

Trustees recommended that the two men be judiciously replaced, but Synod rejected this as "a dangerous expedient." Professor Young offered his resignation, and at the suggestion of Synod, stayed on for another year while a replacement could be found; Professor Lowry continued for three more years until 1883. In the years intervening between the departures of Young and Lowry, E. L. Patton gave up his post to teach at his alma mater, the South Carolina College. Thus by 1883, only William Hood remained on the faculty who had served before W. M. Grier assumed the presidency.⁸⁰

New appointments were subject to Synod's unwillingness to look beyond the bounds of the church and the alumni as well as the \$1,000 annual salary. The three men chosen were all recent graduates of the college, with the first, John H. Miller of Alabama, the most recent (Class of 1880). Miller's selection, however, was unprecedented in that he had a year of graduate training at Johns Hopkins, under the new German system, where he had received a master's degree. In 1882, he was joined by J. I. McCain of Tennessee, who also had a year of graduate study at Johns Hopkins. The third new professor appointed in 1883 was J. McClintock Todd who had a more conventional Erskine background in that he was an ARP minister who was an editor of the *A. R. Presbyterian*. In 1888, when Miller left the college to return to Alabama to practice law, a brother of the president, P. L. Grier, then in charge of a public school in Washington, D.C., was selected to succeed him as professor of mathematics.⁸¹ (In 1891, McCain became the first Erskine professor to secure an earned doctorate, a Ph.D. in English and modern languages from Princeton, and it was fitting that he soon earned the reputation of being the most demanding teacher in the college.)

With these changes in staff, there were also some innovations in offerings. In 1880-81, French and German were added to the curriculum, and in 1886, McCain offered the first course in English Literature. In that year, the college itself granted the only Ph.D. in its history to C. M. True of the Smithsonian Institute. This degree, like the M.A.'s which it had granted since the late 1870's, recognized some post-graduate study done off the campus.⁸²

The new professors may have somewhat contrasted with their predecessors in regard to training, but there was no loss of emphasis upon discipline and moral training. John H. Miller in an article in 1886 warned the older students of their duty to provide an example for their younger fellows by Bible reading, attendance upon meetings of the YMCA, and "proper reverence for divine ordinances," and he concluded "that education which has not under it and behind it a vigorous Christian life is dangerous."⁸³ McCain, in one of his frequent addresses to the college YMCA in 1887 advised his listeners, "The first truth to which I call your attention is this: If you wish to be useful to yourselves and to the world, you must realize that this life is a life of work. No one is placed here simply for ornamental purposes."⁸⁴

In January 1882, the first student newspaper was issued under the simple title of *The Erskine Student*. Its stated object was "to afford a field for the improvement of Erskine students," and its subtitle was "A Monthly Journal Devoted to Fact, Fun, and Fiction." It was issued irregularly through the spring of 1886.⁸⁵

Despite this stress upon seriousness of purpose, all was not work. There were such recreations as an annual student body picnic at Erwin's Mill on the Saluda River and class day exercises initiated by the Class of 1887. There were intramural baseball games on the grounds on the corner of Cleveland and Abbeville Streets. Sometimes the college nines engaged in match or challenge contests with clubs in the surrounding country. For example, the *A. R. Presbyterian* in May 1888, carried a notice from "the best nine of Erskine" to "cross bats" with "the first nine" of Anderson whenever the latter accepted its challenge.⁸⁶

Whiskey continued to be a feature of student life, notwithstanding the efforts of both the town and college authorities. Professor E. L. Reid in a memoir forty years later told of the conditions when he entered college in 1884, as follows: "The 'ole Rock and Rye' flowed freely in those days. I had to turn down many an insistent offer," he said, "and the insistent ones used a not illogical argument just before the soirees. 'It will loosen your tongue and keep you from getting stuck,' they said, and that was a pretty

