

SOUTHERN HONOR AND NORTHERN PIETY: HENRY TUTWILER,
ALVA WOODS, AND THE PROBLEM OF DISCIPLINE AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA, 1831-1837

by

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A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

The University of Alabama opened its doors in April 1831, and over the next six years, the first president, Alva Woods, was confronted by numerous episodes of student misdeeds. Knife fights, dueling, shootings, slave baiting, hazing, the torture of animals, and the destruction of property were common events on campus. Woods—a Baptist minister from Vermont—was never able to end the troubles; in fact, student defiance ultimately led to mass resignations by the faculty and the installation of a new president. However, the traditional reading of Woods' tenure at Alabama has not taken into account deeper issues.

At the heart of Woods' difficulty was a contest for discipline. He came to Tuscaloosa determined to establish a religiously orthodox vision of virtuous conduct for the future leaders of Alabama. Woods himself was the product of New England's theological schism between Calvinism and Unitarianism. At that time he was mentored by his uncle Leonard Woods, who instilled in him a challenge to counter the spread of liberal theology by teaching the ethics of Christian piety. This was the charge that he pursued first at Columbian College, then as interim president of Brown University, as president of Transylvania University, and finally at Alabama.

While resolved to carry out his mission, he was met by seemingly constant waves of student insubordination. The students hailed from the homes of the planter elite where their rearing supplied them with ideals of privilege, and where spiritedness and indulged independence were rewarded rather than harnessed. Honor not piety was the Southern way and this premise was juxtapose Woods' theory of moral discipline. These two guiding principles remained at loggerheads until 1837 when Woods retreated to New England. Moreover, these are

the two ideologies that have been neglected in the historiography of The University of Alabama. The first six years of the University's history must be understood not just as an era where boys were being boys or where student actions are summed up as the expected exaggerations of adolescence; rather, it was an era shaped by the clash of two great cultures, honor and piety.

DEDICATION

To God be the Glory. In thanksgiving to God, I dedicate this dissertation in memory of my father and honor of my mother.

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Many professors, teachers, colleagues, and friends deserve applause for their help either directly with this project or due their consistent support of me during the process or researching, writing, and editing. Writing a dissertation is alone a daunting task; however, when coupled with family tragedy, the project can seem Sisyphean. In the midst of researching, in September 2005, my father was murdered. I experienced a set-back mentally, emotionally, and even intellectually. If it were not for my faith in God, I am certain I would not have had the resolve to continue this study. Fortunately, I have the most empathetic and understanding chairperson, Stephen Tomlinson, to whom I am greatly indebted. Not only has he been supportive on a personal level but he has also guided and directed me through this academic exercise, the most rewarding I have ever experienced. Moreover, I would like to thank my committee: Wayne Urban, Natalie Adams, Michael Harris, and Beverly Dyer. It would be a great failure if I did not thank my friends at the W. S. Hoole Library, including Clark Center, Tom Land, Donelly Lancaster-Walton, Kevin Ray, Jessica Lacher-Feldman, and Allyson Holliday. My co-workers at Shelton State Community College also deserve my gratefulness as they have persevered through my countless stories of University history. Finally, I must thank my mother Kathy, brother John and sister-in-law Kelly, nephew Clifton, as well as my closest friends—Glenn Brasher, Christian McWhirter, and Jon Hooks—who I met while a Masters student in the History Department at Alabama and who kept me focused and never let me surrender.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ii

DEDICATION iii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS iv

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS v

1. INTRODUCTION 1

 Prologue

 Institutional Histories

 Historiography

 The University of Alabama’s historian and his text

 The Harvard of the South

 Alva Woods

 Henry Tutwiler

 Generation Excluded

 Statement of the Problem

2. POLITICAL HISTORY 16

 Bibb brothers and Broad River

 Constitution

 Israel Pickens

 The Trustees

 The Board and Money Problems

Pickens' Victory	
Tuscaloosa	
Nichols' Creation	
Ideology and State Politics	
Flush Times	
C. C. Clay, the Whigs, and the end of the Flush Times	
3. ALVA WOODS	44
Alva Woods and the Orthodox Mission in Education	
Building the Baptist Academy	
Woods the Whig	
Alabama's Political Climate	
Lindsley	
4. HONOR	68
American Youth	
Philip Greven	
Great Expectations	
The Schoolhouse as Nursery	
Southern Honor: Primal and Genial	

5. INITIATION	88
Troubles Begin	
University Prospectus	
Curriculum as a Cause	
Escalation	
6. CLIMAX	104
The '34 Riot	
The Power of Noise	
The Inquiry: Woods Versus Tutwiler	
A Continued Contest	
One Way or Another	
Scuffs and Scrapes	
Gambling	
The Circus	
7. DECLINE AND FALL	131
The Final Year	
Merit/Demerit System	
Perfect Anarchy	
The Public Call	
The Report	
Protest!	

Fallout

Basil Manly

Tutwiler's Fate

Back to Brown

Reflections

8. WORKS CITED 155

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In September 1837, Gessner Harrison, the head of the faculty at the University of Virginia, wrote to his friend Henry Tutwiler: “So the Alab Univ has to begin again. I have little hope of amendment. You have withdrawn from the contest and I trust for the better. You must write to inform me more particularly of your new position.”¹ Tutwiler had been the chair of ancient languages at The University of Alabama, but after six tumultuous years in Tuscaloosa, he had resigned and removed to Perry County. He was not alone; by the end of 1837 all but one of the University’s faculty members had resigned. Basil Manly, newly installed as the second president, inherited a school in dire straits. Freshmen enrollment was down and the students had developed a hardened attitude against the school’s faculty members and its administration. Public trust in the institution, once predicted to be the “Harvard of the South,” had largely evaporated. Even the state’s legislature lamented that “abandoned by all its officers, brought into extensive discredit by a series of misfortunes unprecedented in the history of literary institutions here or elsewhere, and regarded by most as an institution on which some unaccountable fatality rested, the prospect presented to those who attempted its resuscitation was, to say the least, unpromising and doubtful.”² How, after its auspicious beginning had the University arrived at this sorry state?

¹ Gessner Harrison to Henry Tutwiler, September 25, 1837, Papers of Gessner Harrison, Special Collections, University of Virginia.

² T. A. Street, *Corolla*, 1893 (Cleveland: Cleveland Publishing Company), 70. The *Corolla* is The University of Alabama’s yearbook. Here the editor is quoting part of an 1843 report made in the Alabama state senate.

Prologue

The University of Alabama, opened in April 1831, was just one of the hundreds of colleges established in the early nineteenth-century. Highlighting the development and growth of American higher education, educational historian John Thelin notes how, in the new National era (1785-1860), colleges, universities, and schools in general were opening at a breathtaking pace. Stepping from twenty-five degree-granting colleges in 1800 to fifty-two in 1820, the number jumped to nearly 250 by the outbreak of the Civil War. For Thelin, higher education had become a cottage industry for the new nation. While Richard Hofstadter views the era as the age when one of the giant steps toward utilitarianism and anti-intellectualism took place, the period saw collegiate evolution—not just in the number of colleges—but also in their type, curriculum, size and character of the student body.³ Thelin, Frederick Rudolph, and Arthur Cohen, among others, detailed the rapid emergence of professional, specialized, religious, and secular schools during the era. They chronicle how the Louisiana Purchase opened the West, internal improvements began to connect the new nation, a growth in population spurred innovations in industry and manufacturing, religious denominations spread while recruiting new members, reform movements attached themselves to crusades against alcohol, child labor, and slavery, and ultimately they argue that optimism drove each of these national developments. Yet while this confidence led to revolutions in the markets, these developments were also met by chaos in both economic and educational spheres. The Panics of 1817 and 1837 hit the emerging nation hard. Many plans for future colleges remained nothing more than blueprints, and others that had opened were forced to close their doors. Yet, chaos did not totally dilute the optimism of the age.

³ Richard Hofstadter and Walter P. Metzger, *The Development of Academic Freedom in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961). Jennings Wagoner notes that Hofstadter viewed the antebellum period was one of “great retrogression;” see Jennings L. Wagoner, Jr. “Honor and Dishonor at Mr. Jefferson’s University: The Antebellum Years,” *History of Education Quarterly* 8 (Summer, 1986), 155-179. See John Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2004).

As market and territorial expansion brought a developing professionalization, new demands were placed on education. And while there was much speculation over who was to provide education to America's young people, few institutional histories (i.e. histories of colleges and universities) mention those National era market revolutions. Readers are forced to consult the texts of historians like Charles Sellers; however, such political, social, and economic writers largely glance over education in their studies. There was no synthesis.

Nonetheless, Edgar W. Knight, in addressing the issue, argues that states became the political force driving the outgrowth of higher education. In the third book of his five volume series *A Documentary History of Education in the South Before 1860*—far more a sourcebook than an analysis of the period—Knight states that in the National era, “Increasing distrust of the collegiate establishments of the colonial period gradually developed in the belief that these colleges were not fully meeting the public need for higher educational opportunity.”⁴ Indeed, in an attempt to better serve the public welfare, by the mid-nineteenth century, states had overtaken religious sects and denominations in establishing colleges and universities because the former groups, despite their missionary work, could not be trusted to represent the democracy as a whole. State-sponsored schools were established while the federal government was—at the least—lethargic in creating a national university. Overall, by 1870, 17 of the 37 states in the Union had a state university.⁵

Institutional Histories

When The University of Alabama opened its doors it joined these other colleges and universities in offering the opportunities of higher learning. Collectively, their histories are part

⁴ Edgar W. Knight, ed. *A Documentary History of Education in the South before 1860: Volume III, The Rise of the State University*, (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1952), v. See also Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford, 1991).

⁵ Arthur Cohen, *The Shaping of American Higher Education*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass 1998), 61.

of not only American history but also of the historiography of American Higher Education, and as Cohen (1998) notes, “The foremost reason for reading the history of higher education is that it teaches appreciation for the power of tradition.”⁶ Within the historiography, various works focus on pre-Civil War colleges and universities. Some concentrate on presidents or faculty members, some on curriculum, others on students.⁷ These works are absolutely necessary in understanding the growth, development, and history of American higher education. Moreover, in the scholastic exercises of reading and writing history (including contributing to the historiography) a challenge is laid before the student to write a different account of the past. However, due to the particularity of schools—as mentioned earlier—historians have often divorced the history of a college or university from its broader context. Historian J. Mills Thornton warns however that such an approach makes it is easy for the search for history to be consumed in parochialism or antiquarianism.⁸ Historical studies of American colleges and universities need not be isolated; broader themes can be employed to understand both a school’s history and its positionality in the larger environment. This is not simply an argument between so-called “lumper” or “splitter”

⁶ Ibid., 1.

⁷ Examples of these works include M. Finkelstein’s “From Tutor to Academic Scholar” *History of Higher Education Annual* 3 (1983): 99-121, E.C. Broome’s *A Historical and Critical Discussion of College Admission Requirements* (New York: Columbia, 1903), Jurgen Herbst’s works “The Institutional Diversification of Higher Education in the New Nation: 1780-1820” *Review of Higher Education* 3 (Spring 1980): 15-18, “Church, State and Higher Education: College Government in the American Colonies and States before 1820” *History of Higher Education Annual* 1 (1981): 42-54, and *From Crisis to Crisis: American College Government 1636-1819* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1982), J.F. Kett’s *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), C. Meriwether’s *Our Colonial Curriculum, 1607-1776* (Washington: Capital, 1907), F. Rudolph’s *Curriculum: A History of American Undergraduate Course of Study Since 1636* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977), David F. Allmendinger’s *Paupers and Scholars: The Transformation of Student Life in Nineteenth-Century New England* (New York: St. Martins, 1975), I.M.E. Blandin’s *History of Higher Education of Women in the South Prior to 1860* (New York: Neal, 1909), Christie A. Farnham’s *The Education of the Southern Belle: Higher Education and Student Socialization in the Antebellum South* (New York: NYU, 1994), Helen Horowitz’s *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Chapel Hill, UNC Press, 1995), Steven J. Novak’s *Rights of Youth: American Colleges and Student Revolt, 1798-1815* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1977), Romeo Elton’s *The Literary Remains of the Rev. Jonathan Maxcy* (New York: A.V. Blake, 1844), and Edward Madden’s “Francis Wayland and the Limits of Moral Responsibility,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 4 (Aug. 1962): 348-359.

⁸ J. Mills Thornton, *Politics and Power in a Slave society: Alabama 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: LSU, 1978), xvi.

historians but rather a defense of the value in researching, investigating, and (re)writing institutional histories of American colleges and universities.

The histories of American institutes of higher education can reflect onto the community at large. There is a value in re-approaching the researching and writing of institutional histories, but not at the expense of historicism; it is incumbent on historians to revisit institutional histories to not only describe what occurred on campus, but to also note characteristics of the surrounding community and to be cognizant of how the relationships between off-and-on campus events, ideas, and persons reflected on both the school and its community at a specific time. This conceptual ideal can already be seen in Civil War historiography where early texts concentrated almost exclusively on battle scenes and troop movements. Later scholars substituted this approach and focused on the soldiers' lives and the war's effects on "the home front." Today, scholars like *Fredericksburg! Fredericksburg!* author George Rable (2002) have successfully brought the two appropriately together in a synthesis where the reader gains a clear understanding of the experiences of the soldiers, generals, politicians, and those at home as well as how news from the home-front impacted the soldiers. Likewise, for religious, denominational histories, Robert Mullin and Russell Richey—in 1994—provide an example of a transition in religious studies. Wayne Flynt summarizes Mullin and Richey's work stating, "Early histories of religious groups were usually written by someone from within the group to preserve basic information about its origins and to defend and extol its beliefs. Since the 1930s, denominational history has shifted toward the intellectual and social context in which the denomination functioned."⁹ Similarly, institutional historians must not isolate their subjects as if those colleges and universities occupied space in a vacuum.

⁹ Wayne Flynt, *Alabama Baptist* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), ix. See also Mullin and Richey's *Reimagining Denominationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

In the first-half of the twentieth century, many colleges and universities celebrated their centennial (or other milestone anniversary) by commissioning an institutional history. While this wealth of scholarship provides an invaluable insight into the early years of America's leading institutions of learning, taken collectively this body of literature is limited by both theoretical and practical constraints. Different generations do not necessarily have access to all primary sources and they typically ask very different questions of the materials. Researchers from different ages approach the sources from different angles, bring new or different insights to inquiry and writing, and use a variety of historical and investigative resources. The result often produces radically different institutional histories of American colleges and universities, works that reveal surprising and challenging stories about our past. The evolution of the historiography—specifically what has been published in the last quarter-century—has allowed our generation to offer both different and “non-traditional” visions of the past. As J. Mills Thornton recognizes, it is the collision of such perceptions on the past that forms history. Therefore, this is an historical institutional case-study which examines the events on the campus of The University of Alabama between 1831 and 1837 by describing personalities involved and the larger regional and national frameworks in which their struggles were set.¹⁰

Historiography

Early institutional histories were written to please trustees, alumni, and presidents. Their biases are quite visible and the authors often refused to apologize for them. They tell tales of famous and infamous students, detail the tenures of great presidents (typically from an administrative vantage point), highlight various building projects, chart the birth of new collegiate departments, and track the growth of extracurricular activities—prime among them,

¹⁰ It should be noted that the various references to the students (e.g. youth, lads, teens, or teenagers) refers specifically to the white males. Women were not admitted to The University of Alabama until the 1890s and African-Americans did not matriculate until the Civil Rights Era.

inter-collegiate sports. However, few of these works relate the university and its educational mission to the broader socio-economic and political contexts of the state and region. Moreover, a cultural analysis of the student body—or faculty and administration—is also typically absent. This latter omission was addressed by writers who read episodes of student riots in the 1960s and 1970s as fixed within and against the backdrop of the Civil Rights Era and the anti-Vietnam War movement. Likewise, others studying the 1980s and 1990s focused on affirmative action and issues of gender and race in minority hiring and enrollment figures. Without dismissing such studies, more recent scholars re-approaching the writing of institutional histories (e.g. James Axtell’s study of Princeton) have sought to appreciate colleges and universities for their primary mission—that of education—and to tell the schools’ stories as the struggle and challenge to achieve that mission without dismissing the context of the world beyond the schools’ front gates.¹¹

The University of Alabama’s Historian and his Text

Many of Edgar Knight’s documents concern The University of Alabama, one product of that explosion of higher education in antebellum America. Even more authoritative, James Benson Sellers’s *History of the University of Alabama* is one of those monolithic institutional histories that made its way into the literary base of higher education scholarship in the mid-twentieth century.¹² Sellers’ text has a commanding tone and elegant style. He is also

¹¹ James Axtell, *The Making of Princeton University*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

¹² James B. Sellers, *The History of The University of Alabama* (Tuscaloosa, UA Press, 1958). Hereafter cited as Sellers *History*. Sellers, born in Camden, AL in 1899, was the son of a Confederate veteran. He attended the state normal school (now Troy University) before enrolling in The University of Alabama’s medical school. The training he gained there aided him as he served as a medic in World War I. After the Great War, he earned an M.S. (1924) and then an M.A. (1925) from the University of Chicago; the latter was earned with the approval of his thesis, “Negro Education in Alabama.” Having graduated he accepted a professorship in the history department at Huntingdon College in Montgomery. Removing from there in 1926 he taught at Athens College 1930-1943. While there he also completed his doctoral studies for the University of North Carolina; his dissertation was entitled “History of the Prohibition Movement in Alabama 1719-1909.” In 1943 he was hired by The University of Alabama and he retired in 1959. Sellers died in 1964 before completing a second volume completing his study of the

unapologetic in nesting his work in the traditional Southern literary vein that fancies a romantic vision of a noble past. As such, the book sits nicely into the boosteristic history of the University, and it has rarely been challenged by scholars. Sellers' work spans well over 600 pages and is partitioned into halves: "The Old University" covering the years before Croxton's raiders burned down all but seven of the school's buildings in 1865, and "Rebuilding the University" that closes with the dawning of the twentieth century. The first half is of primary interest to the present study, and within the book Sellers partially attempts a chronological narrative with chapters on the "First Faculty 1831-1837" and "The Faculty 1837-1860;" his chapters then move into descriptions of the library, students, curriculum and classroom, student organizations, problems of discipline, the military years and finally the destruction of the University. Latter chapters do not follow a strict chronological order and so challenge the reader to keep a running time-line against which to situate events.

For Sellers, "The writing of the history of the University presents many problems to the student of history imbued with the conventional concepts as to values, proportions, and objectives."¹³ However, and disappointing, Sellers does not expose his own vision of The University of Alabama, nor does he describe those values, proportions, and objectives in relation to the goal for his institutional history. In noting that many University students were from affluent plantation homes, he does not offer a description or note the nature of the child-rearing practices that took place in those homes. Sellers also uses anecdotal tales as evidence for broad generalizations, and his examination of the student riots that rocked the University during its first six years reduces oftentimes serious misconduct to youthful high-jinx and applauds them as trials of valor. Moreover, while wonderfully entertaining, his accounts of student misdeeds are not

University's history; the un-published manuscript version of this text is available through The University of Alabama libraries.

¹³ Sellers *History*, vii.

informed by any analysis of Southern culture—such as that provided by Bertram Wyatt-Brown—and so lacks an understanding of the students’ motives and the guiding ethic of Southern honor that shaped the clannish, racial, and gendered practices of their lives.

Sellers taught courses on the Old South as a professor of history at The University of Alabama 1943-1959. The influences of U. B. Philips, William E. Dodd, and Fletcher M. Green were pervasive in his lectures and writings. An adherent of the “Lost Cause,” Sellers’ writings are pro-South, pro-planter, and pro-Confederate. His writings (e.g. *Slavery in Alabama*) do not break with the themes argued by his mentors and his *History of The University of Alabama* largely defends and excuses the students of the early University because these students—typically aged seventeen in 1835 and forty-three in 1861, prime age for Confederate leaders—simply could not be ridiculed by such a proponent of the Southern cause. In contrast to Sellers’ work we need a new kind of institutional history that avoids self-promotion and hero-making for a nuanced, critical account of events grounded in an appreciation of the culture, power-structures, and the social values of those days gone by.

Sellers’ *History of The University of Alabama* was preceded by an article he had written for *The Alabama Review*. In both works not only does he spend much time discussing student rebellion but he also attributes those various outbreaks of violence to the excesses of adolescence. Moreover, seeing only a nominal difference in the youngsters of the antebellum years to those enrolled in post-World War Two America, Sellers’ argument explores the source of student violence in a “boys will be boys” rationale in which he constantly blames the incidents and episodes of violence on “high spirits,” and notes how the students were rebelling against the president’s “joy-killing blue laws.”¹⁴ He only slightly augments the thoughts of Willis G. Clark

¹⁴ James. B. Sellers, “Student Life at the University of Alabama Before 1860,” *The Alabama Review*, vol 2 (1949), 271. Hereafter cited as “Sellers Article.”

(1889) who argued “The students were largely influenced in their conduct and manners by the environment. The civilization of the State was at the time the civilization of a frontier people. The State had not yet been redeemed from the wilderness.”¹⁵ Thomas C. McCorvey’s opinion fits into the same historiographical mode. “As might have been expected in a new institution, in a new State, with a student body used to the free sunshine of the fields and the liberty-breathing winds of the forests, and restive under such academic restraints as were then in vogue, the first few years of the University of Alabama were anything but peaceful.”¹⁶ Yet, for McCorvey, it is “bootless” to analyze the root cause of the student troubles. Nonetheless, this study seeks to get beyond the reduction of events as adolescent restlessness, high spirits, or boyish mischief, to provide a case-study that illuminates the basic grammar of values which gave rise to such violent behavior and such rigid administrative responses.

The Harvard of the South

The University of Alabama opened its doors with the expectation “that all will be done which zealous devotion and well cultivated talents of the highest order can effect, to place the University of Alabama on that lofty eminence, which they [i.e. the trustees] fondly hope it is destined to occupy among the literary institutions of our country.”¹⁷ Yet, almost immediately students began to take exception to the school’s *Ordinances* and the administration imposing the rules. The school’s regulations were obstacles to freedom and opportunities for proving

¹⁵ Willis G. Clarke, *History of Education in Alabama, 1702-1889* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1889), 43.

¹⁶ Thomas Chalmers McCorvey, *Alabama Historical Sketches* (Charlottesville: UVA Press, 1960). McCorvey was chair for the history department at The University of Alabama for many years and was the son-in-law of Dr. Henry Tutwiler. McCorvey’s paper on Tutwiler was in print in 1905 as part of the *Transactions of the Alabama Historical Society*. Moreover, the University of Virginia faced quite similar challenges in its first years: “Virginia students, most of whom were accustomed to the free country life of the plantation, were disdainful of restraints or restrictions not imposed by parental right. Impressed by a code of honor that, when distorted, exalted privilege over responsibility and haughtiness over humility, some students rather quickly turned the university into what one officer described as a state of ‘insubordination, lawlessness, and riot.’” Wagoner, *ibid.*, 171.

¹⁷ Proceedings of the Board of Trustees, January 15, 1831. W. S. Hoole Library, The University of Alabama.

manhood. As such, the episodes of student violence that occurred at the University were the manifestations of clashing ideals. At one extreme was the code of Southern honor, which drove student behavior. And at the other was the campus environment structured by the school's faculty and most importantly the president, Rev. Alva Woods, who sought to govern the youth at Tuscaloosa with religious values grounded in the Northern ideal of piety. Accordingly, the key to understanding these volatile early years of the institution's history resides in a clear conception of the contest between Southern culture and the orthodox educational philosophy that Alva Woods brought to the frontier state of Alabama.

Alva Woods

In his multi-volume work, Knight does not explain that while there was denominational splintering in post-Revolutionary America, differing groups did come together in a grand protestant movement for reform and Christian education. As John Kuykendall (1982) illustrates, this voluntary "Benevolent Empire" showed a willingness to accommodate sectarian differences for the greater protestant good. "As they understood their own behavior," Kuykendall writes, "they were motivated by hope rather than fear...as members of the Christian community, they were prompted to action by the correlative duties of 'snatching brands from the burning'...As Americans, they were motivated by the pervasive feeling that God indeed intended to do something special in, with, and through the new action."¹⁸ Indeed, there was broad public agreement of fundamental religious truths. These religious ideals were central to the Christian

¹⁸ John Kuykendall, *Southern Enterprise: The work of national evangelical societies in the antebellum South*, (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1982), 7. Kuykendall, in a rare synthesis focused on the different societies of the benevolent empire, has highlighted the origin, development, and missions of what he calls the "Big 5:" American Bible Society, American Tract Society, American Sunday School Union, American Education Society, and the American Home Missionary Society. He reinforces many of C. Griffin's conclusions; Griffin's *Their Brothers' Keepers* preceded Kuykendall's text by nearly a quarter century. And see Nathan O. Hatch's *The Democratization of American Christianity*. See also John Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2004). And Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University, a History*, (New York: Knopf, 1962). And Arthur M. Cohen, *ibid*.

mission Alva Woods learned in his undergraduate classes, through the guidance of his family (i.e. his father Able and uncle Leonard), and his religious training at Andover, Massachusetts—America’s first seminary set up by orthodox theologians to combat the spread of liberal Christianity (i.e. Unitarianism) in New England. These ideals guided Woods’ academic life from his first faculty appointments at Columbian College, then at Brown University, in his presidency at Transylvania, and in his abortive mission to Alabama.

Knight argues that the period after the Revolution—the same era in which Woods was raised—brought not only a distrust of denominations but also the separation of church and state. However, Knight’s thesis that the relationship between church and state was at-best unsustainable is a historiographical exaggeration. As D.G. Hart (2005) notes, “American Protestants had drunk so deeply and so long from the well of the Enlightenment that they were loath to consider the possibility of conflict between religion and science. This is not to deny the genuine tension...It is only to assert that few Protestants noticed much antagonism.”¹⁹ Furthermore, for scholars of the Scottish tradition, which dominated American collegiate education, science itself was a primary proof of God’s word. Moreover, the breach of church and state was not—despite Knight’s emphasis—complete. Religion continued to hold a pivotal place in the halls and classrooms as well as in the curriculum of many state operated schools; indeed, college presidents—such as Alva Woods—continued to be recruited from the seminaries if not from the pulpits. This mixture of religion, moral discipline, and personal passion is a central theme of this dissertation.

For Sellers it is the personality and demeanor of Alva Woods that alienated the southern youth. Importantly however, he does not explain how and why Woods’ moral values—arguably

¹⁹ James W. Fraser, “Church, State, and School,” review essay of *The University Gets Religion: Religious Studies in American Higher Education*, by D.G. Hart, *History of Education Quarterly*, 45 (Fall 2005), 462.

his subjectivity—ran counter to the dominant culture in Tuscaloosa, nor does he explain the role religion played in Woods’ educational ideals. The students were not simply rebelling against the structures of academic life, as writers such as Robert Pace argue.²⁰ They rebelled against Alva Woods, his faculty, and the specific environment these men had constructed. To the boys on campus, Woods and his colleagues were in direct opposition to their liberty. The faculty and the president became targets for the students’ disdain, contempt, and ultimately violence. Therefore, in fulfilling the objectives of this case-study’s primary focus, a second historiographical void must be addressed. Alva Woods has been misunderstood, and his time in Alabama has been over simplified or wholly mistaken. His social background, religious outlook, and intellectual training reveal much about an exciting and evolving phase of American history. Without investigating the president’s philosophy the episodes that played-out on campus will never be fully understood.

Henry Tutwiler

In understanding Alva Woods it is helpful to recognize what he was not, as personified by Dr. Henry Tutwiler, the University’s first chair of ancient languages. A graduate of Jefferson’s University of Virginia, Tutwiler was much more sympathetic toward the students and sought to govern them through the more genteel ideals of moral suasion. Opposed to the president’s hard-line approach, Tutwiler and Woods came to loggerheads over issues of moral discipline. The friction between the two men is yet another colorful theme of the University’s first years; moreover, their struggle led to disunity among the faculty and fueled the declining resolve of the faculty against the students.

