

The Chatham Historical Journal

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THE SCHOOL-GIRL.

THERE IS NO ROYAL ROAD TO LEARNING.

VOL. I. PITTSBOROUGH, N. C., MONDAY, AUGUST 6 NO. 3.

by Jane Pyle*

The School-Girl was a newspaper written by students at Locust Hill Female Seminary in Pittsborough. Published during the fall school session of 1866 and the spring and fall sessions of 1867, the four-page paper provides little-known details about the school and its pupils. Drawing from nine known issues of *The School-Girl*,¹ this article will describe the paper and the school, adding information from other sources about some of the people involved.

Locust Hill Female Seminary

From its earliest days, Pittsboro had both boys' and girls' academies,² more or less equivalent to today's high schools. That Locust Hill Seminary opened in winter 1861 is calculated from an advertisement for the school in *The School-Girl* of September 1866, which announced that the twelfth session began July 23rd and would continue until December 7th. With two sessions each year, the first session would have begun in January 1861, just after the Rev. Robert B. Sutton's arrival in Pittsboro the previous fall to assume the rectorship of St. Bartholomew's Church.³ It was common for clergymen to supplement their income by teaching.⁴

In the November 1866 issue of *The School-Girl*, M. McClenahan⁵ wrote an editorial describing "Locust Hill Seminary: Then and Now." The school was located just west of St. Bartholomew's

Church, Pittsboro. The babbling brook she describes still flows at the bottom of the hill, but the locust grove has disappeared. She tells of the former dilapidated and forlorn appearance of the school, its bright yellow rain-streaked, its windows battered and patched with paper, the plaster cracked, and the walls defaced with "names and crude effusions of former occupants." Then she writes of the addition of a new room, a cream-colored wash on the outside, glass windows, and cracks filled to "defy the blasts of winter." The walls are adorned with maps and charts, and there is "every appliance to . . . inform the mind and incite to study." Moreover, an assistant has been employed,⁶ so that the principal can now accommodate more pupils with the approaching new session.

Notwithstanding these improvements, by the following spring the building needed attention, for the

LOCUST HILL

FEMALE SEMINARY, PITTSBOROUGH, N. C.

Rev. R. B. SUTTON, A. M. PRINCIPAL.

Terms. From \$15 to \$25 per session, according to the class, payable in currency. Music, Drawing and the Languages, and fuel, extra.

The children of Soldiers who died, or were killed in the service of the Confederacy, half price.

Board can be had in the village at ten dollars, per month, payable in specie or its equivalent.

Particular attention is given to the smaller pupils.

The twelfth Session began July 23rd and will continue until Dec. 7th. Pupils will be received at any time, and charged from the date of admission. No deduction for lost time, except in cases of protracted sickness.

For farther information apply to the

PRINCIPAL.

*Jane Pyle, past president of the Chatham County Historical Association, has written articles and edited the *Chatham Historical Journal* since 1988.

May 1867 issue opened with an appeal from the Rev. Sutton to the community for help in enlarging the school building and enclosing the grounds, where sheep and goats were grazing. To raise funds, the pupils prepared tableaux ("historical, novel, comic etc.") for presentation at the court house, with refreshments and the Pittsboro Band to enliven the meeting. Tickets cost twenty-five cents. The amount raised is not reported in surviving issues, but a benefit concert for the school the following September raised \$46.65. Two months later, "A Letter" by Caroline M. Jackson⁷ reports that the principal has fixed a nice playground for croquet, and she describes the field and rules of the game.

The Rev. Sutton more than likely started as the only teacher; he was remembered fondly after his death by his pupils, who erected a plaque in his memory. In the October 1866 *School-Girl*, Alice R. Brower⁸ recalled her first session at Locust Hill on a cold, blustery day. The pupils had started reciting the Bible lesson, but the principal greeted her with an invitation to warm herself at the fire before deciding which class she should join.

Tuition cost \$15 to \$25 per session, with an extra charge for fuel. Though all the pupils named in by-lines were connected with local families, board could be arranged in the village for ten dollars a month. Half of the pupils whose articles were published were from families attending the Episcopal church. While this was a school for girls, the principal's son and namesake, age 12, was a student in February 1867, when his first composition, "The Horse," was published.

