Atlanta Journal May 4 1904

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COLLEGE IN GEORGIA MOUNTAINS HAS AN INTERESTING HISTORY

BY BEN F. PERRY,
Editor of the Canton Advance.

(Special Dispatch to The Journal.)

YOUNG HARRIS, Ga., May 14.—Eighteen miles southeast of Murphy, N. C., in Towns county, of this state, is Brasstown valley, a valley from 1-2 to 1 1-2 miles wide by 4 miles in length, shut in on all sides by mountains reaching into the blue skies thousands of feet above sea level, in which valley nestles the quiet but now-come-to-be historic, beautiful little town of Young Harris, where is located a college by the same name that has, perhaps, the largest matriculation of any school in Georgia and that is doing an educational work that is exceeded by none. There is here everything to inspire aspirations and ambitions for a higher education and loftier sentiments and ideals of life. Situated at an eminence of 1,925 feet and with lofty mountains towering hundreds and even thousands of feet above that altitude, Young Harris is indeed an ideal location for a school. Remote from the cities and town, and away from railroads and steamboats, the students here have nothing to allure them from their studies, and the consequence is they make records excelled by no student body elsewhere. With competent, Christian teachers, a community freed from the vices and sins of larger towns and with but one object in view, there is no surprise or wonder that the boys and girls who attend Young Harris college develop into noble men and women who become useful citizens of this and other states.

Back about twenty years ago Rev. R. L. Campbell, Rev. A. C. Thomas and others saw the need of a high school in this section; the grand possibilities as they saw them were presented to others, and the result was that in 1887-8 the school here was chartered as the Young Harris college in honor of Judge Young L. G. Harris, of Athens, who did so much for the school during his lifetime and in his will left it an endowment of $20,000. At the time the school was chartered, the North Georgia conference adopted it as a conference school, and the church has since recognized it as a powerful arm and the means of reaching a people and a section that the church and the people both may be benefited. While the school is denominational, yet it fosters no sectarian spirit, the different leading Christian denominations being represented in its faculty and student body.

For the past five years Young Harris college has been in charge of Rev. Jas. A. Sharp, an educator and school organizer of few equals, and this year shows a matriculation of nearly 400, coming from all parts of Georgia and from other states—a student-body which at once attracts the attention of strangers for their courteous and respectful bearing one to another and to strangers, and their brightness and interest in the work before them—a hopeful, happy, healthy set of boys and girls. One remarkable fact connected with this school is that there has never been a protracted case of sickness in the college family, which emphasizes the healthfulness of the place and that great care is taken for the health and comfort of the students. Everything there conduces to bodily health and mental vigor—the towering mountains, trickling streams of the valley, fresh air, bracing climate, pure water and the moral tone of the people generally. No wonder then that there is such a large attendance at Young Harris. The wonder is that there is not even a larger attendance, and more interest taken in the school by men of money, who, by spending a few hundred here would do so much and lasting good. Indeed, the need of this school now is more money with which to better equip for teaching and for caring for the students who do come.

With the $40,000 or $50,000 that Jude Harhis spent here during his life and the $20,000 endowment left by him, and with what some few others have so generously given and the annual but limited help of the church, the best possible work is being done, and at a cost far below other schools of its character.

The college is now provided with a $7,000 two-story 60x90 brick auditorium, in the basement of which is the primary department, the first floor being used for recitation rooms and the second as a hall for public entertainment, etc. There is also here a handsome brick memorial chapel, dedicated to Susan B. Harris, wife of Judge Harris. Besides there is a 30-room girls' hall, a 30-room boys' hall and numerous shacks and boarding places in the town for the use of students.

But these buildings all need more or less repairs, more thorough system of waterworks and lights, and the different class rooms better equipment of apparatus for more effective and extended teaching. Thus it is Young Harris college needs help and philanthropists and men with money who would do the greatest good with wealth could not do better than inquire into the needs of these mountain schools and help them.