The faculty was similarly reorganized. J. I. McCain was moved to a new chair of English literature and language. William Hood, the senior member of the faculty, resigned over what he saw as pressure by the First Presbytery to get a representative on the faculty. Under reorganization, Hood's post of professor of history and belles lettres was abolished and a new position of professor of chemistry, geology, and physics was created. Hood had also been teaching the courses in physical science, although he (like all his colleagues except McCain) had no advanced training in this field. When he did not apply for the new position, the Board selected E. L. Reid of Charlotte with the understanding that Reid would take graduate study at Johns Hopkins before assuming the job, and Hood was asked to take a one-year appointment to fill in until then. Hood resigned and explained his position in two vehement letters in the *A. R. Presbyterian*.⁹⁸ Temporary instructors filled the slot while Reid studied two years at Johns Hopkins, and when he began his career in the fall of 1894, it was as Erskine's first trained scientist.⁹⁹

In 1893, F. Y. Pressly, son of one of the college founders (James P. Pressly), was selected as professor of Greek and German, and in the same year, D. G. Caldwell was chosen professor of Latin and French, a post vacated by the death of J. McClintock Todd. Todd's death left only W. M. Grier as a minister on the faculty, and the church paper reported that there was sentiment at the 1893 Synod that there ought to be more ministers on the faculty. Both Pressly and Caldwell were ministers.¹⁰⁰

While the reorganization was under way, a disastrous fire destroyed the main College building on the night of January 22, 1892. The loss was severe as the only remaining building other than the literary halls was the obsolete Lindsay Hall. Irreplaceable papers, portraits, and books perished as well as a prized treasure, the 2,500 year old Egyptian mummy which the college had received a few years before from the United Presbyterian mission in Egypt in memory of Mary Galloway Giffen, the first ARP foreign missionary. Classes had to be moved into Lindsay Hall, as unsuited as it was for such use, and to a nearby house, and the enrollment for the fall of 1892, dipped to

forty-eight. The plans for a new auditorium were revised following the fire, and, not only was the projected new building now designed to replace the old main building for classroom use, but its cost was now estimated at \$25,000, even when the north wall of the old building was deemed sound enough to use. Construction was speeded on the new building, but in March the fresh brick of the left tower collapsed and crashed into the auditorium. This mishap delayed its completion for use until the fall of 1893 and increased its cost to about \$42,000.¹⁰¹

The campaign to pay for what was often called "the new college" faced hard economic times. President Grier was able by strenuous canvassing to reduce the debt to about \$20,000 by 1895, but even with a gift of \$7,000 from Joseph Wylie of Chester, the indebtedness had not been significantly reduced by Grier's death four years later.

In the meantime the college authorities had been able somewhat ingeniously to put up Erskine's first dormitory, College Home. As essential as the new main building was to the college operation, its opening brought no dramatic increase in enrollment. A dormitory was needed to accomplish this. Various proposals to fund such a building in the face of the college debt failed until 1895, when the trustees boldly decided to borrow the money, partly from the college endowment, and build a dormitory for an estimated cost of \$8,600.

The structure, College Home, was a functional three-story building with a mess hall and quarters for President Grier and his family on the first floor. It was completed in the spring of 1897, but its final cost of \$13,000 was only one-third paid two years later at the end of W. M. Grier's presidency.¹⁰²

With all the changes in buildings, faculty, and curriculum in the 1890's, perhaps the most controversial change was the introduction of coeducation. In the same decade women gained access to state institutions, namely, Winthrop College in Rock Hill and the South Carolina College, and for a time at Furman and Wofford.

Much of the opposition to coeducation at Erskine centered around the friends of the Due West Female College who feared such competition. From its founding in 1860,

