to understand his law and government. Hawkins' main official duty as agent to the Creeks was to make and enforce treaties, keep the peace, and persuade the tribe from time to time to give up land. Since these Indians had no understanding of agriculture, tribal government, or law, Hawkins felt that the only way he could accomplish his aims was to develop such institutions among the Creeks. Tribal government would be necessary to keep the nation peaceful and to have some organized group with which

¹Talk to the Cherokee Nation, August 28, 1796, John G. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Sources 1745-1799* (59 vols., Washington, 1931-1940), XXXV, 193-198.

²Merritt B. Pound, *Benjamin Hawkins - Indian Agent* (Athens, 1951), 99-117.

to make treaties. Agriculture would require far less land than hunting, and would perhaps make the Creeks more agreeably cede land to the United States government. They could also attain a much higher standard of living from agriculture and might be less interested in raiding the frontier. Hawkins' real work among the Creeks was in the accomplishment of these objectives.³

Hawkins had found that the chiefs of the tribe were men of influence but with no real power of compulsion to enforce their wishes. The only approach to a national government enjoyed by the Creeks was the annual festival where all the chiefs met and made recommendations, even though they had no authority to compel. The best way to create a national government would be to increase the authority of the chiefs and give real power to the national assembly. Hawkins himself had great power because he was the United States government's representative, distributing subsidies, goods, and services, and he wisely used his own influence to increase the authority of the chiefs.

Hawkins utilized the chiefs as a national police force in his development and enforcement of tribal laws, a method which gave him two real advantages. First, the Creeks were more willing to obey respected men of their own tribe, and, second, by being given the task of enforcing the law the chiefs' authority was considerably improved.⁴ When a man was known to have committed a crime, Hawkins notified the chief of the town where the man lived and requested that the culprit be punished. If the village chief refused, Hawkins sent a chief from another village to enforce the punishment. When the friends of the guilty person occasionally tried to protect him, Hawkins would send whatever force was needed. This activity considerably enhanced the power of the Creek chiefs, and the United States benefited greatly by having a large body of the most influential Indians won to her support.

³Benjamin Hawkins to James McHenry, November 19, 1797, Benjamin Hawkins, *Letters of Benjamin Hawkins, 1796-1806; Collections of the Georgia Historical Society* (Savannah, 1916), IX, 238-242. Hereafter cited as *Letters of Hawkins*.

⁴Frank L. Owsley, Jr. "Benjamin Hawkins, Political Leader and Indian," (unpublished masters thesis University of Alabama, 1951), 82-88. Hereafter cited as Owsley, "Benjamin Hawkins."

In addition to their law enforcement tasks the chiefs were made the deputies of the agent in distributing gifts and annuities. Because of past land cessions and other agreements, the government had a number of subsidies and other benefits which were dispensed to the Indians each year. Needless to say, this also increased the sphere of influence and power of the chiefs.⁵

The development of power by external action was very important to the chiefs. Although Hawkins insisted that the Indians enforce the law, he let them do this in the manner which was most nearly suited to their customs. In the past when a family had been wronged, the members of the family took a stick as a symbol of the wrong done them, and kept it until the crime had been avenged, at which time the stick was passed to all members of the injured family to notify them that the wrong had been vindicated. Hawkins changed this practice so that a chief rather than a private individual sought redress. In making this innovation, he introduced the concept that a crime against an individual was a crime against the state. He made the idea easier for the Indians to accept by reminding them that most Creeks were related and that the nation was an extended part of their family. According to the new custom the stick was passed first to Hawkins and then to the chiefs when the crime had been avenged.⁶

A constant source of friction between whites and Indians was the hunting party. Hawkins expected that the introduction of agriculture would reduce or eliminate these expeditions, but in the meantime he insisted that all such parties be carefully regulated by making the chief of each such group responsible for any damage done by one of his hunters. Each party was required to have a permit issued either by Hawkins or by one of the principle chiefs, a system which made it easier to keep track of the persons responsible for depredations in an area. The Indians conformed to the laws fairly well. There was always some horse stealing along the frontier, but these violations of

⁵Hawkins to the Secretary of War, March 1, 1797, *Letters of Hawkins*, 91-92; Report of Tustunnue to Hawkins, November 4, 1799, Hawkins Papers, (Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta).