Generation Excluded

A critical analysis of the nature of the students who matriculated to the University is also missing from Sellers’ text, an oversight that must be corrected to understand the events that

²⁰ See Robert Pace, *Halls of Honor: College Men in the Old South* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2004).

played out during the tenure of Dr. Woods. Without investigating the socio-political and cultural background that shaped the students' lives, understanding their subsequent actions leads to a half-blind analysis. We must appreciate the students' behavior by developing an awareness of how they felt about their life in that context. In the literature on antebellum education, Alabama history, and Southern culture, the instances of adolescent behavior (and violence) have been largely overlooked. Only within the last quarter-century or so has there been an effort made to incorporate children and teens' experiences into the broader historical accounts. Yet these accounts—e.g. Novak (1977), Horowitz (1987), Pace (2004), Friend and Glover (2004), Carmichael (2005), and Mintz (2004)—have come with much difficulty; the older generations of historians—e.g. Coulter (1928)—prefigured the agency of youth into their works and children were simply described and objectified. Certainly, children do not leave historical writings and the diaries, letters, and notes of teens are found sparingly throughout the various archives and library holdings. Moreover, the writings of men and women who reflect back on their childhood and teenage years are often tainted by a nostalgic gloss. Nonetheless, drawing upon new scholarship of childhood, such as the work of Steven Mintz (2004), as well as the classic scholarship of Philip Greven (1977), this study seeks to provide a commentary on antebellum youth in an attempt to better explain what took place at the University.²¹

To balance the study, there will be instances where episodes from other Southern colleges and universities are employed, yet this study stays focused on The University of Alabama. Moreover, it remains tied to the school's first six years which is synonymous with the tenure of Alva Woods. Nonetheless, it is argued that episodes of student violence that helped shape life on

²¹ Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of Childhood* (Cambridge: Harvard, 2004). See also Philip Greven, *The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Child-Rearing, Religious Experience, and the Self in Early America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

the Tuscaloosa campus provide evidence for historians of other institutions in the South during the antebellum period.

Statement of the Problem

This is a historical case-study of The University of Alabama. During the six year tenure of the institution's first president, Rev. Alva Woods, the school's history was marked with episodes of student mischief, pranks, food-fights, cheating, gambling, drinking, slave-baiting, insubordination, dueling, riot, and rebellion. The president has been misunderstood in the historiography of the University, and his religious-based theory of knowledge and its implementation for morally disciplining children and teens has not been incorporated into an explanation of student misdeeds. The president's open quarrel with faculty members, most notably Henry Tutwiler, has not been examined against the backdrop of student incidents, and the students themselves have not been seen as active agents within their own struggles against Woods, the faculty, and the University. Finally, the University's history has not been incorporated into the context of Southern History, nor within the history of the state.

Within this case-study, chapter two will discuss the development of Alabama statehood including the founding of The University of Alabama, its construction, and its opening. Also in chapter two, Tuscaloosa is described providing an analysis of the context in which the University was situated. Chapter three gives a biographical sketch of Alva Woods to his arrival in Tuscaloosa. In addition, the reverend's religiosity and moral outlook is characterized for his overall educational mission. This is done by showing that Woods was the product of the great religious and intellectual debate gripping New England denominations and universities in the early years of the nineteenth century. Chapter four discusses the ethic of southern honor which shaped the genteel rearing of the youth who entered the University. Moreover, the lives of the

young men who matriculated into the University and some of their early displays of mischief and disorderly conduct are described. Chapters five, six, and seven detail the episodes of student misdeeds and explain how Dr. Woods and the faculty sought to constrict student behavior in the face of growing troubles. I discuss the culminating battles that brought about the fall of Woods and the near whole-sale turnover in the University's faculty. Throughout, I explain the recorded incidents of misdeeds and episodes of violence through a conceptual framework constructed from the writings of Philip Greven, Kenneth Greenburg, and Bertram Wyatt-Brown. Their historical writings provide an understanding of nineteenth-century child-rearing practices and the southern code of honor. It was this code that motivated students in their battles with Alva Woods.

What happened on the campus of The University of Alabama during the tenure of Alva Woods (1831-1837) was a clash of two cultures. Alva Woods demanded Christian duty, service, and sincere piety from his young charges, and the lads responded—in their quest for manhood and reputation—with the attitude and actions of defiance, which were demanded by the search for honor in the Deep South. As both sides held firm to their ideals and principles, the University—under Woods—inevitably failed. Six years after opening, the “Harvard of the South” lay in disarray.

CHAPTER TWO

POLITICAL HISTORY

On December 14, 1819 Alabama became the twenty-second state admitted to the Union. Carved out of the greater Mississippi territory, Alabama's entry into the federal system came through political necessity on one side and envy on another. As the Era of Good Feelings dawned, Georgia politicians were asserting their influence in the houses of Congress; they knew the South could not sustain Jefferson's democratic ideals without more southern (i.e slave) seats in the Senate. Therefore, when encouraged by their Georgia neighbors, settlers in the eastern half of the Mississippi territory sought separation from the western half. Complaints were levied that the territorial government at Natchez was not protecting the population properly nor distributing services equitably. To keep the number of slave and free states balanced in the U.S. Senate, in March of 1817 Congress—at the behest of Georgia politicians—granted a petition creating the Alabama territory, leaving the western half envious of the new territory's move toward statehood.²²

Land and money were the great issues of the day, and understanding the history of The University of Alabama must incorporate a reading of early statehood and the political struggles that ensued regarding land, property, and financial affairs—both public and private. Those were the issues upon which political factions built their parties' platforms and designed their agendas. Antebellum Alabama's political landscape was defined by the patterns of early settlement; one

²² Samuel L. Webb and Margaret E. Armbruster, *Alabama Governors*, (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2001), 7-12. The Mississippi Territory had been created in April 1798. See also J. Mills Thornton, *ibid.*

group in the north around Madison County’s hub at Huntsville and the second resting in the river valleys and on the rich Black Belt plains. The friction between these two geographically-based powers and their platforms had a great bearing on—to name just three issues—positioning the state capital, deciding where to build the state university, and establishing a state bank. These issues must be considered to fully appreciate the founding, establishing, and opening of The University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa.

The Bibb Brothers & Broad River

William Wyatt Bibb was named Territorial Governor in 1817 by President Monroe. Educated at William and Mary College and earning a medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania, Bibb served in the Georgia state assembly and both chambers of Congress. In 1817, Bibb moved to the territorial capital at St. Stephens—in Washington County—six years after his brother Thomas had settled near present-day Huntsville. The Bibb brothers had been major players in the Georgia-based Broad River faction, a group with political and fiscal ties that dominated politics at the local, state, and national level—controlling Congressmen and judges. It did not take long for the faction to plant roots in the Alabama territory. The “Broad River Men” moved west, bought large tracks of land, and began selling it off piece by piece: speculation, fraud, and corruption became standard business practices. To ensure their hold on the land market and the fiscal development of north Alabama, in 1816 the group incorporated the privately owned and operated Planters and Merchants Bank at Huntsville. The bank was a powerful tool for the faction, including its director Leroy Pope, who often confused his personal money with that of the bank’s. Yet the bank’s monopoly in north Alabama and the faction’s grip on political power was brief. The Broad River group’s elite status, which stemmed from their aristocratic social standing, money interests, and political power, eventually earned them the

derisive title “the Royal Party.”²³ Curiously, by 1861 many planters were promoting themselves as aristocratic gentlemen, but in the early years of statehood, a charge of nobility was considered a political slur.²⁴

Constitution

Meeting in Huntsville in 1819—St. Stephens had proven to be too far south to represent the interest of the whole state—Alabama’s first constitution was drafted by a Committee of Fifteen. A full article was dedicated to education, mandating the state would forever encourage education, promote the arts, literature, and the sciences. Overall, for Malcom McMillian the document was “a mixture of liberalism and conservatism, the product of the past as well as a forerunner of the future.”²⁵ On one hand, there were no tax-paying or militia qualifications for voting or for holding office. Suffrage was extended to all white male citizens who had attained the age of twenty-one years, without any property-holding provisions. There were even liberal rules for slaves. The state required “owners of slaves to treat them with humanity, to provide for them necessary food and clothing, to abstain from all injuries to them extending to life or limb, and, in case of their neglect, or refusal to comply with the directions of such laws, to have such slave or slaves sold for the benefit of the owner or owners.”²⁶ Moreover, “Any person who shall maliciously dismember or deprive a slave of life, shall suffer such punishment as would be inflicted in case the like offence had been committed on a free white person.”²⁷

²³ *Alabama Governors*, *ibid.*, 13-17. This section was authored by Daniel Dupree who also authored *Transforming the Cotton Frontier* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1997). His monograph charts the history of Madison County between 1800 and 1837. Moreover, it gives details into the politics, daily life, electioneering, land speculation crisis, effects of economic panics, and the local bank wars which colored life in and around Huntsville. “Royal Party” was an intended spiteful slur at the Broad River faction; the term is attributed to Kentucky-born newspaper-man William B. Long who operated Huntsville’s *Democrat*. See Thornton, *ibid.*, 15-16.

²⁴ Thornton, *ibid.*, 13-17.

²⁵ Malcolm McMillian, *The Alabama Constitution of 1819: A Study of Constitution Making on the Frontier*, (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1950).

²⁶ Alabama State Constitution (1819).

²⁷ *Ibid.*

While the constitution was being drafted, the political wheels were set in motion to name a capital city. It appeared a forgone conclusion that a more northern town was sitting in the proverbial catbird seat, namely Tuscaloosa, and the issue proved to be the linchpin in the gubernatorial election of 1819. Convinced that Huntsville would never be the economic center of the state, William Bibb alienated many of his northern allies when he over-rode the legislature's choice of Tuscaloosa in favor of Cahaba. As the gubernatorial race heated, Bibb demonstrated his political might and became Alabama's first governor in December 1819; almost immediately he set-up his government in the upstart village at the confluence of the Cahaba and Alabama Rivers.²⁸

Yet, as governor, Bibb did not enjoy the same latitude he had as the territorial chief executive. The Committee of Fifteen's constitution allowed the newly installed legislature to restrict the term of office for governors and his veto powers; additionally, the body awarded to itself the ability to choose the site of the "permanent" state capital. Bibb worked tirelessly promoting the growth of Cahaba. However, in 1820 while selling lands to support the building of the capitol, he was thrown from his horse injuring his back and kidney. He spent the Spring of 1820 bedridden and in intolerable pain. The state's first governor died that July before ever seeing the capitol completed. He was only thirty-nine years old.²⁹

The president of the senate—William's brother Thomas Bibb—then became the chief executive. Although he was college educated, Thomas Bibb did not have the political skills of his brother, and was considered a "caretaker" governor by his peers. Caught between the northern and southern factions, Bibb presided over a contest to apportion legislative-seats before the 1820 census results were finalized. Fixing the seats in the General Assembly would give one

²⁸*Alabama Governors*, *ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

faction sway over the other. Again, the positioning of the state capital was the main issue at play. The southern faction was uneasy with Thomas Bibb and they argued for the apportionment to be delayed until the census results were finalized. Moreover, they wanted to stall the issue until the 1821 elections.³⁰ In a last-ditch effort, the Broad River group coaxed Thomas Bibb into calling a special session of the legislature, although he ultimately vetoed their apportionment bill as unacceptable.³¹

It is not clear why Thomas Bibb disappointed his northern allies; money and power were at stake. With Alabama Fever booming, thousands of immigrants were rushing into the Black Belt—changing the center of power. They swept in to grab cheap land and to begin turning their hand to the production of cotton, the newest trans-Atlantic staple crop. According to Thomas Abernathy (1965), the price of cotton, stood at an astounding 34¢ per pound in 1818. Of course, with the immigrants came an increased attachment to slavery. The planters’ aim was “To sell cotton in order to buy negroes—to make more cotton to buy more negroes, ‘ad infinitum’.”³² The issue of slavery touched every facet of life: politics, social structure, and child-rearing practices to name but a few. Abernathy recorded, “By 1820 Alabama had attracted a population of over 125,000, black and white, and of these the slaves made up thirty-one percent.”³³ Dr. Abernathy’s numbers are not exact; the 1820 census shows the state population at 144,317 (96,245 white and 48,082 African-American of which only 633 were free blacks). A decade later the state’s population had swelled beyond 300,000 with over thirty-eight percent living as property.³⁴ This

³⁰ William Warren Rogers, Robert David Ward, Leah Rawls Atkins, Wayne Flynt, *Alabama: The History of a Deep South State* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1994), 73.

³¹ *Alabama Governors*, *ibid.*

³² Rogers, *ibid.*, 95. See also Abernathy, Thomas Perkins, *The Formative Period in Alabama, 1815-1828* (Tuscaloosa: UA Press, 1965).

³³ Abernathy, *ibid.*, 57.

³⁴ Alabama Department of Archives and History, “Alabama History Timeline, 1801-1860,” <http://www.archives.state.al.us/timeline/al1801.html> (accessed January 24, 2010). Thornton has the state’s population in 1819 at 70,000 and 127,000 in 1820. David Durham’s dissertation notes that state’s 1820 population

increased migration into the mid-and-southern counties spelled doom for the Broad River group's majority hold in the state legislature and this shift in power away from Huntsville possibly led Bibb to seek new alliances, thus the veto.³⁵

As the battle over the capital occupied the two sides, the Panic of 1819 did not discriminate between victims. Both Bibb brothers had been caught by the economic crisis: "Popular resentment toward private banks exacerbated antagonism toward Georgians who controlled many of the banks and enjoyed large profits from the temporarily high usury rates made possible by Bibb's support for repeal of the Mississippi Usury Act."³⁶ To alleviate the pressure of economic recession, people began to look optimistically for Thomas Bibb's outline for the creation of a state bank. Lacking the political skills and the backing his brother had received, Bibb declined to run for office in 1821; he would leave the capital, bank, reapportionment, and economic recovery questions for the next administration.³⁷

Israel Pickens

With Thomas Bibb retiring from politics and the north Alabama faction reeling from the allegations of banking misdeeds, improper and illegal land speculation, and weakened by the Panic of 1819, the stage was set for Israel Pickens. The North Carolinian had an impressive political career in his native state before migrating to St. Stephens in 1817. An educated man, he had moved to Washington County to seek political office and take advantage of cheap lands. He quickly acquired 3500 acres and assumed the presidency of the bank there in the territorial

stood at 128,000. See David Durham [PhD Dissertation] "Henry Washington Hilliard: 'A story of plebeians and patricians'" (The University of Alabama, 2005). See also, David I. Durham, *A Southern Moderate in Radical Times: Henry Washington Hilliard, 1808-1892* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2008).

³⁵ Thomas Bibb may have stood by his veto in order to allow his brother's dream (i.e. Cahaba becoming the capital) to be fulfilled.

³⁶ *Alabama Governors*, *ibid.*, 16.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

capital. His keen financial mind helped the institution maintain reserves during the Panic of 1819, which in-turn buttressed his standing in the community.³⁸

A respected man, Pickens served as a delegate to the state's constitutional convention where he briefly aligned himself with the Broad River faction. However, Pickens started to distance himself from this group in 1820, building his own support base in the southern counties. In the face of economic depression, Pickens ran for governor against Dr. Henry Chambers, president of the Planters and Merchants Bank. As citizens of the new state tired of the Huntsville bank and the political aspirations of its president, Pickens' supporters grew in number. After the suspension of specie payments in 1820, suspicion undermined Chambers' political agenda. Along with the Broad River members, Chambers was called upon to prove his integrity and loyalty to the common farmer, a demand he could not easily meet. Pickens also garnered support as he lobbied against Thomas Bibb's proposal to auction land set aside by Congress for the state university. The state had the right to sell the lands in order to raise more capital and build the school when and where they saw fit. The initial plan was to set the price at two dollars an acre, but Pickens wanted to raise the price and sell the plots payable in installments. This idea proved quite popular. As Thomas Bibb stepped aside, the election results reflect both Pickens' popularity and the beginning of the end for the Royal Party. Pickens won the 1821 election handily.³⁹

Riding the popular disdain of private banks, Governor Pickens pushed through legislation creating one of his two major political dreams, the Bank of Alabama. The institution was overseen by the General Assembly rather than private individuals, in accord with the wishes of the majority of Alabama's citizens. The Royal Party objected and the governor countered by

³⁸ Ibid., 17-21.

³⁹ Ibid.

launching an investigation into the business practices of the Planters and Merchants Bank, and two years later after it refused to resume specie payments, the governor revoked the bank's charter and closed its doors.⁴⁰ The waning Royal Party legislators vacillated and Pickens' political victory over the Broad River Men was complete. A year after his 1823 reelection—the same year the Royal Party lost its majority in the General Assembly—Pickens opened the Bank of Alabama.

Prior to the Bank of Alabama's opening Pickens had to procure the monies needed for its operation. As the state was only creeping out of the Panic of 1819, coming up with the necessary \$200,000 proved to be a tough obstacle for the governor. The legislature pledged half, but left Pickens with the task of finding the source for the remaining \$100,000. The governor arranged to have state bonds sold on the New York stock market and sold lands allotted for internal and transportation improvements. Pickens used money from the sale of these lands and from the 46,080 acres the territorial assembly had set aside in 1818 for the establishment of a state university.⁴¹ While many of these tracks had been sold before Pickens became governor, the sales gave him liquid capital to help with opening the state bank. By not accepting Thomas Bibb's recommendation to sell university lands for \$2 per acre, the state was able to raise the price to \$17 per acre. They also set up installment plans for buyers—mostly on a four-year payment plan. Collectively, these decisions delayed the beginning of Pickens' second political dream: to build and open The University of Alabama. While many citizens were excited about

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Rogers, *ibid.*, 79. Sellers notes that on April 20, 1818 Congress passed an "Act Respecting the Sale of Public Lands in the Alabama Territory" and a year later the Act of Admission was passed. Together these acts gave two townships to the state for the purpose of establishing a seminary of learning.

opening a state college, political wranglings and the short supply of monies delayed the plans. Pickens could not have both a state bank and a university; one would have to wait.⁴²

Governor William W. Bibb had called for the University's creation in his inaugural address and in the first three years of statehood legislation appeared pressing the issue. However, once governor, Pickens vetoed the first University bill and tabled a second because the investments that went along with the University's creation would have landed power and money in the hands of private bankers without any state oversight. In effect, Pickens bought time for his political allies to win seats in the assembly and for the Bank of Alabama to establish itself within the state. Nonetheless, while the University was delayed, the legislature did elect in 1821 a slate of trustees and charged them with their tasks.⁴³ Their duties were liberal for the era: not only were they entrusted with overseeing the sale of University lands, choosing the site for the institution, but they were also to find a site for a state female institution.

The Trustees

The individuals named as trustees were not simply appointed because of their political affiliations. Certainly patronage and politics played a part, but—despite the Romantic overtone—they were the *grand hommes* of their communities. An early plan, dated 1820, called for twelve men to serve three year terms; they would be chosen by joint ballot of the state legislature with a pair representing each of the state's judicial circuits. By 1822, twelve men proved to be too few and the number was increased to eighteen. The terms of office were then staggered (three groups each serving for six, four, and two years) to ensure a systematic rotation.

⁴² *Alabama Governors*, *ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

This composition remained in place until 1843. The governor served as president of the board and presided over its annual meeting—by law, the board was required to only meet once a year.⁴⁴

The first board consisted of three physicians, a former U.S. Marshall, a banker, the state's Attorney General, the Speaker of the lower house in the legislature, a state supreme court justice, three state legislators, several former soldiers, and both a future Congressman and Senator.⁴⁵ Of the sixty-eight who served between 1821 and 1837 at least seventeen (25%) had received a formal collegiate or university education—five attended South Carolina College, three graduated medical schools in Pennsylvania, three attended school in Georgia, while others matriculated in Kentucky, Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and New Jersey. Most impressively, trustee Bugbee graduated from Yale. Others read and studied law through traditional apprenticeships, at least twenty-four (35%) being admitted to the bar. Among the tasks they faced, Sellers (1953) cites receiving

lands, tenements, hereditaments, personal property, and sums of money for the purpose of promoting the interests of the University. They were the custodians of the University's land and other assets. They were responsible for planning and building and administering an institution which should reflect credit to the state. They were authorized to elect by majority vote of the whole board necessary officers for the University, to fix their salaries, and to remove them from office if they proved incompetent. They were responsible for prescribing courses of study and for enactment of University rules. And when the University should at last be functioning, they were to confer on approved students diplomas or certificates signed by them and sealed with the common seal of the trustees of the University.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ James B. Sellers, *History*, *ibid.*, 7-27. Hereafter cited as Sellers, *History*.

⁴⁵ A list of the trustees came from two sources: Palmer's *A Register of the Officers and Students of the University of Alabama 1831-1901* and William Garrett's *Reminiscences of Public Men in Alabama, for Thirty Years with an Appendix* (Atlanta: Plantation Publishing Co. Press, 1872). Biographical information for the men who served on the Board of Trustees came from numerous sources (including Garrett's text): Thomas McAdory Owen's *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography in four volumes* (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1921), W. Stewart Harris's *Perry County Heritage* (Marion: Perry County Historical and Preservation Society, 1991), Henry S. Marks' *Who was Who in Alabama* (Huntsville: Strode Publishers, 1972), Carl Elliott's *Annals of Northwest Alabama* (Tuscaloosa, 1958), W. Brewer's *Alabama: Her History, Resources, War Record, and Public Men from 1540 to 1872* (Tuscaloosa: Willo Publishing Co, 1964), A.B. Moore's *History of Alabama and Her People*, vol. 3 (Chicago: The American Historical Society, Inc., 1927).

⁴⁶ Sellers, *History*, *ibid.*, 11.

The Board and Money Troubles

Much of the trustees work was carried out by a number of standing committees, and with the opening of the University delayed by Governor Pickens, the bulk of their activity revolved around property sales. The ledgers where proceedings of the board are recorded survived the University's burning in 1865 and contain buyers' names, the collecting of payments, and other fiscal measures relating to the selling of University lands. Some buyers signed up on a four-year payment plan, others to an eight-year schedule. However, many soon found themselves in default, and the trustees were forced to allow a three-year grace period in order for those in arrears to re-establish their credit and resume payments. If that time elapsed they forfeited their claim and all monies paid; the land could then be resold for full price. The state Assembly, however, noting the availability of cheaper lands opened by various Indian cessions, awarded debtors lenient terms.⁴⁷ As a whole, the board's books are compromised. According to Sellers, "In the many transactions which converted sales to leases, considerable sums were lost because purchasers, turned lessees, failed to pay either the original purchase price or interest upon it... Within ten years the confusion had developed to such a point that special investigators were needed to bring order into the records of land transactions."⁴⁸

Using Suzanne Wolfe's text, a January 1, 1831 *Huntsville Southern Advocate* article "bemoaned the 'clouds and darkness' that rested on the University as a result of the legislature's 'disastrous' relief bill, which, in effect, gave away the University's lands 'for a mere song'."⁴⁹ Later that year the trustees considered accepting a more liberal policy for payments on land

⁴⁷ Ibid., 17.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 14-15. In 1826 the debate between the trustees and the General Assembly over the cost of University lands caused the board to take action. Land sales in the early 1820s had been slowed by economic recession and more importantly by the availability of cheaper, better quality land. At their meeting in 1826, the board decided not to lower the overall cost of the lands, but to grade the land and sell it accordingly: \$17 for the best land, \$12 and \$8 for lesser quality plots.

⁴⁹ Suzanne Rau Wolfe, *The University of Alabama: A Pictorial History* (Tuscaloosa: UA Press, 1983), 4.

purchases. Individuals in default were allowed an additional five years (on top of the given three) to pay off their debt. Some trustees—notably Samuel W. Mardis and William Acklen—fought this vigorously.⁵⁰ They argued that this measure favored the wealthy buyers who were only trying to delay payment as long as possible. Moreover, from a legal standpoint, they argued the Board of Trustees lacked the legislative ability to restructure the payment system and schedule. Many newspapers around the state took the side of Mardis and Acklen and published their admonitions of the board. The *Huntsville Southern Advocate* charged that the trustees were “the greatest danger” to the University and that they were “men engaged in political bustle—in whose care the concerns of education will meet with but little regard.”⁵¹ Yet, despite this salvo from the public, the board continued their liberal policies. By 1833, however, they were forced into reform and instituted a one year period between the agreement to buy and the writing of the lease, contingent upon payment of half the principle and all incurred interest. A new forfeiture proceeding process was also implemented.⁵²

The public scrutiny had taken its toll; in 1832—a year after the University opened—the board closed its meetings to the general public and hired two doorkeepers. But demands for accountability would not be silenced, and the following year a state committee was appointed to audit the land sales and the monies collected. Their report, issued in 1834, showed that transactions involving upwards of one million dollars were almost impossible to trace. While the total amount of lands allotted against the total sold to-date balanced within one part of one acre, the money owed was a very different matter. Using board records, private claim slips, and the records of land agents—who had been hired to sell acreage—the committee struggled to decipher what had been sold to whom, for how much, and the standing balances. They also

⁵⁰ Trustee Acklen’s name is spelled differently depending on the source. Some texts have it spelled “Acklin.”

⁵¹ Wolfe, *ibid.*, 4. Here Wolfe is quoting the *Advocate* from September 17, 1831.

⁵² Sellers, *ibid.*, 19.

traced those who were in default, those who had forfeited their lands, and those whose claims were still inside the grace period. Ultimately, blame was placed upon the board and its agents, and new regulations passed to ensure future accountability.

The whole process was thrown into further confusion, when, later that year, the General Assembly passed legislation allowing petitioning purchasers who were in default to buy their lands outright for a reduced rate. Not only were revenues based upon the \$17 per acre cost reduced, but the University lost interest on previous payments. This loss of capital pinched the University immediately. In 1836, B F. Porter—the University’s legal counsel—issued a report on his two-year survey of land sales. According to his records, \$144,239.18 had been lost due to legislative relief laws, lost interest, and forfeitures.

Pickens’ Victory

Due to term-limits, Pickens could not stand for election in 1825. However, he was able to hand-pick his successor, fellow North Carolinian John Murphy. The following year their faction dominated the state legislature and Pickens was sent to Washington, D.C. where he joined William Rufus King in the U.S. Senate. Unfortunately, he spent much of the time in sickbed, weakened by Tuberculosis and fevers. His conditioned worsened and Pickens was forced resign his Senate seat. He moved to Cuba in the hope a tropical climate would help him recover, but Pickens died April 24, 1827.

As Murphy stood unopposed in both 1825 and 1827, two issues excited the citizenry: the choice of where the permanent capital would be and where to build the state university. Considered geographically too south, the General Assembly replaced Cahaba with Tuscaloosa. In his second inaugural, Murphy “urged that the creation of a state university be addressed and that commissioners from each judicial district inspect proposed sites and report back to the

legislature.”⁵³ In 1827, after nineteen ballots narrowed the thirteen suggested sites, Tuscaloosa was chosen as the location for The University of Alabama. The selection of Tuscaloosa was only slightly heated by party politics, because any Broad River Men left in the legislature lacked the political might to challenge the political bosses of the North Carolina faction.⁵⁴ And in March 1828, trustees selected Marr’s field, about a mile east of the capitol, as the site for the campus.

Tuscaloosa

“Tuskaloosa” was a rough-edged town on the American frontier, yet a place of optimism and aspirations for grandeur. Settled by whites just three years before Alabama was admitted into the Union, its position on the Black Warrior River caused the growing village to become a popular crossroads. Just south of the fall-line’s natural shoals, it held the northernmost port, making Tuscaloosa the riverhead for the region’s cotton industry.

The town grew into in different directions. On one hand was the seedy underbelly of frontier life, and on the other hand a reform-minded population committed to the missions of the emerging benevolent empire. William Ely, an agent for the Connecticut Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb, passed through the town in 1821 and noted the more shady side of the town’s life. He proclaimed Tuscaloosa to be “Mobocratic,” and he found “Gross, excessive profanity is very prevalent, and many spent much time lounging about Taverns, Stores, tipling and gambling houses, or in making and attending horse races...[and] cockfights.”⁵⁵ The planter elite enjoyed “hunting, barbecues, and horse-racing;” furthermore, they took pleasure in the excesses of

⁵³ *Alabama Governors*, *ibid.*, 17-21. He was succeeded in the Senate by John McKinley, 23.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 17-24

⁵⁵ John W. Quist, *Restless Visionaries: The Social Roots of Antebellum Reform in Alabama and Michigan*. (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1998), 21.

alcohol: “Even the clergymen drank wines and toddies...women accepted drinking as a matter of course...[and] men drank during the day and at dances and social entertainments.”⁵⁶

He also commented on the sorry state of homes in the area, “most of them without a single Pane of Glass, with scarcely a saw’d board or Plank, Nail or any other Iron about them, all with wooden Chimneys & fire Places & almost as destitute of furniture as of Glass or Iron, some have no floor but the bare Earth.”⁵⁷ Ely was particularly disgusted by the lack of religiosity, the open drinking, and the sorry state of education. He found the teachers immoral and “ignorant.” Moreover, the so-called religious devotees merely pretended to teach and preach, and that the meeting houses “were mean uncomfortable Places generally left open for hogs &c to enter at pleasure’.”⁵⁸ Overall, the townspeople were living a despicable existence, and one that was prone to fatal violence. Writing to his family, he explained

My health is not very good, tho I am able to attend to business, but the constant care and anxiety I experience, both on account of my Business, and the hazard to myself and the Property in my Custody among such a barbarous People, many of whom are inclined against me, and the confinement I find prudent to subscribe to, never going out here unarmed, pray severly on my health and spirits and render me quite unhappy.⁵⁹

“At the core of the town’s problems—and in Ely’s mind the cause of Tuscaloosa’s loathsome behaviors—was the absence of ‘enough of a religious or moral Principle in the Body politic to cause the Laws to be put in execution’”—a similar lamentation to the sentiments Alva Woods would express a decade later.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Marie Brown, [PhD Dissertation] “A Social History of Tuscaloosa from 1816 to 1850” (The University of Alabama, 1930), 31. Things did not change much over the next several years and not surprising, alcohol aided in the street violence. In 1838 a local newspaper, the *Flag of the Union*, reported thirteen fights had occurred within sight of the state capitol; “Pistols and Bowie Knives were used in every case.” Theodore Weld, *American Slavery: As It Is*. (New York: Arno, 1968), 194.