Bumalacka, bumalacka, bow-wow-wow,
Chickalacka, chickalacka, chow, chow, chow,
Bumalacka, chickalacka, who are we?
We are the boys of the Y. H. C.

Thus sing the boys of the Y. H. C., and the refrain is joined by others who sing the praise of this splendid school and the charming success of the commencement exercises from Friday evening to Tuesday morning last.

Friday evening last the commencement was ushered in by the splendid exercises of the children in the primary department who have been under the charge of Miss Otie Sanders, of Athens, and Rev. E. L. Adams, of Danielsville. The efficiency and effectiveness of their work was shown in the children's part of the exercises which were interesting and creditable throughout.

Saturday morning there was a temperance contest between four young men, each of whom delivered excellent speeches, but the medal was awarded T. H. Shackelford, of Hogansville. Following this contest Rev. C. M. Verdell, of Waleska, delivered a masterful temperance address.

Saturday afternoon was taken up with a prize oratorical contest between six young men and six young ladies of the sophomore class, the awards being made to Clarence Hall, of Red Hill, Ga., and Miss Joyce Martin, of North Carolina.

Saturday evening Shakespeare's "Hamlet" was presented with splendid effect. The regulation costumes for the occasion were obtained from Atlanta. President J. A. Sharp represented Hamlet, Miss Sadie Smith, teacher of English and elocution, represented Ophelia, and students took the part of the twenty-four other characters. There was a fine house, some 500 or more present, and the play was greatly enjoyed by all.

Sunday morning the commencement sermon was preached by Rev. B. P. Allen, presiding elder of the LaGrange district, and at 3 p. m. the missionary sermon by Dr. W. F. Robinson, of Monroe, who for five years was president of the Young Harris college, and so largely instrumental in bringing the college through its most trying crisis.

At the Sunday evening service Rev. Ford McRea, P. E. of the Dalton district, preached a strong sermon to young men, preachers in particular.

On Monday morning the junior class was represented by a class of young men and ladies who presented original speeches and essays to the edification and pleasure of their auditors.

This was followed at 11 o'clock by a strong literary address from Rev. Fletcher Walton, of Merietta, who took as his subject "An Analysis of the Character of Robert E. Lee." In the preparation of his subject, Dr. Walton made thorough research and study, reading fourteen volumes on the life of Lee.

Monday evening the champion debate between the Phi Chi and Young Harris societies enlisted intense interest and packed the auditorium with a large crowd, all of whom were in sympathy with either the one side or the other. The subject was, "Resolved, That the Monroe doctrine with modifications, should be maintained." The affirmative or Phi Chi speakers, were S. E. Hamrick, Walton Shanklin and H. T. Freeman, while the Young Harris society was represented by C. E. Adams, M. L. Cooley and H. D. Weaver. Both sides presented the question ably and exhaustively and won unstinted plaudits from the audience; it was said to have been the best champion debate in the history of this school, and that each side was entitled to the verdict, but as a decision had to be made, the judges made their award to the affirmative, which was received in a manly, noble spirit by the defeated and their friends.

Tuesday morning brought the sixteenth commencement of the Young Harris college to a close, when a class of nineteen manly, genteel young men and womanly graceful young women received their diplomas as a token of the work they had done and victories accomplished during the past four years in Young Harris college. After the graduating speeches and essays and the baccalaureate address of President Sharp, the diplomas were handed the following class of 1904, heralded in class motto as "second to none":

Miss Mae Fleming, of North Carolina; L. M. Bradford, Bartow county; Miss Emma Weeks, Covington; Miss Ida Nichols, Young Harris; Miss Viola Thompson, Athens; Miss Mamie Weaver, Ringgold; L. F. McCord, Lincoln county; O. E. Byers, Whitesburg; Miss Lydia Dyer, Young Harris; Miss Lollie Ellis, Gainesville; S. E. Hamrick, Pickens county; Miss Bert Winter, Hartwell; H. T. Freeman, LaFayette; Howard Weaver, Ringgold; Walton Shanklin, Rome; Miss Pearl Christopher, Blairsville; Luther Cooley, Cleveland.