- ⁴²ARP, Dec. 22, 1897; Agnew Diary, April 11, 1851
- ⁴³Abbeville Press & Banner, July 4, 1900
- ⁴⁴Agnew Diary, March 20, 1851; also see Agnew memoir about the incident in ARP, May 2, 1894
- ⁴⁵Agnew Diary, April 28, 1851
- ⁴⁶Agnew Diary, April 10, 1851
- ⁴⁷A. B. Hood to Father, March 2, 1858
- ⁴⁸Due West Telescope, Nov. 26, 1852
- ⁴⁹ARP, Dec. 3, 1874
- ⁵⁰Erskine Collegiate Recorder, April 1860
- ⁵¹Due West Telescope, Feb. 5, 1858
- ⁵²Due West Telescope, May 14, 1858
- ⁵³Lesesne, pp. 91-93, 99
- ⁵⁴Lesesne, p. 80
- ⁵⁵E. E. Pressly to W. R. Hemphill, July 6, 1840, Hemphill Papers
- ⁵⁶Grier to Hemphill, Dec. 1, 1847. See copy in vault, McCain Library. The Hemphill family tradition is that George was sent to Mecklenburg County, but W. R. Hemphill made a trip to Columbia to get a pardon from the governor, and that George Grier was brought back to Due West where he lived out the rest of his life.
- ⁵⁷Compiled from manuscript census schedule, 1860
- ⁵⁸Due West Telescope, Jan. 18, 1861
- ⁵⁹H. J. Walker to an unnamed friend, Jan. 5, 1861, McCain Library, Erskine College
- ⁶⁰Due West Telescope, June 28, 1861
- ⁶¹Mary Hemphill Greene in Abbeville Press & Banner, April 1, 1931
- ⁶²Due West Telescope, August 30, 1861
- ⁶³Due West Telescope, July 4, 1862; Abbeville Medium, September 22, 1910
- ⁶⁴"One of the young boys, Fred Sutton of Arkansas, took his own life and was buried in an unmarked grave in village cemetery, possibly the only Due West student ever to commit suicide. See O. Y. Bonner in ARP, May 27, 1908
- ⁶⁵Abbeville Press & Banner, July 3, 1889; Centennial History, p. 150. Young Grier spent the rest of the war studying for the ministry and teaching in a pioneer school for young Negro boys in Due West.
- ⁶⁶Lesesne, pp. 111-115; Abbeville Press, July 19, 1867
- ⁶⁷Samuel Agnew commented in his diary, "I voted for Hemphill every pop, and think that this old servant of the College ought not to be displaced." Agnew Diary, Sept. 17, 1867
- ⁶⁸Agnew was pessimistic about the new endowment scheme

- and wrote "I doubt the success of the scheme. I think that Erskine is nearly 'caved up.'" Agnew Diary, Sept. 17, 1867.
- ⁶⁹Lesesne, pp. 116-118
- ⁷⁰Abbeville Press & Banner, May 27, 1874
- ⁷¹Lesesne, pp. 120-121
- ⁷²Lesesne, pp. 125-128
- ⁷³Abbeville Press & Banner, Sept. 6, 1876, Feb. 6, June 19, 1878. In the spring of 1876, Cyrus Wimbush, a black Republican leader in Due West was convicted in a case brought by the Erskine faculty of bringing three flasks of corn liquor from Abbeville for sale to "the young gentlemen of the college." Abbeville Press & Banner, May 24, 1876
- ⁷⁴Agnew Diary, Oct. 24, 1871; Lesesne, p. 131
- ⁷⁵MS, 1874, p. 18
- ⁷⁶MS, 1875, p. 18
- ⁷⁷MS, 1879, p. 17
- ⁷⁸Lesesne, pp. 132-133
- ⁷⁹Lesesne, pp. 133-134. Due West benefitted by the preparatory departments of the two colleges, but this likely played a part in the town's failure to set up a public school within its limits until 1899.
- ⁸⁰Lesesne, pp. 137-139
- ⁸¹In 1891, McCain became the first Erskine professor to secure an earned doctorate, a PhD in English and modern languages from Princeton, and it was fitting that he soon earned the reputation of being the most demanding teacher in the college. Lesesne, pp. 141-143
- ⁸²Lesesne, p. 165
- ⁸³Erskine Student, May 1886
- ⁸⁴ARP, Feb. 1887
- ⁸⁵Erskine Student, October, 1882; November, 1885; May, 1886
- ⁸⁶ARP, May 31, 1888; March 20, 1889; Lesesne, p. 152
- ⁸⁷Erskine Mirror, Jan. 15, 1924
- ⁸⁸ARP, July 22, 1886
- ⁸⁹For example, the June 23, 1884 trustee meeting drew only six members, and its actions had to be authorized by Synod. In any event, Synod retained for itself the power to make the most important decisions for the college such as selection of the faculty. MS, 1884
- ⁹⁰MS, 1888, p. 19
- ⁹¹ARP, June 20, 1889; Semi-Centennial Addresses of Erskine College (Charleston, 1890)
- ⁹²ARP, Nov. 20, 1890
- ⁹³ARP, Nov. 20, 1890
- ⁹⁴ARP, Dec. 4, 1890