⁵⁷ Matthew W. Clinton, *Tuscaloosa, Alabama: Its Early Days, 1816-1865*. (Tuscaloosa: The Zonta Club, 1958), 32.

⁵⁸ Quist, *ibid.*, 21-22.

⁵⁹ W. S. Hoole, “Notes and Documents Elyton, Alabama, and the Connecticut Asylum: The letters of William H. Ely, 1820-1821.” *The Alabama Review*, vol. 3, 1950, 63.

⁶⁰ Quist, *ibid.*

The town, however, was not without religion. As the 1820s progressed, Tuscaloosa caught the reform fever that was sweeping through America. During the reorientation of Calvinism—when “the belief that sin is the result of the voluntary, selfish, and conscious actions of individuals”—the evangelical denominations of Tuscaloosa were inspired by Samuel Hopkins’ idea of disinterested benevolence, and banded together to form Bible, tract, and Sunday School societies.⁶¹ Pulling together Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians, these societies were an extension of the benevolent empire, which “aimed to have America become a protestant republic and promoted a strict code of morality, which they expected would eliminate from Americans those behaviors that evangelicals were certain caused poverty and misery.”⁶² Collectively, “they based their activities on essentials of common Christianity, millennialist hopes for establishing the kingdom of God in their lifetime, and expectations that disinterested benevolence would improve the lot of all mankind.”⁶³ These Christian values also blended with (what would become) Whig political ideals, which sought the growth of a protestant American republic, reformed by good works and organizations such as the American Education Society that would inspire the moral transformation of the nation. “Vice would be subdued, poverty eliminated, industrious and sober habits adopted, and a strict code of morality embraced.”⁶⁴

Moreover, these self-identified visible saints worked to measure their own inner-piety by recruiting—or, to them, saving and converting—souls for the missions of Christ. As they snatched “brands from the burning” they also hoped to add to the numerical strength—and thus the political influence—of the church. This was the mission, goal, and task given to Alva Woods

⁶¹ Ibid., 1.

⁶² Ibid., 13.

⁶³ John Kuykendall, *Southern Enterprise: The Work of National Evangelical Societies in the Antebellum South* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1982), x.

⁶⁴ Quist, *ibid.*, 19.

at Andover; and with the encouragement of the Baptist alliance, Tuscaloosa must have seemed the perfect place for him to do God's work.

In 1826, Tuscaloosa replaced Cahaba as the capital city, and with the state government "came an influx of judges, lawyers, politicians, lobbyists, and men of desperate fortunes...Hotels, saloons, restaurants, and gambling dens sprang up. Ladies, the wives of senators and representatives, as well as mere pleasure seekers and women of fashion, assembled from all parts of the state. The citizens vied with each other in giving the most elaborate entertainments. It was a period of gayety and excitement."⁶⁵ Even as the religious reforms took hold, the capital city took on an elitist attitude. Excitement surrounded gubernatorial inaugurations, debating societies, and the elaborate balls held at the elegant hotels. In addition to supplying liquid spirits, the five local taverns gave the men of town a place to discuss the news of the day. "University men," legislators, judges, merchants, and the lesser sort of folk would pile into the bars to mull over town gossip, national and state politics, and other news they discovered in one of the several local newspapers.⁶⁶ The more academic-minded individuals even formed formal clubs to regulate their interests and debates. In 1830 the Franklin Institute met; one year later The Lyceum was born. The 1838 Ciceronian Club was followed by the formation of the Alabama Historical Society in 1841. Not surprisingly, these organizations were for men only; although, the Druid City Club—a literary and society club—included both sexes in its activities.⁶⁷ Tuscaloosa was thus a town of contradiction. It boasted religious movements, literary societies and political clubs, but also accommodated wild drunkards, shanty-town style houses, and dueling after bouts of binge-drinking and gambling.

⁶⁵ Brown, *ibid.*, 23.

⁶⁶ *Northern Alabama*, (Spartanburg: The Reprint Company, 1976), 515. According to this source, between 1820 and 1837, seven newspapers serviced the Tuscaloosa area. Few of them overlapped in years of publication and circulation.

⁶⁷ Brown, *ibid.*, 28.

Nichols' Creation

Tuscaloosa was a frontier town, but rising out of its red-clay soil came two architectural marvels: the state capitol and the buildings of the University. They were two of the most impressive structures in the state at the time and are a credit to William Nichols, the former state architect of North Carolina. Once he removed to Alabama, he began designing and then the construction of the three-story capitol building, which he positioned at the west end of Broad Street. Nichols built the structure in the classical revival style—complete with a massive dome—and finished it in 1829. The building served as the capitol until 1846 when it was deeded to the University in wake of the government moving to Montgomery. The University later leased it to the Alabama Female College, yet unfortunately the structure burned in 1923 leaving only the ruins still visible in Capitol Park.⁶⁸

Despite the near-fatal flaws in bookkeeping, the opening of the University was not delayed. By December 1825 the treasury balance rested slightly under \$68,000, and at the Board's meeting in March 1828 a building fund was established with \$50,000 earmarked for constructing the campus' first structures. The University's building committee, with Nichols in position as lead architect, submitted estimates for the first set of university buildings.⁶⁹ Nichols envisioned the Alabama campus to resemble that of the University of Virginia. "Just as in Charlottesville, campus plans included several buildings symmetrically arranged around a mall."⁷⁰ This lay-out embraced Jefferson's ideal of spherical architecture where the buildings encircled a focal center-point. The design also facilitated the development of Jefferson's

⁶⁸ Wolfe, *ibid.*, 7-8.

⁶⁹ According to Sellers, who relied heavily on an Oct 9, 1830 *Southern Advocate* (Huntsville) article, we can assume with "considerable sureness" that the estimate included costs for Washington and Jefferson Halls, the Lyceum, the row of faculty homes, and the Rotunda. Nichols also designed a few homes in Tuscaloosa along with the University buildings and the capitol.

⁷⁰ Delos D. Hughes, "Jefferson's 'Academical Village'", *Alabama Heritage* (Spring 1997), 26.

academical village concept that the trustees wanted to replicate for Alabama's youth. Nichols used a copy a Virginia blueprint called the "Maverick Plan" to design the campus on Marr's field. "If the Maverick Plan was a common engraving in Charlottesville, in Tuscaloosa it was a treasured document."⁷¹ Indeed, the Maverick blueprint was a tough commodity to obtain. Governor Pickens had written Thomas Jefferson in 1822 requesting plans for the University of Virginia, yet there seems to have been no reply. Somehow Mr. Jesse Beene attained the Maverick Plan and presented it to the Alabama board of trustees. The fact that the gift was recorded in the board's ledger proves the significance of Beene's generosity and the trustees' relief in receiving the plans.⁷²

With the basic plan for Jefferson's university in-hand, Nichols began work; exactly "When and how much the architect was influenced by Jefferson's innovative design is not known. Whatever the case, Nichols was far too skilled a designer to merely copy another person's ideas."⁷³ Having designed much of the campus at Chapel Hill, North Carolina, Nichols used emerging architectural trends specific to colleges and universities and incorporated them into his master plan for Alabama's campus. The native of Bath, England assimilated Jeffersonian ideas and adapted his earlier efforts at Chapel Hill—possibly feeling he was improving upon both—for Tuscaloosa's campus. On Marr's field, Nichols placed the Rotunda at the center of campus rather than at the head of the mall as Jefferson had done. Also, "Unlike Jefferson, who warned against housing large numbers of students in a single building, Nichols planned six three-story dormitories in Alabama, each accommodating forty-eight students in four main suites."⁷⁴

⁷¹ Ibid., 31.

⁷² Pickens's letter to Jefferson was dated June 13, 1822 and it was received, by Jefferson, at Monticello on August 3, 1822. The board thanked Mr. Beene at their December 11, 1826 meeting. See Delos D. Hughes' article in the *Alabama Heritage* for a copy of Pickens' letter to Jefferson.

⁷³ Robert O. Mellow, "The Alabama Rotunda," *Alabama Heritage* (Spring 1997), 34.

⁷⁴ Hughes, *ibid.*, 26.

The first two dormitories built were Washington and Jefferson Halls; the third, Franklin Hall, was added in 1833. Behind the Rotunda—that faced the Huntsville Road—was a row of professors’ houses and the Lyceum, the principle instructional building on campus. Again, unlike Virginia’s campus, Nichols did not connect the buildings with a covered walkway; the boys would have to brave the elements as they criss-crossed campus. Set off to the west from the row of faculty houses was one of two planned hotels; one was probably never completed while the other became the Steward’s home and is today known as the Gorgas House.⁷⁵

Ideology & State Politics

Even before they knew him as the president, politically Tuscaloosa—and Alabama as a whole—was committed to the policies of Andrew Jackson. Their dedication to Democratic ideals sprang from presuppositions cultivated in the formative years of the state. Broadly speaking, these were “characteristics, values and habits of action that were shared by frontier folk throughout the South.”⁷⁶ As frontier people, they were independent yet were vulnerable to anyone who threatened to take that liberty. “This is why they opposed efforts and institutions that concentrated power and wealth in the hands of a few.”⁷⁷ And this is one reason the Royal Party lost its constituency. Moreover, in their emerging slave society, Alabamians buttressed themselves against the great fear—they too would succumb to a power that would make them slaves. As they aggressively defending themselves, an Englishman and tutor for children in the 1830’s Black Belt noticed, “every man is his own law-maker and law-breaker, judge, jury, and

⁷⁵ For a rich description of the University in 1831 see the Huntsville newspaper *Southern Advocate* (October 9, 1831). Sellers quoted much of the article in his *History*. See also Mellown’s *Alabama Heritage* article for a description of the Rotunda. Hughes’ article in the same volume of the *Alabama Heritage* compares Nichols’ plan to that of UVA’s. The fourth antebellum-era dormitory was completed in 1854.

⁷⁶ Harvy Jackson III, *Inside Alabama: A Personal History of My State* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 46.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

executioner.”⁷⁸ To defend their personal liberty and property, the “common man” rallied to Democratic ideologies and even their extreme—states’ rights.

The Jeffersonian principal of states’ rights only caught on in Alabama when anti-Pickens men began to look for an issue and platform whereby they might launch their own bid for political power. However, in the presidential election of 1824 and the subsequent campaign against the “corrupt bargain” many anti-Pickens men joined Pickens supporters finding themselves on the same side—Jacksonian Democracy. The election of 1828 used the old label of “aristocrat” to discern who Jackson’s men were and who sought to steal property, encroach on Alabama’s sovereignty, and whittle away personal freedoms. While political parties were not formal—indeed, they would not be for another decade—the dividing lines were being drawn.⁷⁹

States’ rightists were loyal Jacksonians but they increasingly kept their options open to promote their own causes. A champion of states’ rights was Congressman Dixon Hall Lewis.⁸⁰ A one-time pro-Jackson man, Lewis actually moved further to the political right as he tried to raise the passions of Alabamians during the Nullification Crisis. However, the situation in South Carolina did not excite the Alabama citizenry the way Lewis had hoped. Jackson was against Nullification and so were the majority of Alabama citizens. “Nonetheless during 1830 and 1831, warnings of threats to freedom both from the tariff and from federal aid to internal improvement did carve out for the nascent states’ rights faction a secure power base in the Black Belt.”⁸¹

⁷⁸ Ibid. Here Jackson is quoting Englishman Philip Henry Gosse who tutored children in the Black Belt during the 1830s.

⁷⁹ Thornton, *ibid.*, 21-24.

⁸⁰ Lewis defeated former Governor John Murphy in the 1831 Congressional election. Murphy’s term as governor had expired in 1829 and Gabriel Moore was elected governor.

⁸¹ Thornton, *ibid.*, 27.

Flush Times

1830s Alabama has been dubbed by some “The Flush Times.” It was a period when credit came easy, land was widely available, and cotton was becoming king. Ideological factions were evolving into formal political parties, and national issues were no longer just problems for people in Washington; they were becoming local concerns. Bank wars and Indian removal policies flamed the passions of Alabama citizens, and federal programs tied to commerce, transportation, and internal improvements were coming to loggerheads with state’s rights ideologues.

Dixon Lewis did not have to wait long to raise the standard of states’ rights a second time. The cession of Creek Indian lands in 1832 allowed the state to create new counties; it was announced that after a survey of the lands, settlement would be opened to Alabama’s growing population. As men jockeyed for the best parcels, squatters moved into unopened lands and of course charges of fraud were quickly levied. Moreover, in the agreement, the Creeks were to be given the right to retain a section of the lands, but officials began to manipulate the treaty, pushing the Indians off their protected property. The Creeks appealed to Jackson’s government, and the president sent the army into the territory to enforce the cession agreement and to remove the illegal squatters. The issue began to spiral out of control when, in August 1833, squatter Hardeman Owens was killed by a soldier. Despite acting under orders and a claim of self-defense, a Russell County grand jury indicted the soldier. Rebuffing the judgment, the federal commander at Fort Mitchell refused to allow the sheriff to serve an arrest warrant. Over the next two years the state and the federal government were at to loggerheads over the issue. “The governor championed the rights of the settlers, protested federal military presence on Alabama soil as an insult to the state’s sovereignty, and ordered a militia to be organized in the newly

formed counties in the eastern section.”⁸² Governor John Gayle was claiming Alabama citizens had the rights to arrest, try, and perhaps convict a United States soldier. Sovereignty was at stake. Gayle “announced that the federal government’s efforts on behalf of the Indians were an insult to Alabama and a violation of her rights. Claiming that the state had jurisdiction over the land in question, Gayle argued that state courts should have been allowed to deal with the matter. To do otherwise suggested that Alabama could not handle her own affairs.”⁸³ Gayle was not taking a nullification stance; as a moderate, he viewed nullification as illegal. Rather he looked to the duty of his office and invoked the state’s right to establish the government’s authority over its own territory and the protection of its citizens.⁸⁴ In December 1833 Jackson dispatched Francis Scott Key to Alabama to rectify the situation. Key worked with the Creeks to claim their property, aided the land surveyor to complete his work as quickly as possible, had the federal troops removed, and met with Governor Gayle. When the indicted soldier went missing no trial could be held, and the situation became a moot point.⁸⁵ Moot or not, Gayle’s realpolitik posture provided the average Alabama farmer the ideology of a pure democracy. They could take what they wanted. Jackson could claim the law had been enforced, but Gayle had won. While, “Nullification as a weapon of South Carolina planters against the tariff had little appeal for Alabamians, and particularly little for the subsistence farmer to whom questions of foreign [cotton] trade seemed as yet very far away,” what Gayle and his men had given to the local farmer was a destiny over his own land.⁸⁶ The common man of Alabama would not be a slave to anyone—especially the federal government. Having opened in 1831, students at the University

⁸² *Alabama Governors*, *ibid.*, 32. Gabriel Moore resigned March 3, 1831 to take a seat in the U.S. Senate; Samuel B. Moore became the state’s chief executive and served the remaining months of Gabriel Moore’s term. In the fall election, John Gayle was elected, running on a strong anti-Nullification platform.

⁸³ Jackson, *ibid.*, 68.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 31-34.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* See also Thornton, *ibid.*, 28-29. For a description of Key’s visit to Alabama, see T.C. McCorvey’s *Alabama Historical Sketches*.

⁸⁶ Thornton, *ibid.*, 30.

must have noticed this incident and applied its lessons to their own lives and situations. The issue gripped the state and in the winter elections of 1833 the states' rights forces captured about half of the seats in the state assembly. The moderate Jacksonians were forced to "circle the wagons;" however, they continued to dominate state-wide political offices against the extremists.

C.C. Clay, the Whigs & the End of the Flush Times

The Whig movement in Alabama began in-part as a result of the Jackson-Gayle Creek issue. In the 1834 legislature, those men subscribing to this new political coalition were largely from the Black Belt and cotton producing areas of the state. Yet, due to their fiscal and commercial interests, the group had a tough time recruiting the "common man" to their cause. "The Whigs' support for an active government and the party's strength among large planters convinced yeoman voters that the Whig party was one with the wealthy aristocracy, the traditional villain of Alabama politics."⁸⁷ Politically, their aims were high, although their attempt to unseat the indomitable William Rufus King from the U.S. Senate failed.

Despite the merger of Jackson-King-Unionist and Lewis-states' rightists, party politics remained fickle in mid-1830s Alabama. Clement Comer Clay was recruited to run for governor in 1834, but found himself pinched by the two main groups. The former Congressman and state supreme court justice's mentor, Judge Hugh Lawson White, was leading the Whig opposition to President Jackson in the Deep South, and Clay was seen as a product of White's training. Candidate Clay had to be careful not to be drawn too deeply into debates on national politics during the campaign. Specifically, he avoided having to comment on the Democratic convention, held in Tuscaloosa, as it had called for the nomination of Martin Van Buren as Jackson's successor. With anti-Jackson forces winning seats in the state's general assembly, Clay had to be careful not to alienate anyone. Clay had been a Broad River Man in his early days and adopted

⁸⁷ Ibid., 137.

the Jacksonian image to further his political career, yet fortunately for Clay the Whig/anti-Jacksonians' candidate for governor, Enoch Pearsons, was a weak candidate. Clay easily won the election. Once elected, he pleased the Democrats and joined whole-heartedly in supporting Van Buren's nomination.⁸⁸

Despite Governor Clay's call for internal improvements and a state-wide educational system, two events colored his administration—another war with the Creek Indians and the Panic of 1837 which brought the *Flush Times* to an abrupt end. The Creek War of 1836 was a brief affair and actually saw more Creeks attempt to suppress the rebellion than join in its cause. Governor Clay personally took control of the state militia in order to quash the rising, but it took federal forces to end the fighting and to begin pressing the Indians (not just the Creeks) to newly-created Oklahoma reservations. The following spring, economic recession gripped the state. Clay summoned the legislature into a special session and using a heavy-hand pressured them into extreme actions, hoping to ease the burden of small farmers. The Relief Act of June 1837 extended grace periods to debtors and forced the Bank of Alabama to issue \$5 million in bonds whereby loans could be extended to those in need. Clay became immensely popular for these efforts; however, they were poor fiscal decisions. The Bank of Alabama had no way of backing the \$5 million and it was eventually forced into bankruptcy. Nonetheless, Clay was applauded and in 1837 many of the bank's debtors in the general assembly elected the governor to the U.S. Senate. As Clay accepted the seat vacated by John McKinley who had been appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court, Hugh McVay became governor albeit for only three months. Gubernatorial elections had already been held and Arthur Bagby had been elected, so McVay, as president of the senate, was elevated to high office until Bagby's inauguration in late November 1837.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Webb, *ibid.*, 38. The chapter on C. C. Clay was written by J. Mills Thornton III.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

Issues such as the Creek War, Indian removal, and banking were beginning to play second-fiddle to the issue of slavery. The “peculiar institution” has a long historiography, and slavery more than any other single factor or characteristic of life in the South shaped the upbringing of the youth who attended The University of Alabama. Since Jacksonian democracy “emphasized the notion that freedom is autonomy—that is, the absence of external forces manipulating one’s life—the existence of slavery quite naturally came to seem an essential bulwark of freedom.”⁹⁰ Moreover, as the commitment to Democratic ideals (and the later move to a hard-line states’ rights platform) became the state’s political as well as social ideology, the defense of slavery became the paramount issue.

Most importantly, for this study, slavery helped shape childrearing practices and the ideals and expectations of parents. Slaves, as property, became tools of the master; a young man (or woman) learned to use these tools as a means to an end—be that for attaining wealth, status, or power. As something less than human, slaves were the scapegoat for every imaginable sin; they could not be trusted and were viewed as inherently dishonorable. Only a non-slave was honorable (freedmen were somewhere in between); therefore, the white man constructed a world (and language) where he must appear to be honorable, and he demanded respect to validate his honor. Thus the demand for honor and respect transcended the master-slave relationship and shaped all of Southern society. Every white man—slave owner or not—in the South held a level of honor simply because he was not black chattel. However, “because servility excluded one from membership in the citizen body, an Alabamian therefore could not simply assume that his dignity as an individual was accepted; he had, rather, to prove his worth—his claim to possess the qualities of a free man—constantly, both to his fellows and to himself. If he wished to retain

⁹⁰ Thornton, *ibid.*, xviii.

his place in society, he had to be ready at all times to fight for it.”⁹¹ Despite the fact that the ideals and practices of honor and respect existed long before the age of Cotton, it was in the South’s slave society where Southern honor became a unique characteristic. Children of the 1820s and 1830s grew up in this society, constantly defining themselves, comparing themselves to what they were not (i.e. slaves), and wrestling figuratively and literally to attain what they should be—honorable men. This self-defining journey took place in the fluid context of adolescence as well as in the increasingly politically heating American South.

Steven Mintz posits that childhood is a “social construct that has changed radically over time.”⁹² As such, writers—and the general public—look at the eras of the past and presuppose what childhood, and by extension adolescence, should have been like. Sellers—and others—were caught in this trap; the scant writings of the events on Alabama’s campus in those earliest years show that authors prefigured the student’s agency in those affairs. Rarely did the writers take into account the student’s expectations and opinions. Caught by their own views of the past, they simply did not question why the youth did the things they did. Importantly, we must require that students in the 1830s did not indentify with the concept of adolescence or of being a teenager, a product of the Progressive Era. The youth had to invent their world and shape it as they saw fit. One of the key themes in Mintz’s account is the shifting relationships between parents and children, a dynamic Sellers fails even to address in his explanation of the episodes that occurred on campus. While there are noticeable social norms and characteristics that help define life in the antebellum South for a young man, the society they grew into was anything but static. The generation born in the Era of Good Feelings (and into the early 1820s) was different from their fathers’ and grandfathers’. The evolving ideal of southern honor for privileged white

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Steven Mintz, *ibid.*, viii.

children who attended The University of Alabama gave them certain expectations that—in turn—gave great challenges for the faculty of the new institution.

Alva Woods was from that earlier generation, and he came to Alabama armed with a religiously-based conceptualization of the methods and content of schooling necessary to educate knowledgeable and pious citizens. To understand the events on campus—those violent clashes—we must investigate Alva Woods' mind and understand why his values and ideals were such an anathema to the students attending the promised Harvard of the South.

CHAPTER THREE

ALVA WOODS

Understanding The University of Alabama's place in the narrative history of antebellum education is impossible without a discussion of the man leading the institution at its start. The Reverend Alva Woods' time in Tuscaloosa—like Jonathan Maxcy and Thomas Cooper's at South Carolina or Gessner Harrison's at Virginia—was plagued by student violence. The cumulative effect of these events eventually caused him to lose favor with town supporters and University trustees, but it would be a historian's fallacy to argue this consequence was inevitable. While it is highly probable such troubles would have met any man in his position—as indeed they did Woods' successor, Basil Manly—Woods responded to events in a manner that escalated unrest and elicited violent responses. His deportment and expectations gave the students at Alabama an excuse to exert their manhood in defense of what they perceived as their rights as southern men. It was the president's view of knowledge and his austere demeanor that caused friction not only between himself and the students, but also between other faculty members, most notably Henry Tutwiler. As these hostilities weakened the leadership of the school, a sense of resentment and a general loss of confidence arose among the faculty and trustees. The resulting factionalism only served to fuel student rebellion as their episodes of violence increased in severity and frequency.

Alva Woods' tenure at Alabama must be read with an understanding of his conception of Christian duty and public leadership. He came to Tuscaloosa with a well articulated philosophy of education and an iron resolve to help evangelize the new state. Informed by an understanding

of Woods' intellectual and religious convictions and a knowledge of the role he played within the hierarchy of the Baptist Brotherhood, the events of the first six years at The University of Alabama come into focus showing not so much the failure of an individual but a clash of irreconcilable cultures.⁹³

Alva Woods and the Orthodox Mission in Education

Son of a Baptist minister in Shoreham, Vermont, the “hopefully pious” Alva Woods enrolled in Phillips Academy in 1810 at age sixteen in order to prepare for Harvard.⁹⁴ There he came under the orbit of his uncle, Leonard Woods, the professor of Systematic Theology at the adjoining Andover seminary and perhaps the leading orthodox theologian of the day. After three years of hard-line instruction, Alva entered the freshmen class at Cambridge along with such notables as George Bancroft, Asa Cummings, and George B. Emerson. Evidently a very capable student—he was well regarded by his Latin tutor, Edward Everett—he graduated in 1817 with honors. Returning to Andover, he then spent a year as an assistant master at Phillips before preparing for ordination in 1821.⁹⁵

⁹³ For James B. Sellers, Woods was simply a Yankee, who, having “learned discipline in the shadow of the New England Puritans” was unaccustomed to southern ways and the high spirits of “frontier youth, many of them still in the undisciplined, restless early years of adolescence.” See Sellers, *History*, *ibid.*, 55, 197.

⁹⁴ Alva's father Abel Woods was born in Princeton, Massachusetts, to a devout Congregationalist family. An intense conversion experience at age 18 convinced him to join the Baptist church and promote the word of God. After preaching in local churches, he accepted a ministry in Vermont. Throughout his life he was a strong supporter of Baptist causes—Sunday Schools, tract and Bible movements, temperance societies and missionary groups. According to his biographer, he preached “the doctrines of human accountability and divine sovereignty, of man's depravity and the agency of Spirit in regeneration and redemption through the blood of Jesus, [and] of Christian perseverance through grace.” Letters to and from his son reveal a close filial bond and common religious convictions; indeed, the entire family lived within the church. Alva's sister Sarah married a Baptist minister in Albany and another sister, Ella, married a lecturer at Newton. At the end of a long life dedicated to his faith, Abel Woods retired to Hamilton, New York, to spend his remaining days among the Baptist brotherhood at the denomination's new literary and theological college. Ashael C. Kendrick, “Discourse delivered in the Baptist Church, in Hamilton New York, Wednesday August 14, 1850, at the Funeral of the Reverend Abel Woods” in *Alva Woods, Literary and Theological Addresses, by Alva Woods, with a Biographical Sketch Appended* (Providence, RI: Providence Press Company, 1868), 367.

⁹⁵ New England Baptists were closely aligned with conservative Congregationalists in the first half of the century. While differing on questions of infant baptism, they shared basic Calvinist principles and a dedication to moral reform. Attending Andover in the years prior to the establishment of Newton Theological Institution, students found a faculty interested in revival theology, spreading the gospel, and missionary service. Indeed, several worked

Founded amid the political turmoil of the American Revolution to conserve traditional values and combat the rise of liberal theology, Phillips was dedicated to instilling strict Calvinist teachings in the pliant minds of future leaders. The school's first master, Eliphalet Pearson, set the pattern of instruction for the next half century. Josiah Quincy, later president of Harvard and Unitarian confidant of Horace Mann, recalled how the "Preceptor" of the academy ruled by fear and force, compelling students to sit on hard wooden benches daily "for four hours in the morning and four hours in the afternoon" while they memorized passages from the Bible, Cheever's *Accidence*, Dr. Watt's *Hymns for Children*, and the *Westminster Catechism*—the foundational text of the institution.⁹⁶ With the instructor's gaze fixed on the child's soul, "monitors kept an account of all a student's failures, idleness, inattention, whispering, and like deviations from order, and at the end of the week were bestowed substantial rewards, for such self-indulgencies, distributed on the head and the hand, with no lack of strength of fidelity."⁹⁷ The preceptor's personification of God's-eyes was a trait invoked by Alva Woods throughout his educational career.

In 1786, Pearson joined the faculty at Harvard. Twenty years later, when the Unitarians gained control, he returned to establish Andover, a bastion of orthodoxy that would fight, as Leonard Woods, put it, "against the soul-destroying corruption" that threatened "to sweep away every remnant of primitive truth and goodness."⁹⁸ Unitarianism, Leonard Woods' friend Lyman

closely with the First Baptist Church (Francis Wayland's congregation in Boston) and other prominent evangelical groups in the cause of moral reform. The two institutions eventually merged to form the Andover-Newton Theological School a century later.