Excepting the classes of 1893 and 1899, and they only equalled it, this is the largest class ever graduated from this institution.

During the exercises exceptionally fine vocal and instrumental music was discoursed by students of the school and of the music classes. The music and art departments are in charge of Mrs. L. H. Candler, of Gainesville, a lady of much talent in vocal and instrumental music, and art also; a lady, too, of charming personality beloved by all her pupils and all with whom she is thrown.

The faculty the past year was composed as follows and will be the same next term, except Prof. J. E. Fleming, of Hayesville, N. C., will take the chair of Latin and Greek. The faculty is as follows: President, Rev. Joseph A. Sharp, who also has the chair of Biblical literature, psychology and ethics, and the normal classes also; Miss Julia Byrom, Latin and Greek; A. E. Lashly, natural sciences; W. S. Mann, mathematics and bookkeeping; Miss Sadie Smith, English and elocution; Miss Otie Sanders and Rev. E. L. Adams, primary department; Mrs. L. H. Candler, music and art; and Mrs. J. A. Sharp, boarding department.

The fall term opens September 7th, next, but a two-months' summer term for the preparation of students for more thorough classifying, will be taught by Miss Julia Byrom in July and August.

One very pleasing incident of the commencement exercises was not down on the published program, which was the happy marriage of Miss May Sanderson, of Young Harris, to Rev. E. L. Adams, one of the faculty, on Sunday afternoon, though it was only a quiet home wedding the ceremony being performed by Rev. J. A. Sharp.

This is said to have been one of the best and most largely attended commencements in the history of Young Harris college, many coming overland 60, 75 and even 100 miles. Among those present were W. L. Pierce, presiding elder Gainesville district; Rev. H. F. Branham, of Jefferson; Rev. W. T. Hamby, of Buford; Dr. W. F. Robinson and wife, of Monroe; Rev. C. M. Verdell, of Waleska; B. O. Allen, presiding elder of LaGrange district; Ford McRea, presiding elder Dalton district; Rev. Fletcher Walton, of Marietta; Rev. J. W. Gober, of Clarkesville; Homer A. Fleming, A. G. P. agent A., K. & N. railroad; Ben F. Perry, editor Cherokee Advance; S. B. Ledbetter, presiding elder Marietta district; Rev. N. E. McBrayer, Cleveland; Rev. Felton Williams and Rev. T. C. Hughes, Blairsville; Rev. G. W. Barrett and brother, Blue Ridge; Rev. M. J. Cofer, of Wesleyan Christian Advocate and president board of trustees Y. G. C.; Miss Aurelia Kee Bell and Miss Ida Ashe, of Atlanta; James Hamrick and wife, of Ludville; Miss Kate DeJournette, of Greensboro; Mrs. Thompson, of Athens; Colonel Isaac Oaks, of Cleveland; Dillard Cooley, of Cleveland; J. I. McWhirter, of Dallas; Mr. Payne, of Macon; Dr. J. A. Parson, of Gainesville; Dr. Sam Alsabrook, of Ringgold; Mrs. R. W. McCord, of Augusta; Colonel Meaders, of Dahlonega, and many others.

The visitors found much of interest and to enjoy besides the entertainment afforded by the commencement exercises, the commingling with friends and social features of the occasion. Frequent visits were made to the tops of some of the nearby towering peaks, from the lofty eminence of which a fine view was had far down towards the southern boundary of our state and far over into North and South Carolina, Tennessee and Alabama, impressing more clearly the language of the snowball "thoughts of Heaven," which flower grows here in such profusion.

As before stated, Young Harris is surrounded by numerous mountains, Brasstown valley being shut in by some of the loftiest peaks in Georgia, one of which is Bald mountain, 4,795 feet above sea level. There are also Double knob, over 4,000 feet high, Cedar mountain, the Three Sisters, Track Rock, Blood mountain and others of these peaks have interesting stories connected with them. Blood mountain is said to have taken its name from the streams of blood which ran down its sides as the result of a bloody conflict between opposing Indian tribes when the red men roamed those hills and vales. Another legend is to the effect that a certain Indian treaty was made on a part of the sand or soft rock of now Track Rock mountain, the duration of which treaty was to be contemporaneous with the bear and Indian and deer tracks here and there cut into the rock, which are yet said to be visible, though much worn by the ravages of time.