⁶Report of Tustunnue Haujo to Hawkins, November 4, 1799, Louise F. Hays, compiler, unpublished letters of Benjamin Hawkins, (typed transcripts in Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta. Hereafter cited as Hays, Letters.

law became less and less frequent until just before the outbreak of the Creek Indian War in 1813.⁷

Hawkins' system of justice was reasonably successful. If an Indian stole a horse or looted a white settlement, the chiefs would have him whipped or sometimes have his ears cut off, and the purloined goods would be returned to the rightful owner. If a white man was killed, the chiefs would hunt down and execute the guilty party. The remarkable thing about this crude system was that the offenders were usually caught while innocent persons were seldom wrongly punished.⁸ Although Indian justice was firm and quick, Hawkins tempered it with mercy. When a normally law abiding Indian committed a crime while drunk or after being provoked by the whites, he was often pardoned or the punishment reduced.⁹

Hawkins believed that trouble between the whites and Indians could best be avoided by eliminating situations which would result in difficulties. Since illegal trading was the greatest single cause of ill feeling, he made every effort to regulate and license all traders, and he expelled a large number of dishonest or otherwise undesirable white traders from the Indian territory. Not only could Hawkins issue licenses to whomever he saw fit, but he could also revoke the license of traders who misused their position.¹⁰

Hawkins continually exerted every effort to transform the annual assembly of the Creek nation into a real representative government. As has already been noted, this council was a regular event when he arrived in the Creek country, but it was largely a festival rather than a governmental meeting. However, since this was the one time when most of the chiefs and important men of the nation were assembled, Hawkins made a practice of conducting the bulk of the tribal business at the meeting. Needless to say, this act increased not only the importance of the council itself but also magnified the power invested in the assembly of the chiefs. Soon after he took office Hawkins organized this annual council on a regular basis and

⁷Hawkins to Robert Weldon, May 29, 1798, and H. Gaither to T. Davis, January 24, 1800, Hays, Letters.

⁸Report of Tustunnue to Hawkins, November 4, 1799, Hawkins Paper.

⁹Hawkins to Burrell Pope, February 6, 1798, Hawkins Papers.

¹⁰Hawkins to Martin Hardin, November 17, 1797, *Letters of Hawkins*, 237-238.

proposed that each town be represented at the gathering by at least one chief. At the meeting Hawkins would give an annual report on the state of the nation and then any pending business would be considered. Following this would be a discussion of various treaty violations and then new treaties or amendments.¹¹

Once the governmental business was settled, the council would function as a court and any member of the nation who had been accused of a crime could be tried by the assembled chiefs and either punished or released as the court might decide. Since the council meeting was part of the Indian tradition, the innovations were not wholly alien to them. Even though the council's new powers were not immediately accepted, the Indians had little difficulty in understanding the new functions, nor did they seem to resent them. Despite the fact that the Creeks had no tradition of representative government, Hawkins was able to present the new concept in a framework and in terms which were already well understood by the Indians so that they had little difficulty in comprehending the new system.¹²

Another significant part of the Indian assimilation program was training the Creeks in agriculture and domestic manufacture. They had some cattle and hogs at the time of Hawkins' arrival and were, in fact, quite willing to increase and improve their livestock herds. He also introduced sheep raising with some success.¹³

Hawkins rightly believed that the best way to civilize the Indian men was to teach the Indian women. According to the statements of the Creek women, he was the first white man to ever take any interest in them, and as a result he won their respect and cooperation. Unquestionably the best manner of making long range changes in the Creek culture and economy was by working through the women because they not only trained the children but also did the farming.¹⁴ Hawkins pro-

¹¹Hawkins to John Milledge, September 5, 1805, Hays, Letters; Merritt B. Pound, "Colonel Benjamin Hawkins — North Carolina — Benefactor of the Southern Indians," *The North Carolina Historical Review*, XIX (April 1942), 170.

¹²Owsley, "Benjamin Hawkins", 82-84.

¹³Hawkins' Journal, November 24 — December 12, 1796, *Letters of Hawkins*, 15-23.

¹⁴Hawkins to Mrs. Eliza Trist, March 4, 1797, Hays, Letters.

vided them with good seed and taught them how to plant new crops, a means which greatly improved the food supply.