⁹⁶ Edmund Quincy, *Life of Josiah Quincy of Massachusetts* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1867).

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 74. The schoolroom run by the preceptor was thus a microcosm of life in God's universe.

⁹⁸ Prior to this time future ministers would apprentice with leading divines; practicing their oratorical skills at the pulpit while writing lessons on points of doctrine. Horace Mann's pastor and youthful nemesis, Nathaniel Emmons was the most prominent of all these teachers. A disciple of Samuel Hopkins, he tutored some 78 students—including Leonard Woods—in his radical "consistent Calvinism." Following David Hume, Emmons argued that there is no distinct human nature inherited from Adam; corruption flowed from the exercise of voluntary choice. In contrast, Leonard Woods held that individuals were born with an innate taste for evil. Woods quoted in Daniel D.

Beecher claimed, was perverting "the youth of the Commonwealth by means of Cambridge...silently putting sentinels in all the churches, legislators in the halls, and judges on the bench, a scattering everywhere physicians, lawyers, and merchants. [They] sowed tales while men slept and grafted heretical churches on orthodox stumps."⁹⁹ Alva Woods' education, in root and branch, was derived from this heated theological debate. Its lessons, and the Baptist mission it spawned, helped him shape his core attitude toward teaching.

Leonard Woods played a vital role in this counter-revolutionary movement. Bringing together "Old Calvinists" (who eschewed speculative thought in favor of reestablishing community life based upon the traditional Puritan covenant) and "New Divinity" theologians (epistemologically informed thinkers, such as Samuel Hopkins, whose teachings were developed from the work of Jonathan Edwards), who formulated a doctrinal consensus that united the orthodox behind Andover.¹⁰⁰ Basically, this comprised the accommodation of the Westminster Catechism with the twin Hopkinsonian principles of human depravity and God's absolute moral and physical government of the world. Adam's descendants, the faculty had to swear,

Williams, *The Andover Liberals* (New York: Kings Crown Press, 1941), 2; Daniel Walker Howe, *The Unitarian Conscience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 4. On "exercises" and "tasters" see Bruce Kuklick, *A History of Philosophy in America* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001).

⁹⁹ Lyman Beecher quoted in Milton Rugoff, *The Beechers: An American family in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), 38.

¹⁰⁰ According to E. Brooks Holifield, Leonard Woods informed "his students that 'a doctrine proved by sufficient evidence, is not to be rejected on any account whatever'. Woods "began his lectures with a discussion of right reason, natural theology, and the evidences of the Christian revelation. To understand reason he had the students read the Scottish philosophy of Common Sense. For natural theology, he immersed them in readings from the English theologian William Paley. On the evidences, he had them read the deists, from John Toland to Ethan Allen, and then to critics of deism, from Joseph Butler to John Leland to the Tübingen theologians G.C. Storr and C.C. Flatt. He assured them that 'all religious truths must harmonize with the divine intelligence, which is the highest reason in the universe'. Nothing that Woods told his students was new or surprising. Ever since the seventeenth century, theologians in America had affirmed the reasonableness of Christianity, produced treatise on natural theology, and countered deism with the evidences of revelation. But never had the issue of rationality assumed as much importance as it did in the early decades of the nineteenth century. The period saw the maturation of a style of theology devoted to the promotion of evidential Christianity and convinced that the methods of Baconian science could work for theology as well as they did for geology or chemistry." See E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 173-174.

were constituted sinners; that by nature every man is personally depraved, destitute of holiness, unlike and opposed to God; and that, previously to the renewing agency of the DIVINE SPIRIT, all his moral actions are adverse to the character and glory of God; and that being morally incapable of recovering the image of his CREATOR, which was lost in Adam, every man is justly exposed to eternal damnation.¹⁰¹

This did not mean the Creator was responsible for human sins. According to Woods, while men and women may have been born with a “taste” for evil, they also had the free will to overcome their desires. Merely following God’s word, however, did not ensure salvation; election also depended upon God’s grace. Moreover, once justified, inner piety spurred acts of benevolent service to the community. Collectively, all human behavior was governed by the logic of Divine Providence: good deeds were rewarded, wicked ones punished. The apparent suffering of the just and the dutiful, Alva Woods explained to Francis Wayland’s Boston congregation in 1824, was simply a matter of perspective. A man who labors “under bodily infirmities”

complains that he is cut off from all the comforts of life, and from the sympathies of friends who are in health and activity around him. But while his friends are eagerly following worldly pursuits or pleasures, his thoughts may perhaps be directed to that world where pain and privation are unknown; and he may see reason to thank God for all that affliction as the greatest blessing of his life.¹⁰²

Given this view of the human condition, three major concerns governed theological studies at Andover: demonstrating the reasonableness of Christianity, justifying Calvinism, and revealing the practical value of the pious life.¹⁰³ The first problem developed in response to the rise of deism, and involved the complementary projects of proving the Bible is a source of revealed truth and science an instrument to uncover the workmanship of God. Underwritten by Scottish moral philosophy and a Baconian commitment to the compatibility of reason and faith,

¹⁰¹ Quoted in Williams, *The Andover Liberals*, *ibid.*, 6.

¹⁰² Woods, *Literary and Theological Addresses*, *ibid.*, 284.

¹⁰³ The three-year Andover curriculum comprised Sacred Literature, Christian Theology (including Natural Theology), and Sacred Rhetoric and Ecclesiastical History. See James W. Fraser, *Schooling the Preachers: The Development of Protestant Theological Education in the United States 1740-1875* (Lanham, MD: University Press of American, 1988), 35.

theologians rejected speculative thought for knowledge grounded in common sense and the logic of induction. On one hand, it was argued that the historical record verified the miracles and events described in the Bible; on the other hand, as Paley explained in his canonical *Natural Theology* (1800), like the mechanism of a watch, the structure of physical and organic phenomena pointed to a beneficent designer. Certainly, theologians were forced to accommodate their interpretation of the Bible to facts of the geological record and other scientific findings, but, by and large, they boasted a near complete harmony between the two sources of truth. The Bible, it seemed, contained imperatives on life in a world adapted to human needs—an assumption reinforced by the way scriptural lessons spoke to the primitive truths and moral sense God had implanted in the human mind. The debate therefore had as much to do with education as it did with theology.

Equally important for the founders of Andover was the defense of Calvinism against the rise of liberal theology. This second project came to the fore in 1819 when William Ellery Channing published “Unitarian Christianity.”¹⁰⁴ As much an attack on Calvinism as a defense of liberal theology, Channing’s sermon suggested that the orthodox image of a vengeful father not only misrepresented the moral perfection of God, it also prevented the harmonious growth of the child’s mind. Therefore, the Calvinist God, he asserted, was unworthy of worship. Claiming a total mischaracterization of the orthodox position, an incensed Leonard Woods wrote a long and detailed rebuttal to Channing’s argument. His letter then excited Henry Ware, Hollis Professor of Moral Philosophy at Harvard, and the famous “Woods n’ Ware” debate of 1820 ensued.¹⁰⁵

Central to the exchange was the question of original sin. Following Baconian canons, both

¹⁰⁴ William Ellery Channing, *A sermon delivered at the ordination of the Rev. Jared Sparks, to the pastoral care of the First Independent Church in Baltimore, May 5, 1819* (Baltimore: J. Robinson, 1819).

¹⁰⁵ Henry Ware, *Letters addressed to Trinitarians and Calvinists, occasioned by Dr. Wood’s Letters to Unitarians, by Henry Ware* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1820); Leonard Woods, *Letters to Unitarians and Reply to Dr. Ware, by Leonard Woods* (Andover: M. Newman, Flagg and Gould, 1822).

looked to the facts. For Woods, experience and the Bible proved the truth of the Westminster Catechism, that human beings are destitute of holiness and innately prone to evil. His own impressions agreed with the judgment of Timothy Dwight, president of Yale, who after thirty years observing “thousands of children,” declared “I cannot say with truth, that I have seen *one* whose native character I had any reason to believe to be virtuous; or whom I could conscientiously pronounce to be free from the evil attributes...disobedience, revenge, selfishness etc.”¹⁰⁶ Not just the experience of a single man, Woods claimed this opinion was shared by “the great majority of enlightened Christians in all ages and countries.”¹⁰⁷ Ware was appalled; “innocence, and simplicity, and purity,” he countered, “are the characteristics of early life.”¹⁰⁸ Under his own Lockian view of character, which assumed children were born morally neutral, “duplicity, and all the cold and selfish, and calculating manners of society are the fruit of education, and intercourse with the world.”¹⁰⁹ Sin was a consequence of the choices men and women made, not the Almighty’s will. Moreover, he found infant depravity simply inconsistent with the ideal of a just God because it assumed that men and women were damned before they ever acted. God would not create beings “so inclined by nature to evil . . . as to be from the first the objects of his hatred and wrath,” and he would not require of them “a change, which he has made it morally impossible for them to experience,” while inflicting “eternal punishments upon them for failing to do it.”¹¹⁰ Woods, who believed that sin was God’s instrument for engineering the greater good, rejected Ware’s conclusion. Reconciling the truths of human depravity with God’s perfection was simply beyond the power of finite minds. In the end, both turned to the

¹⁰⁶ Timothy Dwight, “Human Depravity,” sermon XXIII printed in *Theology Explained and Defended*, vol 2 (New Haven: Clark & Lyman, 1831). This quotation can also be found in Leonard Woods’ *Letters to Unitarians*, page 149.

¹⁰⁷ Leonard Woods, *Letters to Unitarians*, *ibid.*, 149.

¹⁰⁸ Henry Ware, *Letters Addressed to Trinitarians and Calvinists*, *ibid.*, 26.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Henry Ware, *A Postscript to the Second Series of Letters Addressed to Trinitarians and Calvinists* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1823), 15.

effects of their opponents' religious views. Woods claimed that Unitarianism, with its emphasis on reason, promoted pride and intellectual hubris; Ware posited that Calvinism perverted the moral faculties. Dissipating in a morass of scriptural detail, the two sides eventually reached an impasse—and both orthodox and liberal theologians claimed victory for their views.

Alarmed by the secularization of American life during the revolutionary period, the orthodox feared Jeffersonian democracy would lead to infidelity and the kind of egoism that had soured the French Revolution. Andover's third and most pressing concern was thus to create a new religious community in which republican virtue would be melded with Christian piety. Fusing a growing millennialism with the emotional fervor of the Second Great Awakening, Woods and his colleagues helped energize a generation of men and women with an unparalleled zeal for moral reform. Temperance and anti-tobacco leagues, Sunday Schools, Bible and tract societies, all grew up to Christianize the nation. Primarily concerned with ministerial education, the faculty at Andover also played a role in the formation of the influential American Education Society (1815) which raised funds to train hundreds of pious youths from the poorer classes.¹¹¹ This cause was particularly pressing for the Baptists who had no seminary of their own, and, apart from Brown, no schools dedicated to an education in the tenets of their faith. In 1800, William H. Brackney notes, the Baptists had only 40 pastors in North America with a college education.¹¹²

Building the Baptist Academy

As sectarian spirits consolidated, the question of who would minister to America and its new territories gradually turned higher education into a site of denominational struggle. By 1820 Harvard, Yale, and Princeton had opened their own graduate seminaries, and over the next

¹¹¹ For the involvement of Andover faculty and benefactors see Natalie A. Naylor, [Ed.D. Dissertation] "Raising a Learned Ministry: The American Education Society, 1815-1860" (Columbia University, 1971).

¹¹² William H. Brackney, *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought* (Macon GA: Mercer University Press, 2004).

twenty years fifty more institutions followed suit—including the Baptist literary and theological schools at Hamilton New York, Waterville Maine, and Washington, D.C. (Colgate, Colby, and George Washington University). The Baptists also opened Newton Theological Institution to serve as the doctrinal counterpoint of Andover.¹¹³ Joining the cause, Alva Woods—intellectually sound and religiously earnest—was a natural choice for professor of mathematics, natural philosophy, and ecclesiastical history at the newly established Baptist literary and theological school, Columbian College (now George Washington University).¹¹⁴

Joining William Staughton and Irah Chase, Alva Woods became the third professor hired for Columbian College. Groomed for the position by the faculty at Andover, he was ordained by

¹¹³ See Natalie A. Naylor, “The Theological Seminary in the Configuration of American Higher Education: The Ante-Bellum Years” *History of Education Quarterly* 17 (Spring 1977): 17-30.

¹¹⁴ Actually, Washington’s Columbian College grew out of a second, related interest of the Andover divines: the preparation of missionaries to spread the Gospel and civilize the barbarous peoples of the world. Inspired by the English Baptist missionary William Carey, Adoniran Judson, Luther Rice, and several other Andover students had pressed the seminary and its supporters to prepare them for a life of overseas service. The Congregationalists responded by establishing the Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (1810) which quickly raised the money for Rice and Judson’s passage to India. Upon arrival in Calcutta, however, the two men came under the influence of Carey and quickly converted to Baptism. The Board withdrew financial support, and Rice—suffering from illness—returned to America determined to establish a national organization that would fund the spread of his new faith. Judson continued on to evangelize Burma. Traveling the country, Rice spent much of 1813 knitting regional groups into an overarching Baptist Board of Foreign Missions. Then, the following year, at the group’s first triennial conference, he petitioned the delegates to establish a seminary where future missionaries could learn the languages necessary to translate the scriptures for the peoples of the Far East and South America. Carey and his team of scholars at Serampore eventually translated the Bible into 40 languages for the peoples of the sub-continent. Judson produced a Burmese Bible. See William Smalley, *Translation as Mission: Bible Translation in the Modern Missionary Movement* (Macon, GA: University of Mercer Press, 1991). Three years later at the second convention this charge was broadened to establishing “a classical and theological seminary, for the purpose of aiding pious young men, who, in the judgment of the churches of which they are members, and of the board, possess gifts and graces suited to the gospel ministry.” See “History of Columbian College, District of Columbia” in *The Christian Review*, 2 (March 1837), 115-136. Still with no seminary of their own, the Baptists evidently believed there was a more pressing need for educated pastors at home than educated missionaries abroad. Events moved quickly. Endorsing the plan of the Philadelphia Baptist Education Society, the Board funded an experimental school under the leadership William Staughton (an English disciple of Carey) and Irah Chase (Woods’ friend, and fellow student at Andover).¹¹⁴ With this scheme underway, delegates at the third conference in 1820 were ready to commit funds. The main concern was location. While some argued for expansion of the Philadelphia school, the call for political and geographical centrality—together with the donation of 46 acres and buildings on land acquired by Rice and his associates—won out, and the new capitol was chosen. The proposed college presented something of a problem for politicians in the federal city, who, alert to the advantages of an education close to the seat of government, wanted to ensure a reasonable separation between church and state before granting a charter. In the end, with the strong support of Henry Clay and several other senators, it was agreed that the institution would be established—under a Baptist controlled board—as a non-denominational college with a theological department. So it was that the teachers and students from Philadelphia traveled south in September 1821 to commence religious instruction in Washington. The classical department and a preparatory school opened in January.

his uncle in October 1821 with the observation that “the whole course of your education has manifestly been directed by providence with a view to the particular station for which you are now designated.”¹¹⁵ Recognizing “a four-fold reward” for his filial investment, Leonard Woods proudly announced his nephew’s mission as the disciplining of minds, and, “as a minister of the Gospel the promotion of true religion.”¹¹⁶ Alva’s first duty, however, was to raise money and purchase materials for his new school. He was extremely successful: in the space of just six months he solicited the best part of \$14,000 from congregations across the Atlantic states. The following June he accompanied Staughton and Chase to Europe, where, continuing his fund raising, he was able to secure sufficient donations to purchase £500 worth of books and £400 worth of philosophical apparatus.

In addition to meeting with a variety of Baptist groups, Woods also used his eighteen month stay to visit public institutions and universities across Britain and the continent.¹¹⁷ He became particularly interested in the politics of educational reform, developing a strong sympathy for the conservative evangelical pietism of Hannah More and the efforts of Henry Brougham to elevate the population through public schooling, popular lectures, and cheap publications. For Woods, the practical lessons in physiology and economics promoted by Brougham meshed perfectly with the Baconian spirit he had imbibed in his own New England training. Downplaying the classics, he found scientific education the best tool for training the

¹¹⁵ Leonard Woods quoted in Alva Woods, *Literary and Theological Addresses*, *ibid.*, 381.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Woods trip was coordinated by the Bristol Baptist College. After Bristol, he visited London, Oxford, and Cambridge before travelling on to “Edinburgh, and Glasgow, and visited the principal institutions of literature, science, and art in Paris, Lyons, Genoa, Leghorn, Florence, Rome, Naples, Milan, and Geneva.” See Clark, *History of Education in Alabama*, *ibid.*, 47.

faculties and furnishing the mind.¹¹⁸ Combined with the Bible, it taught the essential order of society and demonstrated each individual's Christian duty.

In December 1823, a month after his return from Europe, he was married to Almira Marshall. Moving from Boston to Washington, he no doubt looked forward to a promising academic future. Determined to maintain the highest standards of learning and conduct, the faculty at Columbian adopted policies modeled on New England's leading colleges. Entrance requirements were rigorous: to tackle the undergraduate curriculum of Latin and Greek literature, mathematics, physics, geography, history, Christian apologetics, and moral philosophy students had to be proficient in classical languages. As for discipline, alert to the rebelliousness that had plagued Harvard, Princeton, Brown, and Yale, a near monastic routine of prayer, recitation, and study was instituted—all of which was carefully monitored in a merit book.¹¹⁹ Close attention was paid to dress, cleanliness, and deportment.¹²⁰ Weapons, gambling, alcohol, and tobacco were banned, and everyone had to be in bed by 9pm. Infractions of this code were penalized by a rising scale of fines, public admonition, suspension, and ultimately expulsion. Joining in the blacklisting of troublemakers, the faculty refused admission to any student expelled from another institution.

Enrollment grew quickly and the faculty reported high standards of scholarship. At the first commencement in 1824, before numerous members of Congress and the ageing Lafayette, President Monroe spoke of the grand achievements of the students and the faculty, and the promise of the new institution so advantageously set on the steps of Capitol Hill. In reality the

¹¹⁸ Under the influence of Moses Stuart the curriculum at Andover turned toward the study languages—including Hebrew and German—necessary for biblical criticism.

¹¹⁹ See Steven Novak, *ibid.*

¹²⁰ Personal slaves were not allowed; the college hired “servants” to provide meals and attend to the domestic needs of the students. Elmer Louis Kayser, *Bricks without Straw; the Evolution of George Washington University* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970).

college was already in dire straits. Despite relaxed admission standards, the theological department had not enrolled a new student in two years. Crippled by high interest loans, questionable investments, an ill-conceived tuition scheme, and deplorable accounting—some even charged Luther Rice with fraud—the college edged toward bankruptcy.¹²¹ Woods, who had helped Rice with the accounts, saw the writing on the wall and quickly accepted a professorship in moral philosophy and mathematics at Brown University. Following suite, Chase moved to Boston to become first president of Newton Theological Institution.

While little evidence remains about Woods' life and work during these months, he seemed to fit well into not only the academic routine at Brown but also the Baptist community of Providence. Quiet mannered and scholarly, he was well regarded by students and peers.¹²² Ever the family man, he was strongly attached to his wife and son (Marshall, born 1824), as indeed he was to his parents and several key friends, including Brown's president, Asa Messer.¹²³ Woods' sober character and conservatism also appealed to the orthodox trustees, who blamed poor student discipline on the liberal leanings of Messer.¹²⁴ When Messer was forced to resign in 1826, Woods was appointed interim president until the more formidable Francis Wayland was

¹²¹ Rice also used college funds to support two publications, the *Columbian Star* and the *Later Day Luminary*. The situation got so bad the college was forced to meet faculty salaries with library books and the philosophical apparatus Woods had purchased.

¹²² On leaving Brown a committee of students wrote thanking Woods for "his many important services as an instructor," and "the gentlemanly politeness and the more than paternal kindness . . . sustained for more than three years without an unkind feeling to mar its pleasure." While not a ringing statement of affection, certainly recognition that Woods played his part within the expected order of northern schooling. Quoted in Woods, *Literary and Theological Addresses*, *ibid.*, 387.

¹²³ Through the years, the Woods and Messer families shared religious commitments, personal intimacies, and a good deal of cooperation in financial affairs. Alva's letters to his parents are equally open and touching, while notes sent to his son reveal a devoted and loving father.

¹²⁴ Although nominally a Baptist, Messer attended a Unitarian church in Providence. His liberal views also drew public attention in 1820 when Harvard conferred him with a doctorate in divinity. W.C. Bronson, *The History of Brown University, 1764-1914* (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1914), 186-204. Messer was Horace Mann's father in law.

able to assume the position.¹²⁵ This was a momentous period for Woods, for at the very time he accepted the presidency, his second child Pricilla was born, only to die in infancy. Given his views on original sin, human responsibility, and baptism, her loss must have weighed heavily upon him.¹²⁶ Woods remained at Brown for a further eighteen months, apparently on cordial if not warm terms with the new president. Wayland—whose intellectual presence dominated Baptist thought during the second quarter of the century—would later prove instrumental in persuading Basil Manly to succeed Woods at Alabama.

Through the agency of Henry Clay, Woods left Rhode Island in 1828 for Kentucky and the presidency of Transylvania University.¹²⁷ Transylvania was also a religious battleground; Unitarians and the Presbyterian-Baptist alliance (which dominated politics in the Bluegrass State during the early decades of the nineteenth century) were entrenched in a battle that was as much about religion as it was about politics. Despite bitter sectarian criticism, the university had prospered under the liberal Horace Holley, until, in the wake of a political dispute with Clay, the Jacksonian governor, Joseph Desha, attacked the institution for its elitism, fiscal irresponsibility, and irreligious curriculum. Unable to represent the college in Frankfort, Holly gave way for to a more orthodox man. Yet Woods fared little better. Attempting to placate the legislature, he adopted a more egalitarian attitude. In addition to its traditional “aristocratic” course of classical studies, the university would prepare teachers for a state-wide system of common schools and

¹²⁵ Wayland graduated from Union College at age seventeen and entered Andover in 1816 hoping to train for the ministry. A year later he became a tutor at Union. In 1821 he was appointed minister of the First Baptist Church in Boston, where he attracted much attention for his eloquence and strong spiritual convictions. In 1826 he returned to teach at Union College before accepting the presidency of Brown the following year.

¹²⁶ When separated from family in 1837, Woods wrote to Marshall probing his piety and pleading with him to embrace Jesus. “Could you welcome sickness and death?” “Not unless you accept Jesus for your friend,” he warns, adding “do not neglect him while in health lest he should slight you in the hour of sickness and death.” Alva Woods to Marshall Woods, June 1837, Alva Woods Family Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society.

¹²⁷ J. T. Kirkland, president of Harvard (1810-1828)—who founded the university’s divinity school to rival Andover—told Henry Clay, chair of the trustee’s search committee, that Woods was “a ripe scholar, well grounded in the several parts of elementary knowledge. He is a good disciplinarian, without any tincture of severity. In manner he is quite gentlemanly. He has as little bigotry as any Baptist I know.” Quoted in John D. Wright, *Transylvania: Tutor to the West*, (Lexington KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1975), 118.

offer a curriculum grounded in science and modern literature. Transylvania would avoid distinctions of class—so prevalent in the South—by requiring students to wear a common uniform and insisting on a little more religiosity than his predecessor (without appearing to favor the Baptists), Woods promised that the school would be “founded on the broad and deep basis of Christian principle.”¹²⁸ Enrollments increased, but the college’s budget remained tight. Events came to a head in May 1829 when a fire destroyed the main building on campus. A new governor expressed support for Transylvania, but funds were not forthcoming. When the Kentucky Baptist Education Society appointed Woods to oversee the establishment of a denominational seminary, Georgetown College, he became deeply conflicted over his mission at Transylvania.¹²⁹ A dispute over salary proved the final straw. By the time James G. Birney approached him in 1830 about the presidency of Alabama, Woods was ready for a new challenge—even in the rough and ready frontier state.¹³⁰

Woods the Whig

Accepting the position in the winter and arriving the following spring, Woods entered Alabama during what Lawrence Kohl characterizes as an era of change; the Age of Jackson experienced a “transition from a society based on tradition to a society based on an ethic of

¹²⁸ Woods quoted in *Ibid.*, 121.

¹²⁹ Armed with a sizable bequest and a charter from the state legislature, the Kentucky Baptists transformed Rittenhouse Academy into Georgetown College and appointed William Staughton its first president. When Staughton died on his way to assume the presidency Woods’ tried to recruit Irah Chase. When Chase refused to leave Newton the committee settled on Joel Smith Bacon, a star student at Hamilton. Bacon later lectured at Hamilton before assuming the presidency of Columbian College in 1843. Basil Manly Jr. became president of Georgetown in 1871.

¹³⁰ It is interesting to see the political and academic references Woods was able to muster in support of his appointment. In addition to Henry Clay, these include Edward Everett (congressman and later governor of Massachusetts), John McLean (Supreme Court justice and trustee of Columbian College), W.T. Barry (Jackson’s postmaster General), and future vice president Richard M. Johnson. For more information on James G. Birney, see *Sketch of the Life of James G. Birney*, written by General William Birney (Chicago: National Christian Association, 1884). According to board of trustee notes, Woods and Tutwiler both had been hired elected to their positions on November 24, 1830.

individualism.”¹³¹ In the 1830s two veins of thought emerged, each with its own ideology of how to construct and mold that individualism. As Kohl explains, there were Whigs “whose social character was more ‘inter-directed,’ that is, comfortable with the impersonal, self-interested relationships which characterize an individualistic society,” and Jacksonians “whose social character retained more remnants of ‘tradition-directed,’ those who still felt bound to others in more personal ways.”¹³² The “triumph of the Jeffersonians had assured that American society would be built on a foundation of individualism, but it was not until the age of Jackson that divisive political conflict erupted on this foundation. This political conflict may well be called the ‘politics of individualism’.”¹³³ The Whigs

genuinely appalled by Andrew Jackson’s Caesarism, by his apparently flagrant contempt for the separation of powers and the rule of law, a contempt that, early Whigs believed, threatened the people’s political freedom, the party’s founders tried to rally politicians and voters behind a crusade to save the Revolutionary experiment in republican self-government or, in Henry Clay’s words, ‘to rescue public liberty’.¹³⁴

Aligning with the Whigs, Alva Woods was part of a group who “continually made traditional-sounding appeals for social order and unity. In fact, a closer examination of their language [i.e. Woods’ speeches] reveals that Whigs were not trying to reweave the traditional social fabric, but were rather attempting to reorganize and reconnect individuals on the basis of their own self-interest.”¹³⁵ It was with this mindset that Woods urged his students,

Nerve yourselves to a noble daring in the pursuit of the highest objects of an honorable ambition...I do not regard any young gentleman as having taken the first step in the road to an honorable eminence, who has not ceased to rely upon his friends and his wealth, and every other factitious aid for success, and who has not

¹³¹ Lawrence Kohl, *Politics of Individualism* (New York: Oxford, 1989), 6.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

¹³⁴ Michael Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party* (New York: Oxford, 1999), xii-xiii.