Towns county was named in honor of Governor G. W. Towns, and is in the extreme northern part of Georgia, bordering North Carolina, and being bounded on the east and southeast by Rabun and Habersham counties, on the west and southwest by Union county, and on the south by White county, having a population of about 5,900 people. From the mountain and hillsides gush the waters of Brasstown creek, Hiawassee river and other streams along which are fertile valleys of loamy, black soil and strong hillsides that produce in abundance cereal crops, potatoes, fruits and [illegible]bles. Red top clover and other [illegible] peavine and other hay afford [illegible] pasturage for cattle upon a thousand hills, horses, mules, sheep, etc., from which with the hogs fed upon mast in the forests, the greater part of the money [illegible] is derived. The market being so far away and inaccessible over the [illegible] mountain roads, very little of these crops are marketed except cabbage and apples, together with chestnuts. [illegible] no part of Georgia or western North Carolina produces better and larger cabbage, heads white and firm, not turning [illegible] excellent flavor or larger in size [illegible] the farmers and truck raisers of [illegible] Union and adjoining counties. [illegible] sweet potatoes, ground peas and [illegible] are also indigenous to the soil, [illegible] and seasons, but no crop [illegible] is more certain, perhaps, than [illegible] apple and the berry.

Added to the fertility of the soil and variety of products, soil free from [illegible] pure and bracing climate, [illegible] spiring scenery, and honest and hospitable people, with environment [illegible] and you have here a section and a people who can but win the admiration of visitors.

The people of Towns county are essentially a white people, there being [illegible] two or three families of negroes in the county, and not one individual in the town of Young Harris. Therefore the race problem is of little concern to them. [illegible] from this question, the people of [illegible] country are neither bothered over [illegible] price of cotton nor the use of fertilizers, no cotton being produced in the county nor any of the guanos used. Certainly enough, if for no other reason, to [illegible] them a happy people.

Eight miles distant from Young Harris is Hiawassee, the county seat of Towns county, at which point there is also a flourishing high school, under the management of the Baptist denomination. Equally distant, but in an opposite direction, is Blairsville, the county seat of Union county. Other postoffices in Towns county are Mountain Scene, Visage, Titus, [illegible]ly, Campagne, Welch, Osborn and [illegible] but there are no very populous communities, the population being distributed over an area of 1[illegible] square miles, much of which, however, is not cleared or in cultivation. By reason of the sparse settlement, there is considerable wild game, such as deer and turkey and occasional bears and wolves.

In the streams there is also an abundance of mountain trout and other fish.

There are very few manufacturing enterprises in Towns county, only an occasional flour and grist mill for [illegible] grinding and nearly or quite all are operated by water, but the hard woods and mineral deposits of this section will some day, no doubt, attract the attention of capitalists who will invest in and develop some of its splendid resources.

Already thousands of acres of wild [illegible] and other properties are being acquired by outside parties and the building of a railroad through the mountain of Union, Towns and Rabun being agitated. Murphy, 18 miles away, now being the nearest railroad point.

In politics the people of Towns county are about equally divided between Republicans and Democrats, and in religion they hold to the doctrines and teachings of the Baptist or Methodist creeds of faith, the Baptists, perhaps, being in the lead.

As a whole the people are clever, hospitable, kind-hearted and progressive in their way. They are not a wealthy people, but have plenty about them on which to live, be happy and contented. Their needs are limited and their desires circumscribed. While there is some "blockading," yet the people have a high regard for law, are peaceable, neighborly and full of good deeds unto others—[illegible] rugged mountaineers with a heart true as steel, noble men and women, and [illegible] Georgians living among these native [illegible] beloved hills.

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