One innovation which caused a major social revolution in the tribe was teaching the women to spin and weave. Hawkins placed great stress on their learning the skill and actually brought several white women to the agency to teach the art. He encountered some resistance to this program from the men who had previously furnished all the clothing as a product of their hunting. As long as the women had been dependent on the men for clothing, the husbands had been able to treat their wives as slaves. If the women learned to weave, however, they might rebel against the men's authority. Because of this opposition, the only women allowed to learn the art of weaving at first were single girls and widows.¹⁵ Progress in this program was slow, but eventually the men found clothing made from cloth more to their liking than that made from skins so that opposition gradually disappeared. To begin with, the Indians were taught to grow and spin cotton and flax but by 1807 they were being instructed in the weaving of wool.¹⁶ Hawkins conducted much of the training activities on his plantation at the Creek agency on the Flint River. He had 16,000 acres of land there and worked 75 slaves along with numerous Indians who were trained in agriculture by his slaves.¹⁷

It was in no small degree due to Hawkins' counsel that the United States adopted the policy of attempting to teach the Indians some of the elements of civilization. To this end the United States government set aside a considerable amount of money to hire instructors and to purchase supplies that would be necessary in this work. It was at Hawkins' agency that the work progressed the furthest.¹⁸ He taught the Creeks the use of the plow and the loom, and by 1816 most of them were able to practice these skills. He was, as has been noted, equally successful in teaching the Creeks law and order by correlating civilized systems with the old Indian traditions. Hawkins realized that the most effective way to deal with them was

¹⁵Hawkins to James McHenry, January 6, 1797, *Letters of Hawkins*, 56-58

¹⁶Hawkins to Captain Wellington, August 8, 1807, Hays, Letters.

¹⁷Hawkins' Will, typed copy in Auburn University Archives, original in Jones County, Georgia.

¹⁸Hawkins to George Washington, May 28, 1795; Hawkins to Thomas Jefferson, October 28, 1793, Hays, Letters.

through their own tribal organization, and, there, he gradually tailored this organization to fit in with the customs of the white man.

Hawkins won the confidence of the Indians and had he been younger and more active, he might have been able to offset the influence of Tecumseh and avoided the Creek War in 1813. At the time of the Creek uprising he was in poor health and unable to appeal to the Indians in person. Lest the outbreak of the Creek War indicate that Hawkins' great influence had diminished, it should be noted that the Indians who lived close to his agency nearly all remained at peace with the United States in spite of all Tecumseh and the British could do.¹⁹

Hawkins' understanding of the Creek Indians made it possible for him to have greater influence over them than any other white man.

¹⁹Edward Nicolls, Return of Creek Indians Who Have Not Joined the British, undated document (approximately late 1814), War Office I, Vol. 143 (Public Record Office, London).



LIBRARIES IN THE ANTE BELLUM SOUTH

By

Tommy W. Rogers

Libraries were not unknown in the colonial South. Probably the first library in the colonial South consisted of a collection of books owned by the Rev. Robert Hunt, the first clergyman in the Jamestown colony.¹ By 1775 a number of Southerners had accumulated libraries of upwards of a thousand volumes. Among the more notable of these early libraries were those of Virginians (Robert Carter, who owned over fifteen hundred volumes, and George Mason, the guardian of George Washington, whose library contained over fifteen hundred books. The library of William Byrd II, which numbered over four thousand volumes, was probably the largest collection in the English colonies in the colonial period. "We that are banished from the polite pleasures (of London) are forced to take up rural entertainments," he wrote. "A library, a garden, a grove and a purling stream are the innocent pleasures that divert our leisure."²

A reasonable estimation would place the number of books in privately owned collections of Virginia residents alone prior to the eighteenth century as at least fifty thousand volumes.³ What was true of Virginia seems to have been true of the other colonies also. Preparation for the establishment of a public library in Georgia, for example, antedates the founding of the colony. Over three thousand volumes were donated for a public library six months before General Oglethorpe made his maiden visit to the colony.⁴

¹Matthew Page Andrews, *Virginia: The Old Dominion* (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1949), 31, 63.

²For extended discussion of the size and content of these colonial libraries, see Phillip Alexander Bruce, *Intellectual History of Colonial Virginia* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1910), 402-41, and Richard Beale Davis, *Intellectual Life in Jefferson's Virginia 1790-1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 74-118. Cited hereafter as Davis, *Intellectual Life*.

³Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, *The Old South* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1963), 39.

⁴Virginia Satterfield, "College Libraries in Georgia," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, XXV (March, 1941), 17. Cited hereafter as Satterfield, "College Libraries in Georgia."