¹³⁵ Kohl, *ibid.*, 16.

thrown himself entirely upon the energies of his own mind...every well-educated man is, in a greater or less degree, a self-educated man.¹³⁶

Whigs “saw both individual and collective progress as dependent on the willingness of Americans to exercise self-control. They championed those institutions devoted to inculcating this virtue in the young and those remedial institutions responsible for disciplining adults who had not proven themselves capable of disciplining themselves.”¹³⁷ This was evident for Woods when his uncle ordained him in 1821 and blessed him with both a theological and educational commission. It also gives further evidence that Tuscaloosa—with the religious and secular

¹³⁶ Alva Woods, “Address to the Students,” *Literary and Theological Addresses*, *ibid.*, 68-69. This was a speech to the undergraduates of The University of Alabama, delivered December 19, 1832. Other papers in his *Literary and Theological Addresses* provide further evidence of his Whig ideology. In his 1828 Inaugural Address at Transylvania, he discussed moral culture. The failures of modern man—such as the excesses of the French revolution—were due to inadequate educational systems and an overall lackadaisical approach to the responsibility of right morals, Christian-based virtues, and active citizens. These would be the themes of subsequent speeches. In his Inaugural Address to the students in Tuscaloosa (April 16, 1831) the *Spirit of the Age* tells us, “the orator exposed to us the evils of ignorance, representing her as the parent of crime, and the forerunner of tyranny and oppression. He touched on the severity and inefficiency of penalties and punishments for the suppression of crime.” Woods postulated if the money spent on prisons and workhouses could be diverted to the promotion of higher learning; there would be little need for the corrective services of the state. The following year (December 1832), President Woods drummed personal responsibility, self-reliance, and the cultivation of individualized knowledge; students were told “In valuing your various acquisitions, place the highest estimate upon your moral attainments. These are attainments whose value will endure when the triumphs of intellect shall be forgotten, and when the splendors of genius shall have passed away.” See page 72. 1833’s Baccalaureate Address uses the theme of Romanticism—indeed Woods was no stranger to Rousseau—in which he argues that knowledge is useless without morality. Woods insists that advancement cannot be made at the expense of others. Here he is highlighting what he sees as the unethical and immoral ideals propagated by-and-in the Southern Code. Eight months later (December 1833) he addressed the Alabama Institute, one of the several debating societies of town. This was a lecture on history in which he asks the rhetorical question “whether any community shall be enlightened, is a question whether it shall be free.” He gave countless examples of how irreligion and immoral behavior hastened civil breakdown and then revolution and anarchy. He promoted the idea that “knowledge is the strongest safeguard for our religious as well as our civil privileges.” See pages 113 and 115. In 1834 the president, after a difficult year, told the students that they might be prone to bad behavior: “you may sometimes have seen associated a self-confidence which spurns restraint, which disposes its possessor [*sic*] to think himself too wise to learn, too knowing to take advice, and which is the precursor to any early downfall.” He thus urged the students to study their own character, motives, career ambitions, and to view these against their duty to their neighbor while keeping a humble, Christian mission. See page 189. In his summer 1835 address, he told the audience “for the last time” he would call their attention to their civic duties and responsibilities: “Prone, as we all are, to live too much for ourselves, we need to be reminded again and again of our social duties.” He reminded them they were bound to their society and should do everything within their power to elevate it to higher pursuits. See page 177. And in his final address to Alabama students—in December 1836—Woods lamented what he saw as the nation’s faltering from the goals of the Pilgrim fathers. He described the situation where poor rearing, inadequate education (both at home and in the community), and an attraction to vice and passion countered the ideals of self-restraint and progress, principles that—now lost—had led the nation to lose its Christian mission.

¹³⁷ Kohl, *ibid.*, 63-64.

societies doing their good works—was indeed attractive to Woods. Furthermore, Woods saw the University as not only the site but also as the experience where individualism could join in the duties of Christian citizenship. “Seminaries of learning are useful, because in them are gathered together youth of noble aspirations; and by their constant intercourse and collision in the same lofty pursuit, their minds become polished, invigorated and stimulated to higher and still higher attainments.”¹³⁸

These “higher attainments” would help the inner-directed to discover their personal flaws, the obstacles to their ambition. Individuals needed to discipline their passions, keeping greed, lust, and envy at bay; such barbarous forces would destroy a person’s reputation and ruin their dreams for right living. Moderation was the key to a harmonious lifestyle. There was no place for whims and rashness; order and control were necessary. It was a Stoic lifestyle where happiness through moderation was the ideal, not hedonistic pleasures. According to Kohl, “Individual progress and, ultimately, social progress, now depended on the willingness of individuals to exercise a virtuous self-control.”¹³⁹ Woods pleaded with students, “form a just estimate of your own attainments and your own capacities;” he warned them against pride—even the pride of education, cautioning that “if you pursue knowledge merely to feed your vanity, and to enable you to display yourselves, depend upon it, your knowledge will be superficial and worthless.”¹⁴⁰

For Philip Greven, the first school or training ground for Whigs was the home. It “was responsible for maintaining moral order in a fragmented world,” and Whig feelings on the

¹³⁸ Woods, *Literary and Theological Addresses*,_ ibid., 69. Was the Baptist mission equivalent to that of the Southern Whigs? In many instances their missions did overlap; however, there is little evidence to support a broad claim indicating a correlation between the two forces. In general terms, the Whigs were pro-government intervention (i.e. the American System) while the Baptist—to a large degree—wanted to operate outside the realm of politics. Nonetheless, as seen in the person of Alva Woods, their goals and values do align providing a framework from which to understand the University’s president.

¹³⁹ Kohl, *ibid.*, 70.

¹⁴⁰ Woods, *Literary and Theological Addresses*,_ ibid., 70 and 71.

institution bordered on worship.¹⁴¹ Holding the family as sacred, “Whigs believed that strong character was essential in an individualistic society and that character was formed early in life, the home became the first line of defense against the chaos and disorder always threatening to overwhelm both the individual and society.”¹⁴² After chronicling a series of misdeeds in his 1836 commencement address, Woods asked rhetorically, “Why are instructors of youth sometimes vexed with turbulent, unmanageable pupils, who show no regard for law or order?” It is because” he answered, “these youth were never taught in the nursery the first lessons of submission to lawful authority.”¹⁴³ “Lawful authority” not only meant the local constables, but parents, teachers, and community elders. The Whigs had made the family into a school for self control, by using religion to inculcate

morality, which in practice was little different from building character. Virtue was to be attained by strengthening the forces of reason or conscience so that they could wage effective war on the ‘bad passions’ of human nature. To the Whig, ‘*morals* of the people, purified by the spirit of the Christian religion,’ was one of the ‘pillars on which rests the temple of freedom.’ Social order and political stability alike depended on the moral restraint of the people, and organized religion was committed to instilling such moral restraint in Americans.”¹⁴⁴

Woods ended his 1832 commencement address with the plea: “Young gentlemen, with all your gettings, get moral worth. In valuing your various acquisitions, place their highest estimate upon your moral attainments. These are attainments whose value will endure when the triumphs of intellect shall be forgotten, and when the splendors of genius shall have passed away.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Kohl, *ibid.*, 72.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁴³ Woods, “1836 Commencement Address,” *Literary and Theological Addresses*, *ibid.*, 193-194.

¹⁴⁴ Kohl, *ibid.*, 73. In his 1835 Baccalaureate Address Woods notes, “As to the moral condition of society, you are bound, young gentlemen, to do all in your power to improve and elevate it; to put down every species of vice and immorality; and to foster all those humane, benevolent and religious institutions, whose object is to disperse the mists of ignorance, to reform manners and morals, and to make society the abode of every virtue.” See Woods, *Literary and Theological Addresses*, *ibid.*, 185.

¹⁴⁵ Woods, *Literary and Theological Addresses*, *ibid.*, 72.

Attacking Jacksonian America, the Whigs argued “Discipline and self-restraint were necessary for the success of the self-reliant individual and for the peace of an individualistic society.”¹⁴⁶ The Temperance movement provided the perfect cause for understanding Whigs. “They opposed drink because it reduced a man’s ability to exercise self-control.”¹⁴⁷ Other social causes embraced by the Whigs included asylum and penitentiary reform, increased promotion of almshouses, and a refocused attention to juvenile delinquency programs. With each of these social ills seemingly on the rise, Whigs blamed the family, child-rearing, and education for the failures and faults of American society. “Without proper childhood training, the individual would be too weak to resist the temptations America presented to wrongdoers...In sharp contrast to the Jacksonians, whose constant complaint was that the individual was hedged about on all sides by restrictions and controls, Whigs were convinced that Americans were plagued by an absence of order and limits in their lives.”¹⁴⁸ And “if too many Americans fell prey to their passions, if too many succumbed to ignorance, prejudice, and licentiousness, they would destroy the moral foundations of a free society.”¹⁴⁹ Realpolitik was the wrong principal, the wrong example to set. For Woods, “nothing which is morally wrong can be politically right.”¹⁵⁰ The totality of Woods’ religious training, his personal upbringing, and educational experiences was a preparation for correcting what Whigs viewed as evils besieging American society.

Alabama’s Political Climate

Woods came to Alabama convinced he was both an educational missionary and social reformer. He had drunk long and deep from the well the Whigs had begun to call their own, yet

¹⁴⁶ Kohl, *ibid.*, 74.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁵⁰ Woods, “Inaugural Address delivered at Transylvania University, Lexington, Kentucky, October 13, 1828,” *Literary and Theological Addresses*, *ibid.*, 18.

those ideals ran counter to the culture of Tuscaloosa and the Deep South. Jacksonian democracy dominated the political landscape and Democrats stood against the Whigs' inclination to regulate individual passions and interests and, as a means to that control, to have the state support businesses and education. Democrats rejected state intervention (and aid) for internal improvements, the establishment of private banks, and they feared concentrated power. As it pertained to political power, Whigs also feared the masses more than the gentry, which—when spun by the politicians—allowed Democrats to label the Whigs as aristocratic, elitist, and monarchical. In Alabama, such branding served to cramp political ambitions.

However, whatever political party or faction one belonged, as J. Mills Thornton argues, “There was really never but one issue in Alabama politics: how to avoid [falling into] slavery.”¹⁵¹ As the decade of the 1830s progressed, opposing groups engaged in a heightened rhetoric with one side alarming Alabama citizens that their freedom was being threatened. “Should the state divorce itself, as much as possible, from the central government and go its own way even though such philosophical purity demanded that it give up advantages that come from collective action within the Union? Or should the state accept federal aid, with accompanying regulations and restrictions, so that its people could have the same advantages enjoyed by other states?”¹⁵² The issue of slavery became the guiding metaphor; acquiesce to federal (and that meant increasingly northern) power meant a loss of autonomy, sovereignty, and honor. As the issue became more heated, Alabamians fought to retain their chattel property while at the same time refused to become slaves themselves.

Threats to slavery—and thus to the Southern way of life—were not just local. When Congress first denied Texas' entry into the Union as a slave state, “the northern-controlled

¹⁵¹ Thornton, *ibid.*, 32.

¹⁵² Jackson, *ibid.*, 75.

Congress was sending the message that it considered anyone who owned slaves, or might own slaves, or hoped to own slaves, to be tainted. It was a slight, a cut, a slap in the face, an insult that no honorable man could tolerate.”¹⁵³ As Alabamians of the 1840s reflected back on the debates over banking, Indian cessions, and states rights, the political culture of the Deep South made citizens feel as if their “liberty was always in danger. Israel Pickens alerted them. Dixon Lewis warned them. And John Gayle revealed that even their beloved Andrew Jackson could be a threat, unwittingly perhaps but threat nonetheless.”¹⁵⁴ So, as Harvy Jackson argues, when the fire-eater William Lowndes Yancy told the South that Yankee abolitionists were using the federal government to emancipate blacks and were plotting “to enslave southern whites, they listened and believed.”¹⁵⁵ Southern Democrats became more vehement in their states’ rights rhetoric; the fear of becoming slaves to a hostile federal government caused them to entrench themselves in an ideology that—more than any other single issue—was the defense of slavery.

Alva Woods found himself increasingly at odds with the political and social culture of Tuscaloosa. Lost Cause historians frame Woods’ tenure in Alabama as part of the struggle over the slavery issue. For example, Albert B. Moore notes, “It may be assumed that much of Woods’ s unpopularity in Alabama was due to his dislike of slavery; he had been chosen president on the recommendation of James G. Birney, the noted abolitionist.”¹⁵⁶ Certainly, Woods loathed the South’s slave society and tried ardently to shield his family from its effects. Yet piecing together evidence from Woods writings is problematic; he rarely talked about slavery in his published works. He seems, nonetheless, to have adopted a position similar to what

¹⁵³ Ibid., 78.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 84

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Albert Burton Moore, *History of Alabama and her People*, vol III (Chicago: The American Historical Society, Inc., 1927), 501.

Horace Mann would articulate a decade later. While Mann abhorred the immoral treatment and economic exploitation of blacks, his main concern was the negative impact of slave society on the healthy development of white citizens' moral character. Perhaps like Basil Manly and others at Andover, he regarded slavery as a moral responsibility of Christian culture toward a more primitive people. His letters north suggest a family "servant" and speak of the necessity of hiring or buying colored labor for agriculture in the South. What did concern him greatly, however, were the effects life in a slave society might have on his son. Writing to his father in 1831, Woods observed that "the indolence and degeneracy of character, resulting from slavery are very forcible."¹⁵⁷ Five years later he confided that he cannot bear the thought of "bringing up my child at the South. The chance of his being ruined would be very great. I wish him to live in the country at the North, where he can form *industrious* and *moral* habits, and be in the neighborhood of a good school."¹⁵⁸ Woods' son Marshall would have been surrounded by slaves as he grew-up on Alabama's campus, and the president feared the consequences of the experiences his son witnessed and learned every day in Tuscaloosa. After his wife Almira and son had moved to Boston in 1837, Woods wrote to Marshall, "[I]f you are brought up to be waited on by servants constantly, you will soon become helpless, and unfit to do anything for yourself or others. Besides, whenever people are very idle, they are very bad. I wish you brought up to constant industry; also to be good to your friends and to everybody, and above all to be pious toward God."¹⁵⁹ Alva Woods gravitated to Jefferson's thoughts expressed in his *Notes on Virginia* "There must doubtless be an unhappy influence on the manners of our people produced by the existence of slavery among us. The whole commerce between master and slave is

¹⁵⁷ Alva Woods to Abel Woods, August 11, 1831, Alva Woods Family Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society.

¹⁵⁸ Alva Woods to Abel Woods, September 1836, Alva Woods Family Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society.

¹⁵⁹ Alva Woods to Marshall Woods, June 1837, Alva Woods Family Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society.

unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submission on the other.”¹⁶⁰ And he probably tried to impart that intellectual and moral stance to his son every day. Indeed, concern for the detrimental influence of the system on his son was one of the main reasons Woods made the decision to return to the North.

Lindsley

Alva Woods was not the trustee’s first choice for president of The University of Alabama. As was the norm for the era, Alabama’s board of trustees selected and then elected a man before interviewing him or asking if he had an interest in serving as president. Their first pick for the position was Philip Lindsley, the president of the University of Nashville. The former acting president of Princeton had begun a series of steps reforming education in Tennessee; he had “issued a steady stream of addresses and essays envisioning a complete system of formal education for the state of Tennessee, from infant schools through colleges, universities, and special professional schools of law, divinity, medicine, military and naval science, agriculture, and architecture, in which, at all levels, a boundless curriculum would be purveyed.”¹⁶¹ Grammar—or common schools—would go beyond the basic instruction of the “Three Rs” providing courses in science, economics, ethics, and mechanics (i.e. physics). Institutions of higher education “would possess ‘the means of teaching all the sciences, and everything, indeed, which it is desirable for any man to know.’ Its libraries would contain ‘one or more copies of every valuable book extant in any language, ancient or modern’; and its laboratories would include ‘specimens, living or preserved, of every vegetable and animal and mineral, peculiar to the earth, the air and the waters of our planet’.”¹⁶² Moreover, like Woods’

¹⁶⁰ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on Virginia*, Query XVIII. Found in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings* (New York: The Library of America, 1984), 288.

¹⁶¹ L. A. Cremin, *American Education: The national experience 1783-1876* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 279.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

and Francis Wayland's proposals, Lindsley showed a pragmatic vision, arguing for a modern, utilitarian curriculum that parents would be willing to pay for. Despite the lofty aims, fiscal difficulties undercut the ideals Lindsley had for his adopted state. Nonetheless, he was able to advance the cause of higher education not only in Tennessee but throughout the South as a whole. Well known through his writings and lectures, Lindsley was thus an ambitious choice for the Alabama trustees. Ultimately, his investments in Tennessee's state politics and the feeling that he was making progress in the state led him to decline the presidency of The University of Alabama. As a result, the board employed James G. Birney to recruit the University's leader from the Northern and Atlantic states. It was he who returned with Alva Woods' name.

Woods had reason to be confident of success in Tuscaloosa. After ten years teaching in leading institutions, including four as college president, he knew the academic world and understood its relationship with religious groups and political powers. His intellectual convictions were firm, well-grounded, and practical. He was firmly committed to reforms that would bring the region moral and material progress. Socially well-connected, and a highly regarded leader in the Baptist church, he was sure to have the respect and support of local dignitaries. Moreover, the new campus was blessed with a very favorable endowment and extensive facilities, despite the early fiscal obstacles that have been highlighted. In short, the presidency of The University of Alabama must surely have appeared a golden opportunity for Woods; he could establish and control the education of future leaders on his own terms. Unfortunately for Woods, this control was never fully achieved, and almost from the opening bell of the school year in 1831, he found himself an outsider to both students and faculty members, a position that helped breed disrespect and ultimately violence.

CHAPTER FOUR

HONOR

In reviewing the thesis of this study, James Sellers, Willis G. Clark and others have argued that what took place on the campus of The University of Alabama was nothing unique. Boys were being boys, reacting to a cold and aloof puritan president from New England. However, something special was indeed occurring. Alva Woods' proscribed prospectus and the moral tone with which he enforced it ran counter to the culture of the slave society that produced the youth on campus. The lads hailed from the elite homes of the Black Belt and had been reared by genteel parents who instilled within them the deep-play ethic of southern honor. Within this chapter, background will be provided showing how the incidents of student violence in Tuscaloosa were part of a wave of student violence that began, in earnest, with the election of Jefferson. Also included is a brief explanation of how the riots and revolts rocking the southern states were different from those above the Mason-Dixon Line. Finally, having come to an understanding of Alva Woods' ideas and ideals, detailed in the previous chapter, a definition of southern honor will be provided. The stage will then be set for subsequent analysis of the first years of the University.

Often quoted, Thomas Jefferson's revealing lamentation, "The insubordination of our youth is now the greatest obstacle to their education," was an indictment not only of the affairs at his university in Charlottesville, but of troubles experienced on campuses throughout the

nation.¹⁶³ Helen Horowitz (1987) notes often in her study of undergraduate student culture that “College life was born in revolt;” it is hard to argue against her thesis.¹⁶⁴ As early as 1766 colonial students were in rebellion and by 1776 discontent rattled numerous institutions throughout New England and reached south to William and Mary. However, as Steven Novak (1977) illustrates, these earliest riots were “small, nonviolent, short-ranged in their goals, and easily put down. They had little effect either upon the colleges or the rest of society. They were not the antecedents of later revolt.”¹⁶⁵ After Yorktown, no immediate or major crisis occurred; nonetheless, while there were small incidents at Yale and Harvard, “The Revolution brought other changes... which were large factors in the coming revolt. The decline of the colleges [due to the sapping of resources for the cause of independence], confusion about their purposes, falling academic standards, eroding customs, and deteriorating student-faculty relations all resulted directly or indirectly from the Revolution.”¹⁶⁶ Indeed, in the post-Revolutionary era, a questioning of the purposes of higher education confronted theorists, trustees, presidents, and faculty members. “In the end, postrevolutionary academic experiments proved unsuccessful. After a period of curricular confusion, most colleges retreated to the old prescribed classical course of study. While it lasted, however, this flux undoubtedly contributed to the undermining of academic authority.”¹⁶⁷ However, from the height of the Enlightenment in America to the mid-1790s there was not a “‘student problem’ per se.” The sudden upsurge came amidst the “Revolution of 1800.” “The crisis both mobilized the young and altered the meaning of youthful disorders. After the turn of the century student unrest was no longer calmly attributed to the

¹⁶³ Steven Novak, *ibid.*, 164. Here Novak is quoting an 1823 letter from Jefferson to George Ticknor.

¹⁶⁴ Horowitz, *ibid.*, 23.

¹⁶⁵ Novak, *ibid.*, 2.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 9. The curriculum was “modernized,” allowing students to choose their own courses and when they would take them. There was no pre-subscribed plan for the students, no pre- or co-requisites.

‘influence of the first lapse’ but was perceived as ‘the product of vice and irreligion.’ This change in perception would make a crucial difference.”¹⁶⁸

Novak describes two main waves of student action: one from 1798 to 1802 and the second 1805 to 1808. In 1799 the president at North Carolina was bullwhipped; an 1802 insurrection at Princeton culminated with the burning of Nassau Hall, a former home of Congress; in 1805 Hampton-Sydney College expelled all but six for participating in a riot; and in 1807 Harvard was besieged by the infamous Rotten Cabbage Rebellion. While these are but a few of the numerous episodes coloring campus life, generally speaking, students took exception to the prices of meals, to faculty interference in student literary societies, to the structure of the curriculum, to their lack of voice in questioning professors, and most importantly in challenging the proscribed regime of discipline. Faculty members blamed the wave of violence on the French Revolution and the students’ irreligion, yet finding no recourse they extended concessions and rights to the students. However, when the idea of blacklisting students (i.e. not admitting students who had been expelled from other colleges) was introduced, these early waves of rebellion lost their momentum. “After 1807 for all practical purposes there was no longer a nascent student movement, though there continued to be an abundance of riots and rebellions.” As Novak explains, every four or five years a wave of violence would break out—in 1811-1812, 1817-1819, 1825-1826, 1828-1830, 1834, and so forth.¹⁶⁹ While Novak’s study arbitrarily ends in 1815, he and Horowitz’s show that student revolt became a college tradition, and a college education was simply incomplete without at least one incident or rebellion. Novak and Horowitz’s studies aid the historiography of early American education by demonstrating the agency of students as they shaped their worlds and participated in the creation of college life.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 15.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 25.

Novak was right in pointing out the continuity of student riot and rebellion into the antebellum era, an age where regionalism caused North and South to diverge over the issue of slavery. Yet, despite the rift, student troubles persisted in both sections of the country. So, the rhetorical question persists: what is the difference between the episodes of student riot in northern colleges and universities and those of the antebellum South? To answer this question we need to understand the culture of youth and its relation to the culture of the time.

American Youth

In his recent synthesis, Steven Mintz (2004) uses imagery from Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* as a metaphor in addressing the changing attitudes toward the study of American children and childhood. Specifically, he sees Huck's raft as "the modern conception of childhood" encapsulating "a period of peril and freedom; an odyssey of psychological self-discovery and growth; and a world apart, with its own values, culture, and psychology."¹⁷⁰ Moreover, "The precariousness of Huck's trip down the Mississippi suggests the physical, psychological, emotional, and socioeconomic challenges of childhood. Much as the raft is carried by raging currents that Huck can only partially control, so, too, childhood is inevitably shaped and constrained by society, time, and circumstances."¹⁷¹ This is the ideal that must be employed when understanding the antebellum academic world, a space inhabited by youth, structured by trustees and academicians, and governed by presidents and faculty members. It was a new world for students.

¹⁷⁰ Steven Mintz, *ibid.*, 5.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Philip Greven

In his powerfully influential work Philip Greven offers a psychological study of three overarching temperaments structuring the fluid world of early American society.¹⁷² He reveals a vivid picture of the home life and describes the family dynamics that fashioned childhood and shaped American personalities. The “genteel” group dominated the South (if not in number, then with their influence), but also encompassed wealthy merchant families of the North. Doting parents extended much agency to their children, yet when punishment came due, they relied on surrogates to administer corporal punishments. “Genteel parents thereby created pleasure-loving, extroverted sons who valued outward appearance and good manners, accepted the play of ambition and the open pursuit of power, and did not suffer the pangs of conscience.”¹⁷³ Differing greatly from the genteel, the pious “evangelicals” (i.e. northern Calvinists and Congregationalists) instilled in their children an ever-constant need for introspection. Emotionally extreme, parents denied themselves anger but used guilt and shame to keep children on the proverbial “strait and narrow” as they navigated a “world tainted by original sin.”¹⁷⁴ In an almost militant style, “through physical restraint and psychological warfare, parents sought opportunities to break the will of children. They created introverted sons submissive to parental authority.”¹⁷⁵ Francis Wayland—Alva Woods’ successor at Brown and a fellow Baptist—best represents the evangelicals. Greven quotes extensively from Wayland’s published guide and testimony on how he brow-beat and starved his “rebellious” fifteen-month old son into submission. Greven’s third temperament, the “moderates” involved parents who followed a

¹⁷² Philip Greven, *ibid.*

¹⁷³ Helen Horowitz, *ibid.*, 27.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

policy of moderation, mediating between duties and desires. Children were reared to be tolerant of others while self-monitoring their own actions, passions and ambitions.

At the University of Alabama many students of the genteel class conflicted with the evangelical Alva Woods. Convinced of and dedicated to the idea of breaking the child's will, evangelicals such as Woods sought to exorcise Adam's folly from the minds of youth. Yet, as men subscribing to this temperament filled professorships and took on the mantle of college presidencies, they "could comprehend neither the changes of their era nor many of their students."¹⁷⁶ Thus, the assumptions held by evangelical academicians bred conflicts which "were particularly acute in the Southern institutions where planters' sons confronted rules invented in New England and largely maintained by New England-trained clergy."¹⁷⁷ As E. M. Coulter viewed it, "Young Georgians at Athens, young North Carolinians at Chapel Hill, young South Carolinians at Columbia, young Mississippians Oxford—all objected to such a system'.¹⁷⁸ Their's "was a life governed by the ringing of bells, a life restricted (or such was the faculty intention) by the campus fences and by a multitude of rules. Rebellious and unruly sons of pioneers kicked over the traces with healthy frequency."¹⁷⁹ It was a new world that attempted to keep plantation-breed students as subjects, in a position that they were all too familiar with—as slaves.

Great Expectations

From this vantage point we are now in a position to assess the distinctiveness of rebellions in southern colleges. According to Rodney Hessinger (2005), "there was nothing

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 28.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. Here Horowitz quotes from E.M. Coulter, *College Life in the Old South* (New York: MacMillan, 1928).

¹⁷⁹ James B. Sellers, *History*, *ibid.*, 121.

particularly southern about student rebellion.”¹⁸⁰ In his review of Robert Pace’s book, Hessinger attacks the author’s use or “invocation” of southern honor as unpersuasive. Pace’s thesis claims that southern student riot and rebellion took place as the youth were caught in a tempest where normal biological development collided with the code of honor. In stating that Harvard was just as unruly as the University of Virginia and that students in the South were inspired by the same issues as their northern counter-parts (i.e. reacting to faculty forcing students to inform on each other or instituting rigid grading rubrics), Hessinger laments that Pace should have developed his thesis to isolate southern influences more clearly. Mintz, Novak, and Greven note that the antebellum era was an age of shifting approaches toward youth; parents—in both North and South—extended more freedoms to youth. Thus, Hessinger claims that the student-faculty interaction “could be more effectively analyzed if Pace took note of this shifting terrain of age role expectations.”¹⁸¹ Hessinger points to part of Virginia’s early problems being rooted in Jefferson’s granting self-government to the students. “In asserting their manly independence through rebellion, these young men were merely taking a little further Jefferson’s own message of self-rule.”¹⁸²

Hessinger is keen to look at the context in which these student revolts took place; Mintz, Novak, Horowitz, and others describe incidents of student violence where students in both North and South assaulted authority to attain—to use Novak’s title—the rights of youth. While words and concepts such as respect, manhood, and honor became the universal ideals students struggled to attain, the meaning of these words became distinctive relevant to their regionalism. Jennings Wagoner explains that in the North, “Public censure or praise was becoming victim of an

¹⁸⁰ Rodney Hessinger, “Halls of Honor: College Men in the Old South,” *Journal of the Early Republic* vol 2 (2005), 332.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

increasingly diversified student population and to wider acceptance of legal and Christian (that is to say restrained, inward-looking, and conscience-driven) reinforcers of conduct. That shift in public as well as collegiate sensibilities in the North would not find its parallel in the South.”¹⁸³ Moreover, the student bodies of northern universities were less homogeneous than in the South. Students did not come from homes fixed in a slave society, but hailed from families with multiple and varied backgrounds linked only by the northern markets. In the South the ideals of honorable, genteel manliness took on a deeper, more powerful meaning because of the pervasive power of slavery. It is imperative to note that students in the South were not simply struggling to become members of the aristocracy (although that was the goal), rather they were locked in a public struggle to not fail, to not lose face, to not be shamed or embarrassed, to not have their manhood belittled, and ultimately to not become a slave. Each of these efforts is a part of the overarching, guiding structure and ethic of southern honor.

Young men did not just attend college to learn how not to become a slave; they attended where they could learn to become a master—a man of self-control, a respected gentleman of society, a leader. Universities in the South were established to provide the means to those ends. Huntsville’s *Commercial Register* praised The University of Alabama promising “this Institution, brought forward under such happy auspices, will go on to prosper—be the pride and honor of this young and happy commonwealth—and be the home of literature, of science, and of the arts.”¹⁸⁴ This ideal complimented the state’s 1819 constitution which called for the creation of a “Seminary of Learning” and proclaimed that “Schools, and the means of education, shall forever be encouraged in this state.” Similar ideals echoed throughout the country as state universities and colleges cropped-up. A century later Coulter described the college culture of the

¹⁸³ Jennings L. Wagoner, Jr., *ibid.*, 163. See also David F. Allmendinger, Jr.’s “New England Students and the Revolution in Higher Education, 1800-1900,” *History of Education Quarterly*, vol 11 (1971): 381-389.

¹⁸⁴ *Commercial Register for the County* (Huntsville), October 16, 1830.