No details are available about the curriculum, but the school was not just a finishing school, and the advertisements for Locust Hill make clear that music, drawing, and language instruction cost extra. In 1869 a similar academy in Greensboro advertised a course of study that included mathematics, the "English branches," natural science, and "mental philosophy."⁹ *The School-Girl* began as a schoolroom exercise, to improve spelling, punctuation, and grammar, and the pupils who wrote for the newspaper show remarkable facility with expression, grammar, and composition. Geography and history were part of the curriculum, for a note to "A Letter from Rome" by S. J. King¹⁰ in the August 1866 issue explains that the letter is based upon stereoscopic pictures that are used in the seminary to illustrate those subjects.

The School-Girl

The School-Girl is printed on a single sheet, 9" x 12" and folded in half, making a four-page paper 6" x 9". The black ink is uneven, some lines fading to ob-

scurity. The first three pages are filled with articles and the last page carries the masthead and advertising. Three volumes were published of this short-lived newspaper. In December 1867, a brief article announced:

. . . *Our little paper has had a wide circulation, going into eleven States; and from all quarters, words of commendation have reached us. So far, we have heard of only two faults; one, the size, which although true for the reader, the typesetters have found it a mammoth sheet; the other fault, its very low price. . . . All persons indebted to the School-Girl will please settle the mite at once.*¹¹

The School-Girl,

DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF

Education and Morals,

and conducted by the Pupils of the

LOCUST HILL FEMALE SEMINARY, was established for the purpose of improving them in Spelling, Punctuation and Composition. The original articles, unless otherwise specified, are by the Pupils. It is designed to publish it the first MONDAY in each Month, during the session of the Seminary. The Editress is elected monthly by the Pupils from among themselves.

MISS GRACE K. CRANE, Editress

The masthead goes on to give the terms of subscription: ten cents for each school session of five months, payable in advance, and terms of advertising: "Advertisements will be inserted at Five Cents per line for each insertion."

In the October 1866 issue, F. T. London,¹² having been selected by her classmates, relates "The Trials of an Editress." Her range of duties includes preparing the editorial, setting the type, correcting proof, working the press, and folding the papers. Once a gust of wind carried off her copy as she was setting type, requiring her to rewrite the missing portion or be forced to distribute (sort) the type. If the type falls out of place it becomes pie, she says, and comments, "Apple pie, peach pie and pie generally is very good; but printers pie is abominable." The editress has also to contend with press problems such as the paper tearing or ink gumming,¹³ and the problem of critics merits a paragraph by itself. She concludes by saying that the girls have found the trials so great that they unanimously decided that the price should be raised to twenty-five cents, "but our Principal, generally so willing to indulge us, declines."

The following spring (March 1867) Mary S. Headen¹⁴ wrote another clever editorial about print-

ers' terms: chapel, cases, stick, font, chase, furniture, bed, fly, bank, and galley. "They spoke of the galley; and as there is a little stream nearby, I fancied to myself some fine sport, sailing in a boat; but to my disappointment, it was a kind of tray for holding type."

Other articles by students range from Civil War or Biblical history ("The Battle Field," "The Passage of the Red Sea"), sermonettes ("Silent Influence," "The Little Acts That Cost Us Nothing"), and nature essays ("Beauties of Nature," "A Morning Walk") to puzzles and jokes.¹⁵

Brief items of national news were given, such as the laying of the transatlantic cable and President Johnson's tour through some of the northern states. Not uniformly impartial, in February 1867 the newspaper reported that "Congress is still occupied in discussing what it will do with the Southern States, and devising ways and means of enriching New England manufacturers and Pennsylvania iron masters by virtually prohibitive tariffs."

Local news items reported on the first annual commencement of Capt. C. B. Denson's Pittsborough Scientific Academy, a robbery and vandalism at Locust Hill seminary, and a two-hour lecture on Russia by Capt. Denson, delivered without manuscript or notes.

The School-Girl's leading article was usually borrowed from another publication, such as *Parisian Sights*, *Scrap Book*, *Hood's Up the Rhine* and *Whimsicalities*, and the *National Intelligencer*.¹⁶ Advertising filled the back page and sometimes spilled over to the middle pages. Advertisers include local merchants Headen Bynum & Co., Womack & Hill, H. A. London & Son (later W. L. London), and Edwin Long; and agents for Fayetteville and New York merchants. Professionals such as attorney John Manning, piano teacher Miss A. Ivie Miller, music teacher Miss A. S. Thompson, and artist Mrs. Dr. Taylor (before she joined the Locust Hill faculty) advertised, as did carpenter Martin Hanks and Mrs. R. Quince, who had a house and lot for sale.