Possibly the greatest connoisseur of books in the South at the close of the eighteenth century was Thomas Jefferson, who gathered a library estimated at more than ten thousand volumes.⁵ The several thousand-volume collection of John Randolph was judged as nearly equivalent to that of William Byrd II in history and older English literature, and greatly superior to any other contemporary private collection in those areas.⁶

Some of the best private libraries in the United States in the nineteenth century were owned by Southern planters and merchants. The plantation library was a reflection of the education, taste, mentality, and daily life of the planter himself. Books on religion probably constituted the largest group of books in the average library, although books on belles lettres, political economy, and law began replacing the waning dominance of religious writers during the later decades of the ante-bellum period. Other popular subject areas commonly shelved in plantation libraries included books on history and biography, geography and travel, novels, and a liberal sprinkling of the classics.⁷ The erudition expressed in the public statements and private correspondence of many Southern planters gives evidence that their libraries in many instances were functional for purposes other than ostentatious display of wealth labelled by Veblen as conspicuous consumption.⁸

⁵Clement Eaton, *A History of the Old South* (New York: Macmillan, 1953) 72-73. Cited hereafter as Eaton, *Old South*.

⁶Davis, *op., cit.*, 109-11.

⁷Francis Butler Simpkins, *A History of the South* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), 71, and Bernarr Cresap, "The Muscle Shoals Frontier: Early Society and Culture in Lauderdale County," *Alabama Review*, IX (July, 1956), 196-200.

⁸Thomas D. Clarke has suggested that much of the interest expressed in the collection of libraries may have been pseudo: "Ante-bellum Southerners were able to create a semblance of literary culture because they read carefully a few classics. In recent years in older parts of the South family libraries have come to second-hand bookdealers for sale. They have appeared in impressive bindings, and in uniform sets. Because of this fact, modern Southerners often conclude that these books were read by many people. A close examination of the books themselves, however, seems to indicate that many sets were more than decorative properties in 'gentlemen's libraries.'" Thomas D. Clark, "The South in Cultural Change," *Change in the Contemporary South*, Allen P. Sindler, editor (Durham: Duke University Press, 1963), 2, 19. On the other hand, contemporary observer D. R. Hundley presented a somewhat different description in his portrayal of the Southern gentleman: ". . . books though not showily exposed, are forthcoming for in-door entertainment . . .," Daniel R. Hundley *Social Relations in Our Southern States* (New York: B. Price, 1860), 57.

The library of Francis Walker Gilmer, of Richmond was said to contain the most extensive selection of works on general jurisprudence in the United States. The library at "Woodlands", home of South Carolinian William Gilmore Sims, contained a library which exceeded ten thousand volumes.⁹ Hugh Blair Grigsby, a gentleman farmer of Charlotte County, Virginia, gathered a library of some six thousand entries, and kept them housed in a separate building. A better than average bibliographer and modern bibliophile, Grigsby knew bindings, editions, and obscure authors along with content. An ardent collector of Virginiana in manuscript as well as book form, his recorded memories in manuscript and his books currently possessed by the Virginia Historical Society form perhaps the best record of Virginia history prior to 1860 ever accumulated by a single individual.¹⁰

Another illustrious library of the era was that belonging to Dr. Martin W. Phillips, of "Log Hall" in Hinds County, Mississippi. Dr. Phillips, a frequent contributor to DeBow's Review, *The Southern Cultivator*, and numerous other ante-bellum periodicals, owned a wide collection of books of a scientific, historical, and political nature as well as editions of Latin, Greek, and English classics.¹¹ One of the most attractive and widely known private libraries in the Old South was that belonging to A. A. Smets, a wealthy Savannah merchant. This library, which contained upwards of eight thousand volumes, included works of the best poets, novelists, historians, and biographers. "It has a reputation as wide as the country," DeBow wrote, "and scarcely a scholar or distinguished person visits Savannah without seeking it out and feasting on its contents."¹²

The Charleston Library Society, founded in 1748 by a group of seventeen young gentlemen, is generally acknowledged to be the oldest public library in continuous operation in the United States. Within three years membership in the society had increased to a hundred and sixty persons. After two unsuccessful efforts, a charter was granted to the society in 1754 and was ratified by the Crown the following year. Legacies

⁹Eaton, *Old South*, 509.

¹⁰Davis, *Intellectual Life*, 117.

¹¹F. L. Riley, "Diary of a Mississippian," *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society* (Oxford: Mississippi Historical Society, 1909), 307.

¹²*DeBow's Review*, VIII (July, 1852), 97.

and donations brought the society into rapid prosperity, the provincial governor was regularly elected president, and membership came to be regarded as a social distinction.