Old South: “The sons of the more fortunate and ambitious classes attended college, where they came in contact with a social and intellectual system which largely remade them and which sent them back to the people as leaders in politics, religion, medicine, and in most other honorable activities...The college occupied the position of greatest strategy in the making of Southern leadership.”¹⁸⁵ Indeed, such was their goal. Henry Willaim DeSaussure, a founding father of South Carolina College, proclaimed that “we desired our future rulers to be educated men,” and idealist in Tuscaloosa shared similar hopes. To little surprise, the college in Columbia had a profound impact on The University of Alabama.¹⁸⁶ Columbia and Tuscaloosa were the only two states of the future Confederacy who—in the 1830s—had their state university in the same city as the capitol. This was convenient as governors, legislators, judges, men of the bar, and others prominent men served as trustees. Additionally, in both towns, the sessions of the state legislatures were seductive attractions for the students. In Tuscaloosa, students knew their heroes and mentors were just one mile down the Huntsville Road. Moreover, as “DeSaussure had hoped that the college in Columbia would produce ‘able and worthy men for every department of government’,” likewise in Tuscaloosa “The University had been liberally endowed, its prospects were auspicious; it was here the youth of our country were to be educated who were destined to fill these seats of legislation.”¹⁸⁷ There was a definite link between collegiate education and the ambitions of genteel parents rearing southern statesmen, future defenders of slavery; the universities were in essence the nursery for destined politicians.

¹⁸⁵ Coulter, *ibid.*, vii.

¹⁸⁶ Michael Sugrue, “We Desired Our Future Rulers to Be Educated Men: South Carolina College, the Defense of Slavery, and the Development of Secessionist Politics” *Higher Education Annual* (1994), 91-114.

¹⁸⁷ Sugrue, *ibid.*, 93. *Spirit of the Age* (Tuscaloosa) vol 3 no 15, January 11, 1832.

The Schoolhouse as Nursery

The debates surrounding the issues of how and for what purposes to educate the youth at South Carolina College became political concerns early in the history of the college and the state. The first president, Jonathan Maxcy, isolated himself from state politics, but after his death in 1820, Thomas Cooper became the head of the college and “politics moved from being a peripheral to a central concern of collegiate education... Under Cooper, the faculty formed an intellectual vanguard that advocated extreme antitariff, states rights, proslavery, and ultimately secessionist political views...their views were no secret to the students.”¹⁸⁸ Education at South Carolina College was becoming something quite unique and distinctively southern. Others followed their lead.

In 1826 the Clariosophic Literary Society at South Carolina College took up the question “Should we send our youth to northern colleges for education?” It was a question that Thomas Jefferson approached in establishing the University of Virginia. Jefferson’s passion in establishing UVA was fired by his desire to establish a university entrenched against the Federalist Party and their ideology. As Dumas Malone (1933) notes, “Indeed, his [Jefferson’s] regret that so many of his ‘countrymen’ went to be educated among ‘foreigners’ (as at Princeton) or were taught at home by ‘beggars’ (northern tutors) was partly due to the fear that their political principles were being contaminated.”¹⁸⁹ In a similar tradition, and apparently aware that they were receiving a “southern education,” the Clarisophic Society in Columbia answered in the negative as did their neighbors throughout the South. Indeed, there was something distinct about a southern education that men at South Carolina College embraced, refined, and then exported

¹⁸⁸ Sugrue, *ibid.*, 102.

¹⁸⁹ Dumas Malone, *Thomas Jefferson: A Brief Biography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986). Malone’s biography has been revised and published many times. This edition, published at Chapel Hill, is a reprint of the 1986 revised *Dictionary of American Biography* entry Dumas wrote. The 1986 reprint was edited by Merrill D. Peterson.

into the Deep South, perhaps even to a greater extent than did the men of the University of Virginia. By 1836, South Carolina College could claim “two alumni already had served as governor of Alabama; alumni had been elected to Congress from Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia; and alumni were prominent in the state judiciary of Alabama and Mississippi.”¹⁹⁰ Five South Carolina College graduates served as trustees of The University of Alabama between the boards creation in 1821 to Woods’ resignation in 1837: Nimrod Benson, Thomas Gaillard, John Hunter, Thomas Mayes, and James Dellett—who was an Alabama Congressman; and two early professors, Richard Brumby and Henry Hilliard, were also graduates of the college. The alumni of South Carolina formed an extensive network throughout the South. Dellett—who graduated in 1810—wrote and received letters from no less than sixty other alumni. Their network proved to be “both extensive and durable,” and in addition to their establishing a peer network, the college had provided a structure for young men that was shared with other colleges and universities of the Deep South.¹⁹¹

The college gave the young gentlemen a liberal education, in the original, literal, sense of the term: the curriculum fitted a man to be a master rather than a slave. The college curriculum, which stressed classical languages and literature, was intended to train the students’ minds in a broad, general sense rather than to prepare them for a specialized profession. The college gave the sons of the gentry an education designed to produce what Max Weber might have called the ‘ideal type’ of a slaveholder. It was designed to take fourteen-and fifteen-year-old boys and polish them into young eighteen-and nineteen-year-old gentlemen. In their course work the students developed ideas; in their dormitory arrangements they developed friendships; and in their extracurricular activities they developed bad habits that often lasted their whole lives.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Sugrue, *ibid.*, 93.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.* The relationships forged in Columbia were deep as well. James Dellett and John Murphy were both alumni of the college but had significantly different political ideologies. In 1833, amidst the nullification crisis, Dellett was urged to run against the former governor for a seat in Congress. Sugrue recounts that Dellett wrote Murphy informing him that “he did not wish to go to Congress because he could not in good conscience act against the nullifiers—not because they were right but because they were South Carolinians;” he told Murphy “‘although I am satisfied in my own mind that So Carolina is wrong—yet I cannot forget that she nourished me in my infancy, and taught lessons I learned in my youth and early manhood’.”

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 94.

Michael Sugrue (1994) painted a Romantic picture of South Carolina College's mission; however, as seen through the prospectus, he stressed there was pragmatism interlaced with the idealism. By invoking—and paraphrasing—Rousseau, the trustees in Columbia sought to take the youth of their states as they were, and set about molding them into the ideal of polished gentlemen and statesmen: southern men of honor. No doubt, the legislators and trustees for Alabama wanted the same, a fact indicated by their desire to name Philip Lindsley the University's first president. Lindsley argued adamantly against sending young men away to college, because he could foresee—as Jefferson had—that in exporting students the South was admitting the region's inability to educate its own leaders. Northern-educated southerners would lose respect upon a return home. Therefore, it was incumbent upon the South to “create a reasonable local leadership by bringing to it the best teaching and curricular in the arts and sciences,” and to achieve this by offering an urban and nonsectarian environment.¹⁹³ Similar cries went up from southern states: a founder of the University of Georgia remarked that sending students to other (i.e. northern) states “is too humiliating an acknowledgement of the ignorance and inferiority of our own;” and a student in North Carolina demanded “let the Yankees manufacture woolen clothing, let us manufacture men.”¹⁹⁴ However, in both Columbia and in Tuscaloosa (and witnessed throughout the South) the ambitious designs of presidents and trustees met stiff resistance from the youth placed in their charge. Despite the evolution of colleges and universities in the South, and while incidents of student riot and rebellion were not specific to schools below the Mason-Dixon Line, the meaning driving these outbursts was different in the South. Slavery buttressed and enhanced the enveloping power of an ethic and

¹⁹³ John Thelin, *A History of American Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 50.

¹⁹⁴ Craig Thompson Friend and Lori Glover, eds., *Southern Manhood: Perspectives on Masculinity in the Old South*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 28-29.

code, a system that was ritualized in rites of appearance, behavior, and action; it was collectively called southern honor.

Southern Honor: Primal and Genial

What is southern honor? The best answer to this question can be found in the writings of Bertram Wyatt-Brown. He stresses that southern honor is the set of ethical rules found and ratified by a specific community. Family, integrity, deference to hierarchy, and “ascriptive features” are the guides employed when evaluating those rules. Ascription refers to determinants—some biological, others socially constructed—such as race, gender, physicality, age and inherited titles or status. Honor transcends rank, status, pedigree, wealth, and class; “it is the moral property of all who belong within the community, one that determines the community’s own membership.”¹⁹⁵ Blacks—free or slave—were excluded and women too lacked much agency, yet female presence profoundly impacted the male world and forced men into certain behaviors and actions. As for the role of slaves, their presence in the Old South did not create the rules of honor. Honor existed before and after bondage shaped the region. Slavery was used to perpetuate economic, political, and social institutions including the code of honor. Moreover, as Friend and Glover (2004) note, “In the eyes of whites, black men were the antithesis of honor and mastery—dependent, acquiescent, externally controlled. From the point of view of whites, enslavement equaled emasculation,” and the total loss of honor.¹⁹⁶ Slavery also “exaggerated southern elite boy’s sense of independence as well as their proclivity for violence—values that lay at the core of southern youth culture.”¹⁹⁷

Wyatt-Brown further defines honor as the combination of two elements which—at times—are at odds with each other: primal honor and gentility. The primal, medieval side is first

¹⁹⁵ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford, 1982), x.

¹⁹⁶ Friend and Glover, *ibid.*, xi.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

defined by a “conviction of self-worth.”¹⁹⁸ As Glover reviews, “in the early Republic... men needed to prove individual merit and to compete with others for power and wealth.”¹⁹⁹ It also demands that conviction be claimed publically. Here a man, in a very vulnerable position, defines and presents himself before the community. Finally, the public judges the behavior of the claimant. The first two prerequisites speak to individualism, the third to the fact that agency was nothing in the honor-bound world without community acceptance. Reputation was everything. These components were not determined one-time and one-time only, rather honor—and claims thereof—had to be constantly made and (re)evaluated. It was a vicious cycle.

In evaluating claims of worth, Wyatt-Brown identifies five characteristics the society could use in judging an individual. One, valor and bravery are necessary especially in bringing vengeance for a wrong committed against one’s family. Two, a man cannot distinguish between others’ opinions of him from his own conviction of self-worth. Three, a man must use his bodily appearance as an outward sign to others of his merit. Thus the heart, right hand, eyes, head, and genitalia all became sensitive attributes for such claims. In this element we see how tweaking a man’s nose—that part of the body that preceded a man—could and did bring men to blows and mortal combat. Four, a chivalric defense of women should be applauded, because an insult to a white woman of the household was an insult to the family as a whole and to the patriarch specifically. Five, oaths and oral bonds connected non-family members to one another. This element was extremely important to university students who, having found themselves away from home and the protection of family members had to form new bonds of security.

While this primal code affected the way white men thought about themselves it also influenced their views of class, government, and rebelliousness. Conceptually, honor was to

¹⁹⁸ Wyatt-Brown, *ibid.*, 14.

¹⁹⁹ Friend and Glover, *ibid.*

provide structure for a man's life and meaning to valor, family relationships, and hierarchy. However, there were inner-contradictions. "The chief problem was the discrepancy between honor as obedience to superior rank and the contrary duty to achieve place for oneself and family....The ethic of honor was designed to prevent unjustified violence, unpredictability, and anarchy. Occasionally it led to that very nightmare."²⁰⁰

"If Southern history were merely the record of conflict that the primal ethic engendered, it would have been a bloodier, more repressive society than it ever was."²⁰¹ Thankfully, the archaic code was conjoined with a "higher moral system" of gentility, a complement to the primal demands on behavior. Gentility was "specialized," restricted where "uprightness was coupled with high social position."²⁰² Greenberg adds that men of honor "project themselves through how they look and what they say. They are treated honorably when their projections are respected and accepted as true. The central issue of concern to men in such a culture is not the nature of some underlying reality but the acceptance of their projections."²⁰³ Wyatt-Brown had also recognized projections and he rooted them into three components of Southern honor: sociability, learning, and piety.

"Sociability or affability was a way of identifying the Southerner and distinguishing him from the Yankee"²⁰⁴ Self-mastery was the ideal: a man could not be "controlled by anyone but himself...self-mastery distinguished elite men from other members of society and laid the foundations for their dominance over wives, children, and, particularly, slaves. Aggression and independence thus dovetailed with social niceties in the minds of southern elite."²⁰⁵ In the South,

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 61.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 87.

²⁰² Ibid., 88.

²⁰³ Kenneth Greenberg, *Honor and Slavery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 7.

²⁰⁴ Wyatt-Brown, *ibid.*, 90.

²⁰⁵ Friend and Glover, *ibid.*, 29.

games, hospitality, and conversation out-ranked what men of the North would consider more serious concerns, such as outward religious devotion and discussions on political philosophy. What mattered most in a man's life was becoming painted by his regional affiliation. A southern boy striving to achieve a refined reputation "needed to vigilantly attend to his dress, speech, and physical comportment as well as to the elements of his conversation, his leisure pursuits, and his social network."²⁰⁶ Glover continues, "Drinking, gambling, sexual experimentation, and dueling and other forms of orchestrated violence were accepted and even encouraged in southern male culture. These behaviors, which today connote an absence of self-control, did not, in the early Republic South, compromise a refined man's reputation."²⁰⁷

As for learning, "there was a strongly anti-intellectual streak in Southern society, one that generations of college students perpetuated so that sociability—and reputation for manliness—would have no rival."²⁰⁸ Despite the prevailing view that learning was effeminate, schools continued to be built and students swelled their enrollment. Schooling and learning became an accessory of sociability, and universities served as the staging ground for adulthood; learning "preceded other manifestations of manhood: courtship and marriage, career proficiency, mastery over estates and slaves;" Glover shares that "a university education increasingly provided the means by which a boy could become his own man."²⁰⁹

Curriculum in the South rested in the Classics, and students were expected to champion philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, be able to quote poets such as Horace, and to understand histories such as Livy's. Passing references to the ancients assured gentlemanly trust,

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Wyatt-Brown, *ibid.*, 94.

²⁰⁹ Friend and Glover, *ibid.*, 22.

and allowed “Southern whites to boast of the high-toned character of their ‘civilization’.”²¹⁰ In their studies, students did not seek to sentimentalize the Classical Age, rather they were making a claim that change was un-necessary; “the past was yet alive.”²¹¹ While invoking the Renaissance’s humanistic philosophy, Stoicism became, for southerners, an ethic of a leaned man, and the accompanying tradition of virtue helped him define his honor. Meanwhile, in the North, Scholasticism remained the prospectus for learning and pious understanding of scripture and daily-life. Nonetheless, for youth schooled in the South, behavior and appearance superseded the content of the Classics. Students actually did not need to fully understand the great masters, they simply had to be familiar with those passing references and to be able to use them for their own self-promotion. Southerner’s speech patterns and written words from the age seem exaggerated to modern readers; however, “Hyperbole...should not be thought simply as a sign of Southern romanticism; rather it was part of the ritual speech that invoked ancient humanism for current application.”²¹² However, practice consumed philosophy and learning therefore could be used for sociability; it was—for most college students in the South—simply a means to an end. “Southern boys recognized the power of reputation and worked to adopt a persona that would merit the esteem of their peers and secure their position in society.”²¹³

“‘High-mindedness,’ magnanimity, and a sense of self-worth continued to be adjuncts of manly gentility, however imperfect their realization in practice. But much more easily discernible and therefore more readily acquired was piety. That virtue, however, was also subject to some ambivalence in the public form.”²¹⁴ Indeed, a man of piety and deep religious devotion could be highly respected in his community; however, a man of honor could not be expected to

²¹⁰ Wyatt-Brown, *ibid.*, 93.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² *Ibid.*, 96.

²¹³ Friend and Glover, *ibid.*, 31.

²¹⁴ Wyatt-Brown, *ibid.*, 99.

turn the other cheek. Moreover, living a passive lifestyle ran counter to the reward-system of the Old South. “The supremacy of honor as the criterion for excellence of character was much more intense in the Southern gentry code than in the puritan moral scheme.”²¹⁵ For pious men of that background and tradition—such as Alva Woods—guilt was necessary to humbly serve God and for maintaining the Christian ethic, yet southerners as early as Landon Carter remained Stoic. “Despair,” wrought by extreme guilt, wrote Carter, “. . . is the worst disorder that a human Creature can fall into.”²¹⁶ As Greven explained, this attitude reflects a fundamental difference between the genteel and the evangelicals. Southerners used their pride to overcome any sense of guilt; therefore, piety and learnedness remained avenues for achieving sociability.

Pace provides a helpful summary of these dynamics:

The rules that governed southern honor, though complex, can be explained rather simply. Being a man of honor in the South meant that one exhibited a persona that conformed to the society’s expectations. Appearance superceded [sic] content. In public, southern men had to exhibit behavior that held to be dutiful to their responsibilities, respectful of their peers, and, most of all, honest in their public declarations. This ethic, however, did not say that one actually had to *be* dutiful, respectful, or honest; one simply had to *appear* to be a man of duty, respect, and honesty. Any public hint that a southern man was anything contrary to this definition had to be challenged rapidly and publicly in order to maintain the identity of a man of honor.²¹⁷

Appearance as one of those affable characteristics attracted Greenberg who contributed to the historiography on southern honor noting that men, in their efforts to appear honorable, wore masks. “To wear a mask was no shame for a man of honor; the horror was to be unmasked—to be publicly shamed and exposed.”²¹⁸ Southern men of honor expect other claimants of the code to wear masks, “to display a crafted version of themselves through their voices, faces, noses, and

²¹⁵ Ibid., 100.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Pace, *ibid.*, 5.

²¹⁸ Greenberg, *ibid.*, 25.

a thousand other projections into the world.”²¹⁹ The precarious path to chart was however to wear a mask publically and dare anyone to challenge the character of the man behind it. Unmasking someone was often in fact-and-essence calling someone a liar. If someone “gave a lie,” to a claimant of honor, a duel could be the proscribed solution for the unmasked man. In youthful affairs, students “could not allow anyone, whether professor or classmate, to impugn their honor, no matter how incidentally;” young men could not afford to be unmasked, especially in these formative years, in the space where they were learning and practicing their assertions and claims of self-worth, manhood, affability, and ultimately of honor.²²⁰

Honor “was always more than the sum of its parts, and it could bring out the best in men as well as the worst.”²²¹ Wyatt-Brown includes an 1828 quotation of James Henry Hammond, commenting on the subject: “Honor is that principle of nature which teaches us to respect ourselves, in order that we may gain the respect of others.”²²² A man could be educated and pious, yet to possess honor the community had to judge his manliness, speech, appearance, and behavior. A man’s failure would result in ridicule, shame, and despair. Honor-less, a southerner would be viewed as—and would be tormented by the thought that he was considered—something less than a man. Students were bound to the code, and they were caught between the ambition to become a man of stature and inescapable childhood behavior. Glover details that the “generational struggle over comportment reflected a disagreement between southern adults and boys about the nature of self-mastery. Parents [and University officials] stressed restraint of emotions and behaviors—sons [and students] should master themselves. Young men, however,

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Pace, *ibid.*, 9.

²²¹ Wyatt-Brown, *ibid.*, 111.

²²² *Ibid.*, 103.

emphasized self-determination and independence—they refused to be mastered by anyone.”²²³

As students sought to create college life through demonstrations of self-worth and honorable behavior, they often acted and reacted with youthful passion; the result is both comedic and horrific.

²²³ Friend and Glover, *ibid.*, 34.

CHAPTER FIVE

INITIATION

With an understanding of the complex world of southern honor we can begin to analyze the events on campus. On April 12, 1831 the eyes of the state turned to Tuscaloosa's Christ Episcopal Church. There, Alva Woods was introduced by Governor Samuel B. Moore, literally handed the keys to the University and inaugurated as the first president of The University of Alabama. Wolf (1983) speculates that the inauguration took place at Christ Episcopal because builders (i.e. slaves) had not completed the Rotunda.²²⁴ Although no copies remain, the local newspaper—*Spirit of the Age*—noted Woods' speech was in a style that was “often elegant, and sometimes rising into grandeur and sublimity.”²²⁵ Moreover, the article's author pointed out that “The manner of the President, as a speaker is very good.”²²⁶ The “leading subject of the discourse was the importance of learning and knowledge to the safety, liberty, prosperity, and moral and religious improvement of man.”²²⁷ Possibly wanting his audience to know he had come to Alabama from New England via Kentucky for the great cause of education and not simply for profit, Woods added—addressing the trustees—that University funds were “sacred to the cause of learning and the diffusion of knowledge.”²²⁸

Almost immediately after the installation ceremony, Woods returned to Lexington, Kentucky and Transylvania University leaving the opening of the University to the faculty.

²²⁴ Suzanne Rau Wolfe, *ibid.*, 15.

²²⁵ Willis G. Clark, *ibid.*, 47-48. Clark is quoting from the *Spirit of the Age*, April 16, 1831.

²²⁶ Wolfe, *ibid.*

²²⁷ *Ibid.* Wolfe also quotes from the *Spirit of the Age*.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

However, only two faculty members, Gurdon Saltonstall and Henry Tutwiler, were in Tuscaloosa when the school's doors were opened to students on April 18. Professor John Fielding Wallis—the first faculty member hired and chair of Chemistry and Natural History—urged the trustees as early as June 1830 to allow him to travel abroad in order to procure scientific supplies for the University. The trustees granted his request for leave contingent upon his return no later than July 1, 1831.²²⁹ Thus, with Woods in Kentucky and Wallis in Europe, the responsibilities of accepting applicants and evaluating matriculates came to rest in the hands of Saltonstall and Tutwiler.

Gurdon Saltonstall was educated at Union College in Schenectady, New York and also at Columbia, ultimately receiving a doctorate in medicine. He briefly served in the War of 1812 under Captain Samuel Swartout near the conclusion of fighting in 1814. Upon his appointment to the faculty at Alabama, differing accounts have Dr. Saltonstall as either a practicing physician in Tuscaloosa or as a property recorder in Cahaba.²³⁰ One early student, William Russell Smith—whose memories have become an invaluable primary source—notes that Saltonstall was “elegant” and had a “benignant countenance,” and that he was “of easy manners and uncomplaining disposition; too good-natured even to rebuke a rebellious pupil for an unmitigated breach of discipline.”²³¹ Unfortunately for the “good doctor,” his demeanor would contribute to his downfall at the University.

Along with Dr. Woods' name, James G. Birney—who had been hired in 1830 by the Alabama trustees to recruit faculty members—had also returned from his tour of the Atlantic

²²⁹ John Fielding Wallis, Maryland born and Princeton educated, had arrived in Tuscaloosa after operating a boarding school in Georgia.

²³⁰ Sellers, *History*, *ibid.*, 50.

²³¹ William Russell Smith, *Reminiscences of a long life*. (1889) Alabama Collection: Hoole Library, The University of Alabama.

states with the name Henry Tutwiler, specifically for the professorship of Ancient Languages.²³² Born in Harrisonburg, Virginia in 1807, Tutwiler was educated by the Presbyterian evangelist Dr. Daniel Baker before entering the University of Virginia in 1825. Tutwiler was a star pupil. He graduated from six departments at UVA and was awarded the university's first Masters Degree. While at Virginia he was a classmate of his childhood friend Gessner Harrison, as well as the poet Edgar Allan Poe and future Confederate leader Robert Toombs. He was even invited to Monticello to dine with Thomas Jefferson. His familial reverence to Jefferson coupled with the training he learned from Dr. Baker and then university professors Thomas Key, Charles Bonnycastle, Robley Dunglison, George Long, John Emmet, George Tucker, and R.M. Patterson resulted in an educational vision he would promote in various institutions until his death in 1884. Combining a liberal outlook with a sympathetic understanding of Southern culture, he became a warm favorite with his many students.

In contrast to Dr. Woods' hard-line pedagogy, Tutwiler advocated moral suasion and the ideal of gentility which he had admired and experienced while in school under the shadow of Monticello. Tutwiler chose to make "the foundation of character the chief end of education, each pupil being treated as an individual, protesting against the Procrustean bed to which each student must be fitted whatever his natural endowments."²³³ With boys in their teens struggling to assert their manliness, Tutwiler appealed to their southern-bred sensibilities and made the graces of learning seem like a badge of honor rather than a yoke of duty. Smith describes Tutwiler as a man who "was altogether the most noted and marked of the first corps of professors. He was then

²³² According to Washington, D.C.'s *Daily National Intelligencer*, dated December 28, 1830, Woods and Tutwiler had been hired by the University with annual salaries of \$3000 and \$2000 respectively and would be given residences. *The Alabama State Intelligencer* (Tuscaloosa), April 20, 1831 also list William McMillan as the Librarian and Collector of Specimens in Natural History, and Thomas Manning as a tutor. Two other faculty positions were unfilled; one for a Modern Language instructor and another for a teacher of Elocution and English Literature. These positions were eventually filled.

²³³ T.M.Owen, *Dictionary of Alabama Biography*, vol. 4 (Chicago: S.J. Clarke, 1921), 1695.

a delicate stripling of a youth, in appearance as timid and modest as a woman—so gentle in his demeanor and so graceful and apt in his mode of imparting instruction that every boy fell absolutely in love with him.”²³⁴ Nonetheless, the idea of moral suasion was a philosophical counterpoise to Woods’ philosophy and as such undermined the president’s disciplinary regimen.

The Woods-Tutwiler debate was not one carried out in pamphlets, newspapers, or in classroom lectures; actually it was a confrontation that only once (in 1834) boiled to the surface. Yet, letters between friends and professional acquaintances prove that there was considerable enmity between the two men. As their ideological differences pulled them apart, Woods clung to his New England piety while Tutwiler promoted the Stoic, genteel traditions of a southern man.

At least 35 students entered the University on April 18, but only after Tutwiler and Saltonstall took the opportunity and advice offered by the trustees to relax the rules of admission. By late May the enrollment had reached fifty-two.²³⁵ As one of the first matriculates, Smith remembers that “No applicant was rejected on the ground of deficiency of learning—all were admitted; and as a consequence of this, it may be said that for the first year of the college the institution assumed rather the cast of an ‘old field school’ than of a university, for there were many of the boys not sufficiently advanced to enter regularly even the freshman class.”²³⁶ Simply put, the University could not be too picky when it came to accepting students—even those who came with hams under their arms hoping to defray the cost of tuition.

²³⁴ Smith, *ibid.*, 228. Much of Tutwiler’s philosophy comes from understanding the ideals he put in place at Green Springs School, which he founded years after leaving Tuscaloosa. However, the attachment to moral suasion seems to have been central from his earliest teaching years. In an August 9, 1834 speech he gave to the Erosophic Society—one of two student literary societies—the “free will” of students was outlined and the Lockean view of human nature was described, both with a laced plea from their professor, urging students to do their part, to live up to their civic and religious responsibilities by training their minds with continued and dedicated university scholarship.

²³⁵ Smith notes that some 35 boys arrived at the University April 18, however, Sellers claims the number to be 51. The original log-book remains at the University in the Hoole Library; however, names were added to the original list without documenting the exact day of their arrival and admittance. Therefore it is almost impossible to know exactly how many students matriculated on the school’s opening day. See also Wolfe, *ibid.*, 16.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 203.

While Woods was in Lexington concluding school business and readying his family for the move south, Tutwiler, more-so than Saltonstall, took control of the University. “Before the arrival of the president, the students had grown fond [of Tutwiler]...who, until the president’s advent, had been looked upon as the head of the college.”²³⁷ And when Woods returned, “There was a reluctance to recognize a new chief; this reluctance disclosed itself in many ways; and it may be said that the life of the first president of the University of Alabama was, from the very beginning, a life of storms.”²³⁸ There seems to have been a level of jealousy and resentment held by Woods against Tutwiler. The animosity added to the ideological differences the men held on what schooling should be. Woods’ iron resolve pressured students in mastering the curriculum for the ultimate goal of unlocking the secrets of God. Higher education, Woods stressed, was for Christian service, not self-promotion or aggrandizement. His philosophy was based in the ideal that one must submit to the will of God in order to understand both the natural world and God’s plan for man in it. Tutwiler argued “Belief rests upon evidence: evidence demands investigation...Come to the subject, then, with a mind free from prejudice and a sincere desire of ascertaining the truth.”²³⁹ Thus in opposition to Woods, Tutwiler taught that only after learning and understanding could one submit. In his thoughts, students should be led along, molded like clay, allowing experiences to shape their intellect and character. There was no good that could come breaking a child’s will, doing so was unconscionable. “We must think for ourselves,” said Tutwiler, “and not be the mere receptacles of the thoughts of others.”²⁴⁰ In the “progressive improvement” of mankind, education had a twofold purpose for the Virginian: “the development

²³⁷ Ibid., 208.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Henry Tutwiler, “Address Delivered Before the Erosophic Society at the University of Alabama, August 9, 1834” (Tuscaloosa: Robinson and Davenport, 1834), 16.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 11.

and exercise of the mental faculties, and the acquisition of knowledge.”²⁴¹ For Tutwiler, university education was tool for training of the mind and guiding the actions of youth toward adulthood. The rift between he and Woods only widened during their tenures at the University, and as early as 1832 the two were seemingly at an impasse. Gessner Harrison, the head of the faculty at the University of Virginia, wrote to Tutwiler exclaiming, “I find that no climate can change such a man as your president seems to be. Can’t you get rid of him by any means? Of course you won’t permit him to drive you away until You find it in your intent to go, or that it is necessary for your peace and comfort—I wish to heaven we could get you with a good place here.”²⁴² The struggle would continue until finally Tutwiler found the “intent to go” in 1837.