Summary

The School-Girl, even in its brief life, gives us a direct and intelligent look into a small community recovering from the Civil War, capturing detail that goes missing in history books. Its lively reporters entertain and instruct, and we can only hope that the remaining issues of the newspaper and its cousins from other schools might be found in Chatham or other attics and put out for all to see.

In perusing this book, which we did with the greatest avidity, we were struck with the greatness of the man. We felt proud that we had such a representative man, suffering for us,—so patient, so dignified, so sublime. During the days that Mr. Davis directed the affairs of the Confederacy, we were no admirers of his policy. Whatever may have been our views, when he occupied the highest position, no one, even his enemies, can withhold from him admiration at the manner in which he suffers.

The breadth and extent of Mr. Davis's knowledge is amazing. There is no sub-

A review of CSA President Davis's "The Prison Life" in the August 1866 issue is signed only "S."

NOTES

1. In late January 2006, Ms. Sallie Lord Segrist Sypher sent a copy of *The School-Girl* to the Chatham County Historical Association (CCHA) and later sent more copies. Additional copies of *The School-Girl* were found in manuscript collections at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (UNC-CH), Duke University, and the North Carolina Archives (C. B. Denson Papers). This article draws from all these documents: Vol. I, No. 3, August 6, 1866 (CCHA); Vol. I, No. 4, September 3, 1866 (Duke); Vol. I, No. 5, October 1, 1866 (Duke); Vol. II, No. 1, November 5, 1866 (CCHA, partial; Duke); Vol. 2, No. 3, February, 1867 (CCHA; Duke); Vol. 2, No. 4, March 1867 (Duke); Vol. 3, No. 1, May 1867 (UNC-CH); Vol. 3, No. 3, September 1867 (Duke); Vol. 3, No. 5, December 1867 (CCHA; NC Archives)

2. Wade H. Hadley, Jr., et al, *Chatham County, North Carolina, 1771-1971* (Durham: Moore Publishing Co., 2nd Edition, 1976), p. 183.

3. Robert Bean Sutton, 1826-1896, was born in Virginia and served parishes in Granville County and Frederick County, Maryland, before beginning an 18-year ministry in Pittsboro. The church history relates that in the aftermath of the Civil War he was forced to add teaching to his duties "in order to get bread for [his] family." (Martha Hope Smith, *History of St. Bartholomew's Parish, Pittsboro, North Carolina*, 1983, p. 12-13.) *The School-Girl* affirms an earlier beginning.

4. In his diary The Rev. Sidney Bumpas describes his move to Pittsboro in 1843, where both he and his wife teach school for half a day because he can't support himself with the church. He says that the Episcopalians are trying to get the education of their youth into their own hands, and he thinks the Methodists should educate their daughters "among ourselves." (Rev. Sidney D. Bumpas, *Autobiography and Diary*, Bumpas Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.)

5. Margaret McClenahan was the daughter of Dr. Spence McClenahan, wealthy Pittsboro physician, politician, and businessman. In the 1840s Dr. McClenahan bought the ele-

gant former girls' school, Kelvin, and lived with his family there until his death in 1859. His widow and children continued to live at Kelvin until after the Civil War, when "Miss Maggie" purchased a smaller house for herself, mother, and a brother, where she lived until her death in 1927 (*The Architectural Heritage of Chatham County, North Carolina*, Chatham County Historical Association, 1991, p. 108). She was 16 when this article was written.

6. Starting with this issue, *The School-Girl* lists two assistants: Mary P. Newby and Grace K. Crane. Born in 1819 to a prominent Fayetteville merchant, Mary Pierce Newby was probably a sister of George Clinton Newby, a physician at Egypt mine near Gulf. She is listed in the 1870 census as a teacher in Gulf. Grace Crane was the Rev. Sutton's stepdaughter, about 17 years old in 1866, when she was editress of *The School-Girl* in August. Later, Mrs. Dr. Taylor, who had earlier advertised her availability for lessons in music, drawing, and painting, joined the faculty. Carolina Taylor was the widow of Dr. W. A. Taylor.