A museum, founded in 1773 as an offspring of the society, was probably "the first in the English speaking part of the new world and said to be the second in the entire Western world."¹³ The Apprentice Library, established in 1824 for the use of mechanics and tradesmen, offered wide reading facilities. It gradually increased to over five thousand volumes by 1860. It was merged with the public library in 1870.¹⁴

The second oldest existent public library founded in the Southern states is at Alexandria, Virginia. Begun in 1774, and chartered in 1798, its sixty-one page catalog issued in 1856 showed more than four thousand volumes. This library became almost dormant following the Civil War and as late as 1900 contained fewer volumes than were recorded in 1856.¹⁵

The Richmond Library Society, incorporated by the state in 1806, was another of the earlier library societies formed in the Old South. It continued to operate for two decades but finally ceased because, according to one observer, female readers of sentimental novels got the upper hand.¹⁶

Some sort of library, representing several attempts to establish facilities on a public or semi-public basis, functioned in New Orleans from 1806 on. These endeavors were initiated in 1805 when the New Orleans Public Library Society was incorporated by the territorial legislature. This library was a subscription or stock company, with the capital consisting of an unlimited number of shares at twenty-five dollars each. Members could borrow books on the security of their shares; non-members had to deposit five dollars plus one-hundred and

¹³Robert Mobly, Charleston: *A Gracious Heritage* (New York: Appleton—Century—Crofts, 1947), 154.

¹⁴William B. Hesseltine, *The South in American History* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1953), 286; Robert Taylor, *Ante-Bellum South Carolina: Social and Cultural History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942), 147.

¹⁵Edwin Wiley, "Libraries in the Southern States," *The South in the Building of the Nation*, Vol. VIII, *History of the Intellectual Life* (Richmond: Southern Publication Society; 1909), 495-96.

¹⁶Samuel Mordecai, *Richmond in By-Gone Days* (1860), quoted in Davis, *Intellectual Life*, 86.

fifty percent of the value of books withdrawn. Library hours were from ten to two daily in 1806, but were changed to three till eight daily the following year.

City directories claimed six thousand volumes for the library in 1822, and seven-thousand, two-hundred volumes in 1824. However, when the library was seized by the sheriff for nonpayment of rent in 1830, he reported taking possession of only four thousand volumes. Reference to the New Orleans Library Society in the city directory ceased after 1830.

The "Tourro Free Library" of New Orleans was incorporated in April, 1824, and granted lottery privileges. The same year, stock sales having failed to provide adequate funds, the legislature granted lottery privileges to the New Orleans Public Library Society. Lotteries seem to have been one of the surest and most popular means of raising funds. The city directory for 1824 stated that "the Tourro Free Library is kept in the Presbyterian Church, from which any person may have the use of books, gratis."¹⁷ This library seems to have ceased to operate during the 1830's.

The New Orleans Commercial library, initiated by a group of young men in 1831, possessed over five thousand volumes by the early 1840's. Many of these books were purchased by B. F. French, who placed them in the Merchant's Exchange on Royal Street around 1842. They were made available at no charge to patrons of the Exchange Reading Room at least until 1846. DeBow, writing in 1846, observed that "many of the works here are of highest interest and value," and expressed concern over their future disposition. "Shall they continue as private property," he asked, "not even accessible to the reading room as we understand they will be in a short time, or will some individual or society purchase them for public use?"¹⁸

Several months earlier DeBow had given the contents of the B. F. French Library as consisting of seventy-five hundred works in Greek, Latin, French, and Spanish, as well as English language works on statistics, commerce, history, biography, and natural and physical science. Included were "some beautiful

¹⁷Roger P. McCutcheon, "Libraries in New Orleans," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, XX (January, 1937), 156.

¹⁸*DeBow's Review*, 11 (November, 1846) 350-51.

specimens of early printing from 1452 to 1490" and "most of the classical writers in folio, from 1495 to 1550." Other valuable volumes noted by (DeBow) included a manuscript history of the English Revolution of 1688 and a manuscript history of the American Congress held at New York in 1765. The latter was formerly owned by Charles Thompson, Secretary of the Congress held in Philadelphia in 1774. DeBow expressed the opinion that if this collection of books could be acquired by the Public School Library of the Second Municipality then the city of New Orleans could "boast of the largest and best selected library in the Southwest."¹⁹ The French library was purchased by (Alvarez Fisk.) It was later presented to the city and combined with the Public School Library to form the nucleus for the contemporary New Orleans Public Library.²⁰

The Public School Library of New Orleans was initiated, largely through the enterprise of (S. J. Peters,) by the Second Municipality Public School in 1846. (DeBow,) commenting on the five thousand volumes it possessed in 1846, stated that "half of these are for the use of children, but among the rest, we have been delighted to find works of the highest character and value, and have had occasion to refer to them to great advantage."²¹ This library was financed by "an inconsiderable tax levied upon each of the public school scholars in the municipality, in no case to exceed twenty-five cents per month." Payment of dues for three years entitled pupils to life membership. Payment of five dollars entitled any citizen to use of the library facilities. The Public School Library was housed in the City Hall on St. Charles Street, and was open from two o'clock till nine o'clock daily.