Troubles Begin

The rumblings of future troubles were present from the outset. Faculty minutes and trustee notes show that campus property and facilities were being damaged by student high-jinx. Before the close of the first year new rules appeared in which University officials could “visit the rooms of the students at any hour of the day or night whenever they have reason to suspect a violation of the laws, and in all cases of improper noise or disturbance it shall be their duty to visit the rooms. Should any student refuse to admit an officer to his room it shall be punished as a misdemeanor.”²⁴³ The upsurge in the destruction to University property was joined by the faculty’s struggle in maintaining the academic rigor of the University. Tutwiler and Saltonstall had been forced to take the students who showed up on the institution’s doorstep. Not able to restrict admission to students with adequate preparation ultimately caused problems. Within the first year Dr. Saltonstall’s character and skill were called into question. The students were not

²⁴¹ Ibid., 10.

²⁴² Harrison to Tutwiler, June 17, 1832. Mccorvey/Tutwiler Manuscript Collection, W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, The University of Alabama.

²⁴³ *Ordinances of The University of Alabama*, 1831, University Archives, W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, The University of Alabama.

performing well in examinations and in the spring of 1832 the trustees asked him to resign. As was his prerogative, he remained in his position until the board's annual December meeting where he hoped he would be able to defend his methods. However, at the meeting he was refused and asked to resign, then he was removed from the University and his chair was declared vacant—all in one resolution. He had no choice but to resign.²⁴⁴

The series of events leading to Saltonstall's departure were not solely his fault. The mathematics professor, it seems, was the victim of a conspiracy led by Dr. Woods. For some time the president had been in correspondence with William W. Hudson, an instructor at the Green Academy in north Alabama, and from there—in December 1832—he replied to one of Wood's letters assuring the president that they shared views of collegiate government, discipline, and the New England curriculum. Furthermore, he related news about Saltonstall—information gathered from letters written by local students who were attending the University and who were privy to situations on campus. Hudson also responded to remarks made by Woods concerning Tutwiler; the relationship between Tutwiler and Woods had indeed soured. Moreover, Hudson reported that he had tested the trustees of the University and anticipated that he would be appointed Saltonstall's replacement if the professor was to be ousted. While Saltonstall's methods may not have been adequate, Woods and Hudson's plot had forced a coup.²⁴⁵

University Prospectus

Saltonstall was not alone in struggling to adapt to the structures of university life in Tuscaloosa. As can be expected, the youth of Alabama had an extremely difficult time living up to the expectations and requirements of the trustees and professors. One of the University's first *Catalogues* (1833) spelled out the terms of admission:

²⁴⁴ Sellers, *ibid.*, 58.

²⁴⁵ Hudson to Woods, December 1832. Alva Woods Family Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society.

The requisites for admission to the Freshman Class are an acquaintance with English Grammar, Arithmetic, and Geography, an ability to translate four books at least of Caesar's Gallic War, Sallust's Catiline and Jugurtha, and Eclogues, Georgics and four Aeneids of Virgil, and two books at least of Xenophon's Anabasis or Cyropeodia, and testimonials of good moral character.²⁴⁶

The same *Catalogue's* Ordinances codify the College's rules and regulations:

It is the duty of the faculty to cultivate a frequent and friendly intercourse with the students, and to endeavor by moral considerations to influence them to good conduct and good scholarship. Should all such efforts prove unavailing with any individual, it is then the duty of the faculty to return him, without disgrace, if possible, to his parent or guardian, with the hope that under a change of circumstances he may yet give promise of usefulness. Immoral or disorderly conduct, or neglect of studies, or of other College exercises and rules, is always deemed a sufficient reason for dismissing a student. A merit roll is kept by the faculty, in which each student is ranked according to his conduct and scholarship. Whenever a parent desires, he can be informed of the standing of his son.²⁴⁷

Entering Freshmen were required to be at least fourteen years of age, however, in 1834 with the advent of the Preparatory Department, students aged twelve (or younger—dependent upon faculty approval) were on campus. Perhaps this is why Willis Clarke laid much of the blame for misbehavior on the students' age, the local environment, and the school's governance. "A large part of the eastern and north-eastern region was still in possession of the Creek and Cherokee tribes of Indians. A large part of the white people had not yet learned to submit patiently to the wholesome restraints of the law. It is not strange that the sons of the pioneers were restless under the wise restriction of college government."²⁴⁸

The laws which governed student life were so rigid as to be an invitation to rebellion for frontier youth, many of them still in the undisciplined, restless early years of adolescence. In general the authorities attempted to accomplish two things: to force the stamp of studious regimentation upon boys unused to routine and to curb the expression of high spirits displayed in boisterous, destructive, and mischievous ways. The many 'Thou shalt's' governing the routine of college life made spirited lads restive and an even greater number of 'Thou shalt not's' prohibitions on the most

²⁴⁶ *Catalog of The University of Alabama, 1833*, University Records, W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, The University of Alabama.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁸ Willis G. Clark, *ibid.*, 43.

harmless amusements as well as on serious offences. To both demands the students reacted as wiser disciplinarians might have expected them to react.²⁴⁹

Sellers agreed. For these “sons of the frontier,” college life was structured by “the ringing of bells;” conformity was the expectation, yet riot and rebellion became the reality.²⁵⁰ “As might have been expected in a new institution, in a new State, with a student body used to the free sunshine of the fields and the liberty-breathing winds of the forests, and restive under such academic restraints as were then in vogue, the first few years of the University of Alabama were anything but peaceful ones to those in authority. Troubles came”²⁵¹

Sellers’ *History* claims that these rules were “modeled closely on those of the University of Transylvania, from which President Woods came. And those rules were, in their turn, based upon the current regulations at Harvard.” Thus, “the young sons of pioneers were thus expected to live up to approximately the same standards of gentlemanly conduct that had obtained at Harvard in the 1820’s”²⁵² The trustee’s notes do not wholly support this claim however. The University had *Ordinances* in place prior to Woods’ hiring and arrival in town. Nonetheless, what can be stated beyond doubt is that the president intended the enforcement of the rules to mirror the rigor of northern institutions; furthermore, subsequent rules and regulations surely came from the president. The result was, Sellers concludes, inevitable. “Caught between a student body young and mettlesome as young colts, and a president who had learned discipline in the shadow of the New England Puritans, the faculty found themselves in constant turmoil. They never did learn to handle either the students or the president, and their efforts to do so have

²⁴⁹ Sellers, *ibid.*, 197-198.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 121.

²⁵¹ T.C. McCorvey, *ibid.*, 22.

²⁵² Sellers, *ibid.*, 56. Sellers did review the laws, ordinances, rules and regulations of Harvard and Transylvania, however, there is no evidence to support his claim that these were brought to Alabama by Woods. Nor is there any mention in the trustee records that Alabama’s laws were based upon any other institutions’; they most probably were, however, the trustee notes simply do not reflect Sellers’ claim.

elements of both comedy and tragedy.”²⁵³ These developments were not simply about the rites of youth or the gender-flexing of young men, but about a clash of cultures attempting to structure life on campus. Woods was promoting an ideal “that exalted reserve, not ostentatiousness; that saw material success as a manifestation of God’s blessing, not as a means to obtain the admiration of men.”²⁵⁴ For the president, the need for community acceptance was subordinate to the knowledge that one’s actions were moral and proper. Thus he expected self control not self-assertion from the students. It was an expectation met with bewilderment. Students simply did not understand. Woods’ prospectus of curriculum and discipline was anathema to their rearing and the actions young men expected to take in their journey into manhood and genteel society.

Officers in the earliest days at The University of Alabama attempted to structure the lives of students. The 1831 *Ordinances of the University of Alabama* required students to wear the school uniform—the frock and hat—during any school function. They were expected to perform recitations three times a day and religious services twice a day. Unlike at Virginia, prayer services were compulsory. Twice a day the primary instructional building, the Lyceum, was converted for religious services. There is little surprise that in their correspondence and memoirs, students refer to the building as the chapel. Being tardy or absent from chapel services, academic recitations, or class was inexcusable; whispering during academic exercises, prayers, lectures, or study times was met with stern disapproval. No student could leave or join a class nor leave a dormitory except during the proper times. Numbers two and three under the “Crimes and Misdemeanors” section of the *Ordinances* were pointedly clear:

be it further ordained that if any student shall be guilty of profaneness, intoxication...lying...of fighting or assaulting any person, or of gambling, he shall be admonished, suspended or expelled according to the nature of the offence...And be it further ordained that if a student shall fight a duel or send or accept a challenge

²⁵³ Sellers, *ibid.*, 58.

²⁵⁴ Robert Pace, *ibid.*, 6.

to fight a duel, or be a second in a duel or in any way aid or abet it, or abuse a fellow student, for refusing to fight or be consumed in a duel he shall be immediately expelled.²⁵⁵

There were, of course, other laws governing behavior at the University; there were rules relating to commencement, the library, room and board, the length of sessions, and when tuition was due. “By 1832, specific prohibitions had been added to cover attending the theater, the circus, the race track, or any public dancing party.”²⁵⁶ These many laws placed students in a structured world that very few—if any—had ever experienced. Indeed, a world contrary to the permissive and pervasive character of the Southern home and family. As a result, the students responded with the destruction of property, riotous behavior, lawlessness, animal cruelty, drunkenness, criminal mischief, and even attempted murder. Glover writes, “Given the independence, youth, and wealth of southern students, early Republic colleges and universities were, not surprisingly, often chaotic places. Boys in their teen years, separated for the first time from families and communities, living together with minimal supervision, encouraged by their culture to be independent and self-possessed, and in control of their own finances were a recipe for disaster. College offered myriad opportunities for students to act mischievously.”²⁵⁷

Despite the debate over the source of the *Ordinances*, the statutes invested “the faculty with ‘discretionary parental authority,’ admonished the deputy ‘parents’ to ‘treat the Student with mildness and moderation...and to endeavor with parental solicitude, by conversation, admonition, and warning, to save the delinquent so long as it may be done without injury to the institution.”²⁵⁸ While definitely an appeal to the moral suasion argument, the board did allow “in cases which manifest deliberate wickedness, to avoid inflicting the higher censures, until the

²⁵⁵ *Ordinances of The University of Alabama*, 1831, University Records, W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, The University of Alabama. Apparent water damage prohibits a full quotation being included here.

²⁵⁶ Sellers, *ibid.*, 244.

²⁵⁷ Craig Thompson Friend and Lori Glover, *ibid.*, 39.

²⁵⁸ James B. Sellers, Article, *ibid.*, 272.

discipline of advisory measures shall have been tried in vain'...As might have been expected, distinguishing between cases manifesting 'deliberate wickedness' and those of less heinous quality put a heavy burden upon the faculty."²⁵⁹

Curriculum as a Cause

It was not just the daily regimen that upset the youth; classroom assignments also proved difficult. Woods' lecture book for his classes at Alabama (and at Transylvania) reveals a typical New England curriculum for the president's Moral Philosophy course. Focusing on language and literature his classes experienced a close reading of Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, James Harris' *Hermes, or a Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Universal Grammar*, and Murry's *English Grammar*, Levi Hedge's *Elements of Logick* and Paley's *Moral and Political Philosophy and View of the Evidences of Christianity*. He also included the works of Stewart and Brown. The whole course in language and morals revolved neatly around Scottish moral philosophy and the development of intellectual, moral, and social traits necessary for a pious, wise, and virtuous life. Not content to rest on principle, Woods annotated his textual analysis with numerous practical and topical questions keyed to class readings and articles in journals such as the *Edinburgh Review*. He asked: "What differences in men result from education?" "What are the effects of profane swearing?" Should people be imprisoned for debt?" "Was Brutus justified in stabbing Caesar?" And curiously, given his appointment, "are sectarian colleges, which are under the exclusive control and instruction of any one sect, the best places of education?" Furthermore, his notebook shows that Woods explored the history and absurdity of dueling, the advantages and disadvantages of republican government, and the evils of tobacco.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 272-273.

²⁶⁰ Alva Woods *Lecture Notebook*, Alva Woods Family Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society. Alva Woods, as early as August 1831, experienced what he felt was the undesirable elements of Southern life. He wrote to his father Abel Woods out of fear for his son Marshall, afraid the state's social environment would corrupt his son: "the

While “moral philosophy emerged as the capstone of the curriculum,” he sought “to develop a guide to human behavior based not on divine law, but on the exploration—through observation and reason—of the social order as revealed to man.”²⁶¹ For Woods logic, reason, and philosophy were a guide to truth and God’s moral ordinance.

The incidents that occurred at the University can be partially attributed to the students’ reactions to the disciplinary structures—behavioral and academic—enforced by Woods and the faculty. Student violence in the National and antebellum eras was often sparked by the curriculum, and in many instances we have direct quotations from the students expressing their violent disdain for the faculty who attempted to force-feed them classic literature, ancient languages and history, and other content they found irrelevant to their lives as southern men. Often verbal assaults to the curriculum occurred in speeches and debates given within student literary societies; however, minutes and from the Philomathic and Erosophic literary societies at The University of Alabama no longer exist. Unfortunately, it seems that with the burning of the University in 1865 many such records were lost. It would be conjecture at best to guess the students’ reaction to the curriculum they struggled with on Marr’s field. Nonetheless, their poor preparation, views on piety and religious duty, and the emphasis on bookish study would have surely been difficult and probably irrelevant to the young men struggling for recognition in the emerging political and social realms of Alabama life.²⁶²

indolence and degeneracy of character, resulting from slavery are very forcible.” Alva Woods to Abel Woods, August 11, 1831, Alva Woods Family Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society.

²⁶¹ Helen Horowitz, *ibid.*, 26.

²⁶² While the minutes are missing from the historical record, some speeches given to commemorate the anniversary of the establishment of these societies survived. However, after a close reading, there are no remarks undermining or questioning the curriculum or the methodology enforcing it. It would have been a profound revelation to have found such comments because the guest speakers were “University men,” namely Professors Hilliard, Tutwiler, and Brumby, tutor Calvin Jones, and future University legal counselor B. F. Porter; only once—in 1835—did a student, F. K. Beck, address the assembly. He spoke only because John A. Campbell, Esq. was too ill to attend; and in this case, Beck simply read Campbell’s prepared speech. Likewise, student speeches given at graduation ceremonies seem to be scripted (and it is assumed pre-screened by Woods or the faculty) for the audience.

Escalation

The logic of the student-faculty discord is far more evident in the records of misconduct. With the pressures mounting, just into the University's second full year troubles begin to evolve from minor (e.g. breaking things in dormitory rooms) to more serious incidents. There had been admonishments and suspensions; however, the situation grew from bad to worse: "a running battle between the students and their natural enemies, the faculty, was the order of the day."²⁶³ In the early spring of 1833, three students were embroiled in a two-month ruckus. Boling Smith was involved in a fight that resulted in with Samuel Inge being stabbed near the heart. After an investigation Smith was found to be the aggressor, but was not suspended. The faculty allowed him to remain on campus once he promised not to repeat his offences. The faculty had too much faith in young Mr. Smith. Roughly a month later, he attempted to settle the affair with the second Inge brother; this time the faculty suspended Boling Smith for an "unprovoked attack."²⁶⁴

It was not uncommon for the professors to give students "a second chance." In 1833 five students were given the option of apologizing and remaining in school—three had been involved in a disturbance in the Steward's Hall (where students ate their meals) and the others had been in a fight on campus. A letter written in 1835 by Sidney Brown provides a sample apology students were required to make:

I acknowledge and regret the great impropriety of my conduct in the Steward's Hall on Monday morning, especially in restoring to the use of a deadly weapon for the purpose of injuring a fellow-student; and wish my acknowledgement to be made as public as was the offence. May I hope the Faculty will overlook this great error on being assured of my wish and purpose to obey all the Laws of this Institution.²⁶⁵

²⁶³ Sellers, *ibid.*, 273-274.

²⁶⁴ Sellers, *History*, *ibid.*, 228-229. The exact times for these attacks is unknown, however, Oran M. Roberts who had matriculated on February 13, 1833 boarded in the room he thought had been vacated by Samuel Inge. See Oran M. Roberts, *Reminiscences, by Oran M. Roberts, of the History of the University of Alabama, during the four sessions that he was a student in it, from February 1833 to December 1836.*

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 230. Today the Steward's Hall is known as the Gorgas House. It was the first University building built by William Nichols.

Not all were given a second pass. In 1833 “a student was dismissed ‘with disgrace’ for using profanity, being intoxicated, engaging in riotous conduct, and using disrespectful language to the faculty.”²⁶⁶ Thomas M. Mathews was suspended in February 1833 for “‘insubordination and contempt of lawful authority’ toward Professor [Francois] Bonfils,” the head of Modern Languages who had joined the faculty a year earlier.²⁶⁷ Even the most accomplished and promising students found themselves in trouble with the faculty. Alexander Meek, the future literary savant, was discovered cheating: “He failed his senior examination even after resorting to ‘most unjustified means to sustain himself in that examination’ ...he was given another chance... [and] He graduated with his class.”²⁶⁸ Although he was never caught or unmasked, Oran M. Roberts, the future Governor of Texas, would periodically go into town to hear the legislature or to enjoy dancing with the young ladies of Tuscaloosa.²⁶⁹

Events on campus heated up with the approaching summer. 1833’s Independence Day was a day for celebrating freedom and liberty; it was a day that began with scholarly literary exercises, speeches on temperance, and celebrations of citizenship, but one that ended, according to Governor Gayle’s wife Sarah,

with such student rowdiness as to make the professors cringe. [Following dinner] some of the students signalized themselves by their drunken extravagances. They are much mistaken as to the proper mode of securing to themselves fame. At present they limit themselves to the shaving of horses tails, and tying balls dipped in brimstone, and set on fire, to those professors’ harmless dogs and philosophic geese.²⁷⁰

Local newspapers even reported the incident, shading the reputation of the University. To no one’s surprise, the faculty refused to hold another Fourth of July celebration for many years to

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 245.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 204. Bonfils was not the only addition to the faculty; before the first term of 1831 had been completed, Henry Hilliard was named professor of English Literature.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 215.

²⁶⁹ Roberts, *ibid.*, 13-14.

²⁷⁰ Sellers, *ibid.*, 142. Knickerbocker Press published a volume of Mrs. Gayle’s diary in 1895. A copy of the volume is in the Manuscripts Collections, W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, The University of Alabama.

come. If the laws of the University were being challenged at the dawn of 1833, by the end of the session, they were being ignored, disregarded, and held in contempt by the students. The relationship between faculty and students was swinging between “armed truce and open warfare.”²⁷¹

²⁷¹ Ibid., 58. Professor Hilliard had resigned by September and the trustees had abolished the department of Elocution he headed; Hudson had replaced Saltonstall but only because Woods had friends on the board of trustees. Tutwiler had hopes the next election of trustees would bring intelligent men to the governing body, but he notes, “If matters are not bettered I shall be off—my health and happiness will absolutely require it.” See Henry Tutwiler to Gessner Harrison, September 19, 1833, Papers of Gessner Harrison, Special Collections, the University of Virginia. In a follow-up letter dated December 16, 1833 Tutwiler notes, “The legislature are now in session and will give us a new board of trustees but whether for better or worse, I cannot tell. I have my fear—the President is making powerful efforts, but his conduct disgust all sensible men.” See Henry Tutwiler to Gessner Harrison, December 16, 1833, Papers of Gessner Harrison, Special Collections, the University of Virginia.

CHAPTER SIX

CLIMAX

By the end of 1834 the idealistic expectations Alva Woods, the faculty, the students, and the community had for The University of Alabama were wrecked. Students were fighting students, faculty members were at odds with the administration, townspeople had become concerned with on-campus events, and the board of trustees had become entangled in University politics. Students were breaking or ignoring rules and destroying property, and in an oft-repeated cycle, two students would get into a row, be suspended, offer their public apologies, and then be reinstated at the University. It takes hind-sight to see the proverbial snowball effect of this cycle. Beginning with the events of 1833, the episodes of student violence and misbehavior were accelerating in frequency and magnitude and would ultimately lead to the reorganization of the school in 1838. By the mid-1830s, the youth roaming the halls of the Rotunda and the pathways crossing Marr's field resisted, with tenacious brutality, the symbolic chains undermining their sense of freedom: "By the spring of 1834 campus warfare was out in the open, with President Woods in the thick of the fight."²⁷²

The '34 Riot

In late February 1834, just weeks after the new school term had begun, and for unknown reasons, a number of students neglected their private study time, broke curfew, poured out of their dormitories and began making noise. Professor Hilliard attempted to stop the ruckus, urging them to go back to their rooms; however, the students chased after him, one throwing a bottle that only narrowly missed striking him. The students began to march about campus

²⁷² James Sellers, *History*, *ibid.*, 59.

banging on a tin pan and blowing horns. Tutwiler attempted to persuade the youth to end their revelry but when Woods was sighted, the students set off after the president throwing brickbats. One student even fired a pistol. Fortunate for Woods the shot missed. An open window provided sanctuary. Not seeing which direction the fleeing president ran, they searched nearby woods before returning to campus where they began stoning the windows of his home. A frightened Woods, hid in a back room. The boys even invaded the house, but they could not find the president. Returning to the campus green, they persisted in parading and making noise. Professor Wallis came out to end the excitement, but was forced to back down when the students cocked their pistols and threatened his life. They moved on, first breaking into the chapel (i.e. the Lyceum) and ringing the bell, then stoning Mr. Hudson's windows. The riot finally ran its course and the students retired for the night. Stunned by the incident, Mrs. Gayle commented on Woods in her diary: "Were I in his place I would positively make myself an object of fear to them if I could not be one of love and reverence. The University will go down to the ground. What can be the reason?"²⁷³ The events on campus had gone from minor campus misdemeanors of breaking or abusing furniture to assault, criminal mischief, and even attempted murder. Guns were on campus and the students felt honor bound (and proud) to use them—even against the president and faculty.

The Power of Noise

Steven Hahn (1984) writes, "Honor found its clearest expression at moments of crisis," when men and women crossed expected lines demarking acceptable behaviors."²⁷⁴ When the code of honor was violated, boys could employ "howling and crackling cries, clanging pots and whining horns" in protesting the breech and in humiliating, shaming, or antagonizing the culprit.

²⁷³ Sarah H. Gayle, *Extracts from the journal of Sarah Haynsworth Gayle* (New Rochelle, New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1895), March 7, 1834. W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, The University of Alabama.

²⁷⁴ Steven Hahn, "Honor and Patriarchy in the Old South," *American Quarterly*, 36 (1984), 148.

In more extreme, adult cases tarring and feathering, flogging, and riding the rail could be proscribed to someone who violated the standards of honor. Hahn is careful to note “These were not spontaneous displays of popular wrath or personal vengeance; they were customary and structured rituals” carried out by a sizable group of the community.²⁷⁵ In this riot of 1834, while the students were armed and did attempt murder by firing on the president, the primary weapon of the students was noise. Noise was cheap and could not be attributed to one individual agitator; it took a group of students to create enough noise to be disruptive. Those blowing horns or banging on pots and pans could hide in the crowd and when anyone complained, the students could claim that their noise had no singular target. Indeed, as Helen Horowitz notes, the “motley crew” that filled the ranks of student bodies throughout the nation were quite creative in their ability to agitate their professors. Students at Princeton disrupted morning prayers by sliding their boots across the hardwood floors of the chapel. Others filled barrels with stones and rolled them down the hallways of Nassau Hall. Likewise, Robert Pace quotes a Virginia student who shared how his peers “make more noise than any place I ever was at...they all make it a rule to run every new teacher that comes here” out of town.²⁷⁶ Moreover, as a weapon and means of confrontation, noise was effective without being dangerous. Students conspired and effectively planned their revelry, weighing the risks of punishments against the rewards they hoped to gain. More-than-often, noisy revelry was worth student participation.

The crowd itself is an important component to not only this riot but to understanding the youth of the age and the incidents of collective or group violence. Lori Glover (2004) writes that southern students “challenged the authority of university administration and used group violence to express their will. With their classmates, young men began to learn to use power publically

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Robert Pace, *ibid.*, 26. See also Helen Horowitz, *ibid.*

and successfully—essential knowledge for southern patriarchs.”²⁷⁷ As young men in the South entered college, they chose friends carefully (as instructed by their parents) and created “a powerful and regionally distinct peer group. The upbringing of southern gentry boys, the wealth of their families, the intentions of their education, and the legacy of slave-holding combined to produce far more truculence and violence among southern college boys than among their northern counterparts.”²⁷⁸ Horowitz adds that “College men placed a high value on mutuality,” and Pace describes the “‘we versus they’ syndrome” that existed between students and faculty members.²⁷⁹ For Pace, as the “antagonism moved from the realm of covert defiance to outright rebellion...it was not because the students necessarily believed themselves to be socially superior to the faculty. The resistance, in almost in every case, stemmed from students perceiving that their honor—the code that maintained their very existence in the southern society—had been breached.”²⁸⁰ Classism was involved in students’ defiant stance; however, social status—more than class concerns—proved to be the driving force in students’ approach to faculty members. Social status could be achieved through reputation, appearance, and exhibitions of manliness while class identity was partially hereditary and a goal for life beyond college when wealth was attained from the plantation and achievements were made as men of state politics. Moreover, ridiculing professors and tutors became a hobby for the students, but in overcoming “the chief obstacle to their through enjoyment of life,” students flirted dangerously with the professors’ powers.²⁸¹ Faculty members had the authority or power to unmask the students’ attempt at adult actions and behaviors, and because the faculty possessed the right to bring shame and

²⁷⁷ Lori Glover, “‘Let us Manufacture Men’: Educating Elite Boys in the Early National South,” *Southern Manhood: Perspectives on Masculinity in the Old South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 36.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

²⁷⁹ Horowitz, *ibid.*, 13. And Pace, *ibid.*, 6.

²⁸⁰ Pace, *ibid.*, 6-7. Glover adds, “The upbringing of southern gentry boys, the wealth of their families, the intentions of their education, and the legacy of slave-holding combined to produce far more truculence and violence among southern college boys than among their northern counterparts.”

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 16-17.

humiliation students created a dual relationship with faculty members—placing themselves on an equal social plane. “They respected faculty erudition and the knowledge they could impact and saw them as fellow gentlemen, but they also resented the potential unmasking that faculty power represented.”²⁸²

The disturbances on campus were not isolated but were known throughout the South.

Virginia’s chairman Gessner Harrison wrote to Tutwiler in April:

I am truly weary with longing to hear from you. I am daily saying, why don’t Tutwiler write? Again and again I want you to write—don’t wait until you have time or are unoppressed with cares of what ever kind; but write and write soon. I am particularly anxious at this time to hear from you, having understood that your University has witnessed troubling times lately, and that not only the President, but also the professors were attacked—at least their houses. I do not suppose that you were included in the number of those attacked; conjecturing that the unpopularity of the president and his friends may have been the occasion a pretext of the riot.²⁸³

Clement Clay, a student at the time, wrote to his father: “I would not risk my life in Dr. Woods situation for his salary!”²⁸⁴ The situation was dire. Shortly after the riot, Sarah Gayle, friend of the president’s wife, noted Mrs. Wood’s ultimate fear. “I some times fear their threats against him will be executed.”²⁸⁵ Mrs. Woods’ fears were nearly fulfilled. Young Clay recorded in April, some of the students who had been expelled for their part in the February riot returned to campus, physically struggled with Dr. Woods and bullwhipped the president “dealing out lashes strong enough to ‘lift a two-thousand pound percheron [horse] off his feet’.”²⁸⁶ There is no corroborating evidence in the Faculty Minutes or in the Proceedings of the Board of Trustees to support Clay’s account. However, a similar incident was experienced by the president of the

²⁸² Ibid., 17.

²⁸³ Harrison to Tutwiler, April 4, 1834. Tutwiler/McCorvey papers, Manuscripts Collection, W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, The University of Alabama.

²⁸⁴ Sellers, *ibid.*, 60.

²⁸⁵ Sarah H. Gayle, *ibid.*, entry March 7, 1834.

²⁸⁶ Sellers, *ibid.*

University of North Carolina in 1799. While an extreme act, such an action—coming in the wake of the pistol shot at the president—would not have been totally surprising.