7. Caroline M. Jackson was the daughter of J. J. and Lucy Worth Jackson and was about ten years old when her composition appeared in the final issue of *The School-Girl*. Her older sister Betty Louisa was editress of the February 1867 issue and contributed several articles. In 1875 she married Henry Armand London, founder of the *Chatham Record*.

8. The 1870 census for Chatham County identifies Lewis Brower, 49, as a butcher. His daughter Alice was 16, so she would have been about 12 when her article was published. Her older sister Laura, editress in May 1867, is shown in the 1870 census as living at home and teaching school.

9. *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory*, 1869 (Raleigh: Levi Branson).

10. The 1850 census shows Eliza and James King, a tailor, living with Mary and Sarah Reid. In 1860 and 1870 Eliza King and her daughter Sarah, 10, are still living with Mary Reid. Both women are mantua, or cloak, makers.

11. December 1867 issue, edited by G. W. Watters. Godina Watters was born in April 1852, daughter of Leonora Frink and Gen. Henry H. Watters of Wilmington. Her widowed mother moved to Pittsboro after remarriage to Capt. (USN and CSA) William Boudinot (1817-1889), one of Pittsboro's more colorful local characters. In her editorial essay, "Local Attachments," Watters remembers her grandfather and her childhood home on the seashore.

12. Fanny Thurston London was born in 1851, the daughter of Henry Adolphus and Sallie Lord London. She was married to Fredrick Hill, J. Olmstead, and Capt. John Wesley Taylor, all prominent families of Chatham County.

13. Job printing at H. A. London's store (later W. L. London's) was regularly advertised in *The School-Girl*. A student newspaper was also produced for the Pittsborough Scientific Academy, the renamed Pittsborough Academy headed by Capt. C. B. Denson from 1866. That Pittsboro had three working presses seems remarkable to me.

A curious reference is made to "the Record" by Laura Hanks in her editorial of September 1866. After thanking the paper's patrons, she expresses her delight with the little village, having been "prepared to like it from the glowing description, my friend, the Record, gave me." *The Chatham Record* was started by Henry Armand London, with the first issue dated in September 1878. This comment by Laura Hanks, 16-year-old daughter of Dr. John Hanks, seems to indicate that publication had been attempted earlier.

14. Mary S. Headen, listed in the 1850 census as five months old, was the daughter of Aaron G. Headen. The Headen family owned land on Hickory Mountain, and Aaron became a prominent merchant in Pittsboro. She is shown as 18 years old in the 1870 census, the new bride of Alvis Bynum, junior partner in the Bynum & Headen store advertised in *The School-Girl*. Mary's sister Ida, about 16, edited the September 1867 issue.

15. In addition to girls identified in preceding notes, students named in *The School-Girl* were:

Ida and Lillie Haughton, daughters of Martha and Lawrence J. Haughton, Pittsboro attorney. The Haughton family was prominent in the Gulf area. Ida married Robert Cowan, who later became editor of the *Durham Globe*.

H. E. Long may well be a daughter of Isaac Long, Pittsboro merchant whose son Edwin supports the newspaper with advertisements. The 1860 census lists Euphemia, 9, about the right age to be a student at Locust Hill in 1866.

H[enrietta] Marshall was probably a daughter of Delana Gunter Marshall (1821-1905). The 1860 census lists a Henrietta with the family of Abel Green, cabinetmaker and Delana's second husband.

Rebecca Nash was 19 in the 1870 census, daughter of Elizabeth and William A. Nash, store clerk. The war has taken his livelihood, for he was a tailor in the 1860 census.

Julia E. Van Duyn was the daughter of Peter and Annie Van Duyn. S. P. Vandine, carriage maker, is listed in the 1860 census, with daughter Julia, 7.

16. *Parisian Sights and French Principles, seen through American Spectacles* was one of several travel books written by James Jackson Jarves. *Up the Rhine*, a satire on the absurdities of English travelers, and *Whimsicalities*, a collection of essays, were written by Thomas Hood, 1789-1845, British poet and travel essayist. The *National Intelligencer* was a newspaper published in Washington, D.C. in the early 19th century.

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Original articles submitted for consideration in the *Chatham Historical Journal* should be of reasonable length and fully documented.

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