By 1848 the Public School Library had volumes "comprising most of the standard works in English, and many in the French and European languages."²² The 1848 catalog issued

¹⁹*Ibid.*, (April, 1846), 381.

²⁰E. A. Davis, *Louisiana the Pelican State* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University State Press, 1959), 194; J. S. Buckingham, *The Slave States of America* (London: Fisher, 1842), 365; Alcee Fortier, *A History of Louisiana*, (New York: Manzi, Jayat, and Co., 1904), V, 232; Federal Writers of the Works Progress Administration, *New Orleans City Guide* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1938), 319.

²¹*DeBow's Review*, II, 351.

²²*Ibid.*, V, (May-June, 1848), 539.

by the Board of Directors gave the following evaluation of future prospects:

By reference to the catalog it will be found that care has been taken to select such books as will serve to create and foster a taste for useful reading, and promote the cause of learning and sound morals. The steady growth of the library is secured, by the permanence of its principal source of revenue, but the directors anticipate with confidence, that an increasing list of annual subscribers, will enable them to accelerate the extension of its benefits, and in a few years to render it one of the largest and most valuable collections of books in our country.²³

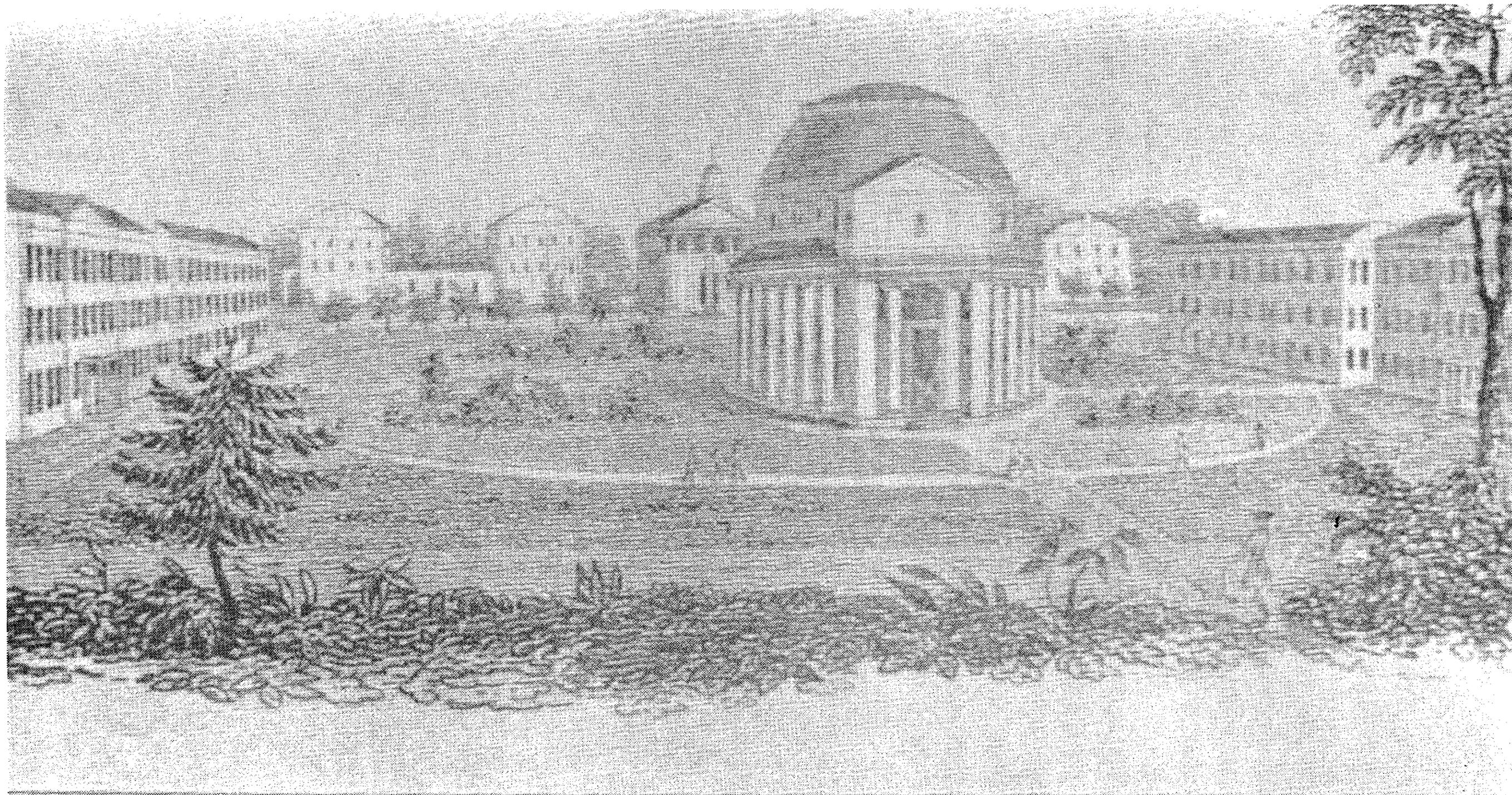
Other ante-bellum libraries in New Orleans included the New Exchange Reading Room which contained "journals of all our states and Europe" and the Library of the Young Men's Society. The membership of the latter consisted of young men "concerned with commerce." DeBow indicated that a few public lectures had been held under their sponsorship, but had attracted very little interest. The library was described as small but increasing, and was open to subscribers from nine to five daily.²⁴

Collegiate libraries were not accorded a great deal of emphasis in most ante-bellum colleges. The best collegiate libraries in the South at the end of the ante-bellum period were those at the University of Georgia, University of Virginia, and the College of South Carolina. The nucleus of the library at the University of Virginia, which consisted of some 6,000 volumes personally selected by Jefferson, had grown to 16,000 by 1840 — about the same number Yale had accumulated in over a century.

College libraries were typically open only a few hours a week in order to permit books to be withdrawn and returned. The regulations governing use of the library at the University of Alabama were typical of this period. Regulations passed by the trustees in 1839 required that the library be opened at least once a week. Use of the library was tendered on a gratis basis

²³*Ibid.*, 539.

²⁴*Ibid.* II, 351.



University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa. Earliest known view.
(From La Tourette's Map of Alabama, 1838.)

Earliest known view of the University of Alabama
(From La Tourette's Map of Alabama, 1838.)

The Senior class deliver original addresses before the college body, twice in the course of the year; and present English compositions once a month; also Latin compositions occasionally. A portion of them deliver original pieces at their graduation, on Commencement day.

The three lower classes declaim in rotation, 15 each week. Each of those classes is exercised frequently in translating English into Latin, and in writing English compositions. Latin compositions are prepared by the Junior class; and French compositions are exhibited by the Seniors.

The Junior class, or a portion of them, deliver original pieces at a public exhibition, at the close of the collegiate year. Examinations are conducted partly, in writing; in part, also, orally.

The University possesses valuable apparatus in the departments of natural philosophy, astronomy, engineering, and chemistry; also, extensive and well selected cabinets in mineralogy, geology, and conchology.

To the chemical department, valuable additions are repeatedly made for the illustration of recent discoveries in chemistry; and the laboratory is kept up to the requirements of modern science.

In connection, also, with the department of geology and agricultural chemistry, a separate laboratory has been fitted up, for the analysis of soils, ores, &c., which is open to students, and in which they receive practical instruction in that branch of science.

The cabinet of minerals, &c., contains a suite of specimens, illustrative of the geology of Alabama. This collection, receives yearly additions, and when completed, will present at a glance the mineral industrial resources of the state.

The library consists of about five thousand volumes. A descriptive catalogue, extending to 260 pages, has been prepared, upon the same plan as the catalogue of the Edinburgh Signet Library. The names of authors are alphabetically arranged, and an index of subjects has been appended, for the use of those who may consult the library. Numerous biographical notices, collated with great care, have been incorporated into the work. The two literary societies in college have libraries of their own.

An astronomical observatory has been erected, and furnished with instruments for observation, of a superior order. The building is fifty-four feet in length, by twenty-two in breadth in the centre. The west wing is occupied by a transit circle, constructed by Simms, of London, having a telescope of five feet focal length, with an object glass of four inches clear aperture. The limb is three feet in diameter, divided to five minutes, and reading by four microscopes to single seconds, and by estimation to fractional parts of a second. Accompanying the transit circle is a very superior clock by Dent, of London. The central apartment is surmounted by a revolving dome of eighteen feet internal diameter, under which is placed an equatorial instrument, constructed also by Simms. The telescope has a clear aperture of eight inches, and a focal length of twelve feet, and is mounted after the manner of the celebrated Dorpat instrument

to the trustees and officers of the University and to individuals who made donations of \$100 in value. Resident graduates and students were also permitted to use the library, but the regulations stated that "no graduates should be considered residents and as such entitled to the use of the library unless they actually reside within the college walls."²⁵

New rules adopted in 1843 called for the library to be opened at noon on Wednesday for making application for withdrawals and again on Thursday at the same time for the students to receive them. Regulations issued in 1852 called for additional hours: one hour during the noon recess on Mondays and Thursdays and from two to four o'clock on Saturday afternoons. Rather formal procedures were established for the issuance of books:

Any person desiring a book shall write down the date and the library number of the book upon a slip of paper and hand it to the librarian and the librarian shall take the book from the shelves. No student shall take a book from the shelves upon any pretense.²⁶

An 1852 resolution of the faculty acknowledged purchase of wire doors for the library cases as well as the purchase of "a dozen spit-boxes" for the library room.²⁷ The library contained over four thousand volumes plus a collection of pamphlets and other unbound material in 1850.

Rarely was the ante-bellum college library deemed sufficiently important to have a building of its own, but "migrated around as necessity dictated."²⁸ The library at the College of South Carolina was possibly a unique exception. There was built here, in 1840, a structure "that could claim to be the first separate college library building in the United States."²⁹ Within ten years an admittedly inadequate library had become one of

²⁵James B. Sellers, *History of the University of Alabama*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1953), 100.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 104.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 106.

²⁸Allan P. Tankersly, *College Life at Old Oglethorpe* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1951), 41; E. Merton Coulter, *College Life in the Old South*; (New York: Macmillan, 1928), 53; Satterfield, "College Libraries in Georgia", 29.

²⁹Daniel Walker Hollis, *University of South Carolina*, Vol 1, *South Carolina College* (Columbia; University of South Carolina Press, 1951), 4.

the best in the South. By 1850 it contained over 18,000 volumes — thus exceeding Princeton and Columbia — and even so exacting a scholar as Francis Lieber found it exceedingly useful. The fine library at the College of South Carolina added greatly to the reputation of the school.

It was not unusual for the libraries of the college literary societies to outstrip the college library in number of volumes, and the wide range of subject matter in the libraries of the literary societies allowed greater opportunity for the play of intellect than did the narrower religious fare of the usual college library.³¹

Outside of the colleges and the larger cities there were few collections of books to which the public had access. DeBow, in 1853, reported on a plan for a “grand circulating library for the South as a means of distributing information where the population is proportionately sparse.” The plan called for central depots to be established from which books would be distributed to the towns of counties in proportion to the amount of their subscription. Books would be returned and exchanged for different ones at twelve month intervals. “We wish our people were as ready,” (DeBow) wrote, “to take up county subscriptions, and as ready to tax themselves for the purchase of books and libraries as they are for subscribing to railroads.”³²

Nevertheless, the growth of towns and cities in the South was accompanied by a remarkable expansion of public libraries.³³ According to the 1850 census the eleven states which later joined the Confederacy contained only 71 public libraries with a cumulative total of less than 200,000 volumes. School, church, and college libraries raised the total number of non-private libraries to 350 with a cumulative total of 360,000 volumes.³⁴ By 1860 the number of public libraries had increased to just under 4,000

³⁰*Ibid*, 35-36.

³¹Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 143, 146; Tankersly, *op. cit.*, 41; Satterfield “College Libraries in Georgia,” 23.

³²*DeBow's Review*, XV (October, 1853), 432.

³³Clement Eaton, *The Growth of Southern Civilization* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1961), 260.

³⁴J. D. B. DeBow, *Compendium of the Seventh Census* (Washington: A. O. P. Noholson, Public Printer, 1852), 159.

and held a total of nearly 2,000,000 volumes. The total number of non-private libraries had increased to more than 37,000 with a total of 2,330,000 books.³⁵

However, as historian Clement Eaton has pointed out, the phenomenal expansion of public libraries in the South during the last decade of the ante-bellum period should not be taken too sanguinely since the average number of volumes in these libraries did not exceed an average of more than one volume for every two or three white persons. South Carolina, which possessed one and one-half volumes per white resident, was an outstanding exception.³⁶ The ravages of the Civil War brought an abrupt interruption to the rapid expansion of public libraries which had been experienced in the decade of the fifties.

³⁵U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistics of the United States, Mortality and Miscellaneous Statistics* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1865), 505.

³⁶Clement Eaton, *Freedom of Thought in the Old South* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1940), 78.