The Inquiry: Woods Versus Tutwiler

It was in the wake of the 1834 riot and open disregard for University law that President Woods' moral fiber was strained to the breaking point. Against the backdrop of the showdown between Governor John Gayle and President Andrew Jackson in which a debate over state and federal powers came to a crescendo and divided the friendships of many political figures of the state, Woods demanded accountability. In August, he asked the trustees to launch a formal investigation into the three professors he felt were responsible for instigating or inciting the Spring riot: Wallis, Tutwiler, and Hudson. It seems the once warm relationship between Hudson and Woods had cooled significantly. Yet, it was John Fielding Wallis, professor of natural history, who became the scapegoat. Nonetheless, the whole event including the investigation, this public questioning of character and morals, caused the impasse between Woods and Tutwiler to flare into a heated rivalry.

August 11-14, 1834 were four pivotal days for The University of Alabama. Dr. Woods had had enough and attempted to rid himself and the University of Wallis, Hudson, and Tutwiler. It is not clear exactly why the president waited until August to request an investigative committee, although it is quite probable that he had been collecting evidence (e.g. written statements) and awaiting the next meeting of the board of trustees. In any case, that August Woods tossed down the gauntlet, charging the three professors with being largely responsible for the riot earlier in the year and for various other infractions that had undermined the University and his government. On August 11 Woods wrote to the trustees asking them to investigate "those causes which have produced discord and dissention in the faculty and insubordination and riots

among the students—and which threaten entirely to blast the prosperity of this well endowed public Institution.”²⁸⁷ Noting that “without discipline and without government, this University cannot, in my opinion, be made a blessing to the state. And to maintain discipline in the present condition of things, is, I solemnly believe, impracticable.”²⁸⁸ Woods issued a series of questions to the three faculty members:

1. Are the members of the faculty divided into two parties acting generally in opposition to each other?
2. Is this want of harmony among the members of the faculty well known to the students, and have they been engaged in riots or disorderly conduct?
3. Have students been dismissed from the University and afterwards obtain admission into other colleges? Have you given such students, on either of them assistance in obtaining admission into other Institutions either by letter of introduction, giving them certification, or in any other manner?
4. Have you, in the presence of students, expressed a contempt of all college regulations?
5. Have you advised students to leave the University, or recommended other Institutions in preference to this? Have you advised parents to send to other colleges or young men to go to others? Or have you said, in the presence of students and others, that you could not advise parents or guardians to send to this Institution?
6. Have you authorized students to disregard college rules relating to uniformity of dress, or to leave or change their dormitories without permission from the faculty or president?
7. Have you disregarded College rules, in relation to the number of recitations in your respective classes?

Each of these questions reveals the reality of the state of affairs occurring under the immediate surface at the University. The issues, independently, are a slight against Woods’ pedagogy.

Taken collectively they were an indictment against him and his leadership of the University. His hand was forced.

The series of questions caused a stir not only on Marr’s field but throughout the broader Tuscaloosa community. The following day, August 12, John M. Smith from Lawrence, Alabama and Reverend William H. Williams, pastor of Tuscaloosa’s Presbyterian Church, met on the

²⁸⁷ Alva Woods to Board of Trustees, August 11, 1834, “Old University file”, University Archives, W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, The University of Alabama.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

street and began to chat about University affairs. Somehow Woods caught wind of the conversation and the president asked Smith to submit in writing the details of the conversation. In the talk with Williams, Smith inquired about the dissention among the faculty and if the reverend thought the board of trustees would investigate. Smith asked Williams—of who Professor Wallis was a parishioner—if he thought Wallis was to blame. Williams commented that he did not know but agreed with Smith’s general comment that whoever was to blame should be sent away. The two men agreed that the climate on campus had become so poor that neither could see how the present faculty could continue working together. A question was then brought up about Wallis being opposed to Woods. Williams said he felt that Tutwiler was more opposed to the president than Wallis. Smith countered asking what the main objection Tutwiler had with the president; Williams answered, “Mr. Tutwiler thought Dr. Woods had not religious honesty enough to be at the head of such an institution: and that he did not conduct his recitations and examinations at-all properly.”²⁸⁹

Woods probably had conflicting feelings over this revelation. On one hand he must have felt both hurt by the public ridicule and incensed with rage at Tutwiler’s accusation. On the other hand he must have swelled with pride at the idea that he had cause to rid himself of Tutwiler. The issue could now allow the president to bring charges of insubordination against Tutwiler. All Woods had to do was prove the words—relayed in Smith’s letter—that Tutwiler questioned his abilities, leadership, and religiosity. Tutwiler would be unmasked, “given the lie,” and expected to make the next move—scripted by the code—and answer the president’s call. In Woods’ mind, Tutwiler would either admit to the slander—for which Woods could then fire him—or the professor could lie and risk public shame and humiliation when the truth was discovered through

²⁸⁹ John M. Smith to Reverend Williams, August 12, 1834, Manuscripts Collections, W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, The University of Alabama.

Smith's letter. The code, of course, would have given Woods the right to challenge Tutwiler to a duel, but the president would never have expected satisfaction in such a manner.

On Wednesday August 13 Woods wrote to the trustees explaining what had transpired over the last day-and-a-half. He told that he had asked Mr. Smith for a transcript of his conversation with Williams and that he had issued a questionnaire to Tutwiler specifically asking, "Have you, or have you not, ever expressed such an opinion either as to my religious honesty, or my capacity for conducting my recitations and examinations?"²⁹⁰ Thinking he had cornered Tutwiler into an admission and subsequent resignation from the University, Woods must have felt that his plan of moral discipline could be fulfilled once the Virginian was gone. However, Tutwiler's response to Woods is one of perfection as he played the game of the Southern code. Tutwiler writes, replying to Woods, "I presume that Mr. Williams is the gentleman alluded to in it, the letter which you will receive from him may render any from me unnecessary. It may be proper, however, to state that I cannot acknowledge the right of any individual to call upon me in general terms for my opinion in regard to the subjects mentioned in your letter. When called upon by the proper authority [the trustees] it will be time to express my opinions."²⁹¹ Nowhere in his note does he admit the words attributed to him were a direct quotation, nor does he deny them. He gave Woods no right to what was said or implied. Tutwiler knew that Williams was to send a note to Woods and that it would provide him with a sturdier defense as he must have known that Williams could or would not directly attribute the remarks to him. Until the board of trustees demanded Tutwiler give his opinion of Woods he would remain mute. Woods was infuriated; again he addressed the trustees:

²⁹⁰ Alva Woods to Board of Trustees, August 13, 1834, University Archives, W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, The University of Alabama.

²⁹¹ Henry Tutwiler to Alva Woods, August 13, 1834, University Archives, W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, The University of Alabama.

You perceive he [Tutwiler] refuses to deny having expressed such sentiments, or to give me any satisfaction. I do not find fault with these opinions, but only maintain that the expressions of them to my injury and overthrow, was incompatible with the relations which we sustain to each other. I leave you to draw your own inferences. While he holds such sentiments toward me and is sending them out into the community, can you suppose that we shall cordially co-operate to promote any object?²⁹²

Woods' desire of bringing down Tutwiler rested on two hopes: that the trustees would remove him based on the sole fact that he and Woods were divided or Williams' forthcoming letter would prove that Tutwiler had indeed slandered the president.

The following morning, August 14, Williams' letter arrived, but gave Woods no satisfaction. Tutwiler was untouchable. The letter stated Williams was not quoting Tutwiler directly. He told Woods, "I have never conversed particularly with Prof. Tutwiler in reference to yourself or the difficulties in the University and my statement to Mr. Smith was simply an impression received from others in reference to the sentiment of Professor Tutwiler."²⁹³

Furthermore, the board had received Tutwiler's response to the committee's seven questions, answers that put-forth a formidable defense:

I feel thankful to the Committee for giving me an opportunity to exculpate myself from reports which have been circulated to my prejudice, and of which I had no intimation until yesterday. Before proceeding to the interrogations contained in your letter permit me to observe, that I have never known an institution in which there was perfect harmony among the Faculty. I could, if it were necessary, point the Committee to an Institution in which the want of is much greater than it has ever been here—nor has this want of harmony, although known to the students and the public, impeded, in the least; the prosperity of the Institution. On the contrary, it has gone on increasing every year and it now ranks among the most distinguished in our Country.²⁹⁴

²⁹² Alva Woods to Board of Trustees, August 13, 1834, *ibid.*

²⁹³ Williams to Alva Woods, August 14, 1834, University Archives, W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, The University of Alabama.

²⁹⁴ Henry Tutwiler to David Hubbard, August 13, 1834, University Archives, W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, The University of Alabama. Tutwiler's response and other University records were housed in the vault inside the Round House when Federal troops arrived on campus in April 1865. Someone fearing the Round House would be destroyed took the documents to the Observatory (i.e. Maxwell Hall today) and threw them in the basement where they remained until the 1880s. When Mr. W.S. Wyman and Mr. Clark, a trustee, returned them to the Round House. Sometime during the tenure of Dr. Denny, Mr. Anderson—the University Postmaster—Miss

In answering the seven questions, Tutwiler showcased the skills he learned while attending the law department at the University of Virginia as well as those a southern gentleman should always be armed with. He explained that professors are both private citizens and officers of the college and if they disagreed it was because of human nature. However, if the board was concerned with a disagreement in their capacity as officers of the University he directed them to the faculty minutes. He even hoped they would give him the opportunity to defend his votes when he stood in opposition to the majority party. He also commented that the students did know and understood that the faculty members were divided among themselves, but he emphasized that in no way were faculty disagreements the cause of student misbehavior. He also noted that the professors in the minority (i.e. he, Wallis, and Hudson) had been at the van of quelling the students' riots, and were certainly not the root cause.

As to the third question posed by the inquiry, Tutwiler gave a diplomatic answer in which he acknowledged that some suspended students had transferred to the University of Virginia, specifically Thomas Matthews and David Porter Bibb. Tutwiler was familiar with both students' cases, but rejected the claim that he had broken any University rule or by-law in assisting their admittance to Virginia. To the remaining questions he denied any wrong doing and offered brief explanations defending himself eloquently,

Septima Smith, and famed librarian Amelia Gayle Gorgas cleaned the documents (they were being eaten by insects) and placed the cleaned files in a steel filing cabinet in Smith Hall. According to Mr. Anderson who seems to have possessed a working knowledge of the University's history noted that Tutwiler's response was the most interesting of all the documents surviving the 1865 burning and the subsequent neglect of University archives and records. Mr. Anderson was interviewed in 1940 and commented on the 1834 crisis: "The matter is that this difficulty was of long standing and had caused a great deal of disturbance in University circles. Dr. Woods, while very able and intelligent, was in no way suited as president of the University and for dealing with young people as was later shown. It was shown by records of examinations made that his administrative methods were exceedingly poor and a great deal was lacking due to his failure to keep a record of his activities. He was of Northern birth, of very suspicious nature. He could not with any comfort associate with members of the faculty. He spent much time alone and brooded over conditions. The situation gradually became worse... This letter was partially responsible for Dr. Woods' resignation. It also placed Dr. Henry Tutwiler in a very uncomfortable position at the University of Alabama." See James Anderson, interview, October 17, 1940, University Archives, W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, The University of Alabama.

I have thus answered all your interrogatories as fully as my time will allow. If I have been tedious you will attribute it to the anxiety which every gentleman must feel to vindicate his character from charge as unjust as they are unfounded. Should there be any other subjects on which the Committee desire information, or any other reports which they may have heard prejudicial to my character I hope they will give me an opportunity of replying to them. Hoping that the Trustees will act in this case with a regard to justice and the best interest of the University.²⁹⁵

Wallis, however, was not as articulate in his August 14th letters, perhaps because of an illness. In the first of three letters, he tells the board that for ten months those faculty members relegated to the minority had been silenced at faculty meetings. He, Hudson, and Tutwiler were not arguing against majority rule. Rather those in the majority were not voting their conscience but simply seeking Woods' approval. "We cannot conceive that your honorable Board would wish us to make a sacrifice of moral principle and secure presidential favor."²⁹⁶ In this letter Wallis also indicates that months earlier a faculty member was to report to the board the various problems of faculty discord. Wallis hoped that the board members would see for themselves where the true trouble lay; he notes "If the writer be in fault he is prepared to take the consequences, if not, he confides in the magnanimity of the Board to secure his refutation from the influence of intrigue and envy."²⁹⁷

In addition to his earlier note, Wallis—like Hudson and Tutwiler—responded to seven questions asked by the board of trustees' investigative committee. In brief statements Wallis

²⁹⁵ Ibid. It is unknown exactly when Porter and Matthews and another student Ashe were suspended from the University; however, in a September 19, 1833 letter Tutwiler tells Harrison why he wrote a letter to UVA on behalf of Bibb. See Henry Tutwiler to Gessner Harrison, September 19, 1833, Papers of Gessner Harrison, Special Collections, the University of Virginia. Harrison wrote to Tutwiler in December and indicated Thomas Matthews had been suspended from Virginia for using vulgar language and that Peter Early Matthews was not studying, yet D.P. Bibb was "a fine student." See Henry Tutwiler to Gessner Harrison, December 23, 1833, Papers of Gessner Harrisons, Special Collections, the University of Virginia.

²⁹⁶ John F. Wallis to the Board of Trustees, August 14, 1834, University Archives, W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, The University of Alabama.

²⁹⁷ Ibid. In an undated note Wallis wrote to the trustees telling them to ask a Mr. McMullin about the state of affairs at the University: "A student of higher character, or one better able to state the ground of college difficulties, with the excellencies or defects of any department has never quit the University. Prof. T. and myself would particularly pleased to have him examined as to faculty disunion, or communications amongst the students." If this (current or former) student produced such a report it is not in the faculty records. See John F. Wallis to Board of Trustees, undated, University Archives, W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, The University of Alabama.

answers most of the questions in the negative and did not expound on the issue of faculty discord. Stating he was unsure how when faculty members “unnecessarily disagree” was communicated to the student-body, he agreed with his colleagues that the minority members were not the source of student misbehavior. Whether it was the brevity of his statements, evidence from others, or the political forces marshaled against him, Wallis was asked by Governor John Gayle, president of the board, to resign his post. “Your views of discipline and college government are such that they ought not to approve, and that they are permitted to prevail, the insubordination already existing to an injurious extent cannot be subdued, but will be extended until it affects the entire body of the students.”²⁹⁸ Wallis was out, but Tutwiler was safe, and he remained a gadfly to the president’s plans.

A Continued Contest

Woods felt it was his duty to question Tutwiler and the others and to demand the investigative committee. Certainly Woods could not be expected to have faculty members on his staff who would not only question his authority and classroom methods, but also—and more importantly—his religious fortitude. He had been trained to defend just such attacks. How could he forgive the spirit of the accusations? In his letters to Williams and Tutwiler he sought satisfaction. Williams’ response was the linchpin to his ordeal. Williams confessed to what he told Smith, but admitted that he had taken liberty attaching the “common talk” directly to Tutwiler. Williams’ letter gave Tutwiler “an out.” Woods could not charge Tutwiler with slander

²⁹⁸ John Gayle to John F. Wallis, August 14, 1834, University Archives, W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, The University of Alabama. It seems either the trustees or the president felt Professor Wallis was the source for the details of faculty discord reaching the students. Wallis had a nephew visiting campus and undoubtedly college officials were concerned with what the professor was telling his nephew who in-turn shared the information with his friends. In a note dated August 15, Washington D. Miller—a University student—wrote to the trustees during the stay of A.S. Wallis assuring them that he and the young Mr. Wallis never shared a conversation about the faculty troubles. Miller added that he had never heard Professors Wallis or Tutwiler comment on the issues either. See Washington D. Miller to Board of Trustees, August 15, 1834, University Archives, W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, The University of Alabama.

and he was forced to leave the matter in the hands of the trustees. Tutwiler's response was in no way an admission. Furthermore, it allowed him to hold a moral high-ground within the code that—while unwritten—stipulated that Woods had no right to know for sure what Virginian had said. Tutwiler was going to make Woods prove that he had indeed spoken the words. The professor had lost no face and the only way Woods could have satisfaction would have been to call Tutwiler a liar (i.e. tweaked his nose) and to have demanded satisfaction at twenty paces.

The 1834 riot proved students were taking extreme exception to the rules, regulations, and those who enforced them. In addition to the spring *mêlée*, student Ezra Bouchelle was asked to withdraw from the University after missing too many lectures; however, "He did not go docilely, but added an insult to a teacher to his crimes."²⁹⁹ In another instance, on March 6, four students were discovered sitting around a table with a deck of cards. When asked to stand and be questioned before the faculty, the "case was further complicated when one of the accused appeared...with a dirk in his shirt; he was withdrawn from school."³⁰⁰

One Way or Another

Student troubles continued to boil. In 1835, Franklin W. Bowden was the "victim" of a cruel prank. Bowden was innocently studying in his dormitory room late one evening when two students crashed through the door embroiled in what Bowden thought was a bitter fight. It ended when one of the students fell to the floor seemingly dead. The assailant dropped the knife and ran away leaving a stunned Bowden standing over the "corpse." The noise of the fight brought students from down the hall, who, discovering the situation, blamed Bowden. The youth was dumfounded and unable to prove his innocence. His peers convinced him that if the faculty and sheriff discovered what he had done, expulsion would be the least of his troubles. He took their

²⁹⁹ Sellers, *ibid.*, 214.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 219.

advice and fled into the woods. The faculty either hearing the disturbance or being informed by a student or servant, flew into Franklin dormitory where the incident occurred. The faculty realizing it had all been a sick joke, gathered a group of students, lit torches, and went in search of Bowden. Seeing the torches, he must have assumed the worse, the sheriff's posse. The fifteen-year-old Bowden hid deeper in the surrounding woods, fearful for his life.³⁰¹

About ten days later Bowden's father brought the young man back to campus. After conferring with Woods, Bowden met with Oran Minlo Roberts in his dormitory room. He was seeking a new, close friend because he was returning to what was sure to be a hostile place for him having suffered such public embarrassment. Roberts recalled the conversation:

Addressing himself to me, he said 'I have come back here to redeem myself. I want a friend, and I have come to you to be that friend. All I ask is to be given a fair opportunity. I have come prepared for any emergency.' There upon he pulled from his bosom a large pistol, and from his vest pocket a very small one, and said 'these I have brought with the consent of my father, I will not use them if I can help it; but I am going to whip the first person who insults me by referring to the unfortunate affair of which I was made the victim, and if I cant do it one way I will do it another.'³⁰²

Roberts agreed to stand by Bowden—in other words, to be his second in the case of a duel. It was not long, a few weeks at most, before Bowden was cut with public ridicule; someone was attempting to unmask him. It happened in the Stewards Hall where student discipline had become suspect at best. Roberts "saw Bowden turn pale, jump up from the table, say something sharply to a young man...and rapidly walked out the door."³⁰³ Roberts followed closely and inquired as what was about to take place. Bowden said he had been insulted and would now "whip" the fellow, who had also come outside. Fortunately, the youth were unarmed. A fist-fight ensued, and the pent-up rage in Bowden proved too much for the other student, William L.

³⁰¹ Roberts, *ibid.*, 9-13; Sellers, *ibid.*, 229.

³⁰² Roberts, *ibid.*, 11.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 12.

Beale. The faculty minutes note that the fight occurred, yet it seems that the faculty were content with the natural justice of the affair; honor had been satisfied and no disciplinary action was taken against the students.³⁰⁴

Bowden returned to campus a vulnerable soul. As such, he possessed and extremely defensive mentality. He *had* to secure himself—both literally and socially—and in order to do so he had armed himself with pistols. His father could see what was at stake and probably felt the public sting of the ordeal himself. He encouraged his son to do what was necessary to protect his name, social status, pride and dignity. Additionally, the father would have expected the son to defend the integrity of the family—one of the first laws of the southern code. It is conjecture to say the father was pleased the incident gave his son a perfect opportunity to prove his mantle as a man of honor. In this age “most duels were fought by young men...[and] quite often their arrogance masked an uncertainty about their place in society and, indeed, about their manhood as well.”³⁰⁵ To gain that status, Bowden had challenged the first person who unmasked him, making reference to the incident. The prank at its base was a lie, and for any student who “gave him the lie” would be seeking to lower Bowden’s status while elevating his own through manipulating and shaming Bowden. Conversely, the student shaming Bowden in the Steward’s Hall was subjecting himself to a duel, but only if Bowden had the pluck to overcome the shame of the prank and public ridicule to face another challenge. Honor in this incident—as in other similar cases—was a zero-sum game. It could be challenged through pranks, jokes, games, and contests or could be defended through taking a public challenge and upholding personal and family status.

³⁰⁴ Sellers, *ibid.*, 229.

³⁰⁵ Wyatt-Brown, *ibid.*, 174. For Brown, “The scheme of honor, the fear of shame gave too much play to jealousy, malice, and physical and social competitiveness by endowing these basic human sins with a rationale of sensitivity to self-esteem.”

Authors addressing the theme of honor agree: honor is reputation. In this case Bowden won back his pride, status, and manhood.

Scuffs and Scrapes

The Steward's Hall, one of seven University buildings spared by Union raiders during the Civil War, is known today as the Gorgas House. However, in 1834, and for several years afterward, it was a frightening place for the Steward and servants. Roberts remembered Judge John Brown being the Steward. "The old gentleman was occasionally very much annoyed by the boys at their meals. If the biscuits were too hard, one of them might be seen flying towards a negro-waiter, which would be succeeded by a whole volley of them from all parts of the hall, until every waiter had fled through the back-door."³⁰⁶ "When Steward's Hall became a constant battleground, with biscuits flying and heads being cracked and general disorder rampant, it was necessary to rule that at least one faculty member should eat in that hall and try to keep some semblance of order."³⁰⁷ The troubles in the dining hall soon spilled over into the town itself.

The scuffs and scrapes between student's and townspeople began on a somewhat small scale, yet in 1835 student Sydenham Moore and Tuscaloosian H.L. Martin, were involved in a fist fight. The student claimed the fight was an act of self-defense. Moore had been in town against University rules. He and sixteen other students were then punished for attending a party where the trouble with Mr. Martin began.³⁰⁸ "If the board of trustees thought that town and campus would be safely separated by the provision that faculty, as well as students, live in the University community, they very quickly discovered their error."³⁰⁹ Indeed, as early as 1831 "rules began to appear which were designed to discourage and prevent students from going into

³⁰⁶ Roberts, *ibid.*, 13. Brown succeeded P.P. Ashe, Tutwiler's father-in-law as Steward.

³⁰⁷ Sellers, *ibid.*, 62.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 248-249.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 243.

town for any purpose.”³¹⁰ Despite the rules against going into town, Tuscaloosa proved too much of a temptation for the students to resist. It was less than a mile down the Old Huntsville Road and offered dances, bars, gambling dens, shops and stores, possible interaction with females, and the state capitol.

On their way into town, one of the first houses the students would pass belonged to the wealthy merchant, William Dearing. Today his house is known as the University Club. If the February riot was the seminal event of 1834, 1835 is marked by the students’ running conflict with Dearing. Students had constantly found Dearing’s farm a temptation for fun and rowdiness: “his life was made miserable by mischievous and sometimes malicious invasions of his property and privacy.”³¹¹ He complained publicly, “Night after night, and week after week, and at almost every hour of the night, companies of students came by my house, singing songs the most obscene, and using language the most disgraceful and offensive to decency.”³¹² In late March the minor unpleasanties came to a head. One of Dearing’s female slaves disappeared. Dearing headed for campus, “sure that she had been spirited away by these student ruffians and that she was even at that time hidden in one of the University buildings.”³¹³ The accounts of what happened next are somewhat conflicting, but the Dearing incident had a profound impact on the University for the next few years.

It seems Dearing approached campus and asked a faculty member to search some of the dormitory rooms. Not finding the girl, the professor told him that the only place she could be held would be in a “society room” and to explore those rooms, Dearing would need a search warrant. If the Dearing account is accurate, he waited until the girl had been missing about three

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid., 62.

³¹² Ibid., 250.

³¹³ Ibid.

weeks before returning to the University--after students had boasted to him they indeed had the girl and would not release her. Roberts remembered, "He [Dearing] with some officers came out, presumably with a search warrant, and commenced searching some of the rooms, or attempting to do so, in Franklin Dormitory."³¹⁴ Students poured out of the dormitories and formed an angry crowd around Dearing, the sheriff, and other officers. The students then began shouting at the adults, using abusive language. Quickly escalating, brick-bats and rocks caused the posse, the sheriff, and Dearing to retreat. A mob gave chase, wielding canes, throwing stones, and firing pistols until the fleeing townsfolk had crossed the fence.

Another version tells that professors Bonfils and Hudson were asked by Woods to search the dorms on behalf of the sheriff and posse, and it was while the men stood talking to the president outside the dormitory that the brick-bats began to rain down on the towns folk. The students "quite properly resented the intrusion, for they thought that their 'honor had been slandered' ...and striking with canes, chased the running townsfolk; even some shots were fired. Although the faculty finally gained temporary control of the disturbance, the fight soon began again as a result of the 'threatening warlike language' of Mr. Dearing."³¹⁵ Dearing, "considerably injured" retreated to his home and sometime later that same evening, the slave returned home.³¹⁶

Mrs. Gayle was not to let the event slip by without comment in her diary. Surprisingly, she sided with the students. "A sound drubbing was the consequence deserved, as I do believe, were it only for the want of judgment it betrayed. They [the students] are in general, a lawless set, but I can but hope that the way in which this truly scandalous charge was met, argues a sense of honor and what is due to the opinion of society which may be received as an earnest of

³¹⁴ Roberts, *ibid.*, 5.

³¹⁵ Sellers, *ibid.*, 250.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 250-251.

something better. There is substance where there is a shadow.”³¹⁷ The students felt they were justified. Dearing had symbolically tweaked their noses twice: once by calling them out for their boasting, having the faculty search their rooms and second by “unmasking” them by way of a search warrant and the appearance of the sheriff’s posse. These two affronts were in-and-of themselves cause for a duel. The students, however, not being social equals with the steam boat magnet, were unable to demand satisfaction. Therefore they resorted to riot. Despite it all, the real horror of this episode, which is lost from the historical record, is what exactly happened to the slave girl while she was held captive by the students.

The students had not had their fill of fun at Dearing’s expense. A few nights later they dismantled a section of his fence and attempted to steal some chickens. Discovered, a fight ensued. Gunshots were exchanged and a student was wounded. The affair became subject of town gossip and newspaper articles. The University attempted to explain the incident through a circular letter sent to parents. In response to the circular, Dearing published his own account in a June article of Mobile’s *Commercial Register*. In his review of the situation, Dearing defamed the University, slighting it and Woods publicly. To Dearing, the University was morally corrupt. There was an “entire want of order and of discipline in this institution,” and Woods was the cause for that lack of discipline.³¹⁸ He also shamed the University by announcing that he was “compelled to incur the anxiety and expense, of sending to a distant college, a son whom I had hoped to educate, within sight of my own dwelling.”³¹⁹

The Dearing episode had a deep impact on the University. Classes were suspended so guns could be “extirpated.” A pledge was required of the students against their using firearms again, but getting back to the business of educating students was not easy. The circular letter that

³¹⁷ Gayle, *ibid.*, entry February 16, 1835.

³¹⁸ Sellers, *ibid.*, 251-252.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

had tried to explain away the incident deflected blame away from the University and the students onto Dearing himself. Tutwiler refused to sign it, thus widening the rift between him and the president.³²⁰ Moreover, Tutwiler asked the trustees to delay sending Woods' circular to parents and to review his substitute letter and hear his reasons for continuing to be in the minority against Woods. Tutwiler was seeking full disclosure with the board of trustees as he did not want to be called into question again as he had after the 1834 riot. Moreover, he may have been pushing the trustees to critically review Woods' policies and ethic of discipline.

The episode, like others before, had become known throughout the region. Harrison wrote to Tutwiler during Dearing episode, simply asking, "I am sorry that things go on so badly in the Alabama University. Is there no remedy?"³²¹ Evidently there was not. Events on campus continued to spiral out of control. There were more food and fist-fights in the Steward's Hall, and even the chapel/Lyceum became a place of anarchy. Attendance had become so poor at prayer services that the faculty instituted the "Rule of Four," which mandated "When a student was absent more than four times in a month from any of these appointments [attending services, classes, and study halls], he was dismissed at the end of the third month."³²² Sometime that year, an expelled student returned, shocking everyone, and appeared in the chapel where he "offered abusive language to some of the faculty."³²³ And the following year, "one student was 'seriously and publicly' reproved for disorderly conduct in chapel and warned that if he continued this behavior he would be 'removed' from the institution."³²⁴ Simply getting students to attend lectures, recitations, study groups, and prayer services was a growing and constant struggle.

³²⁰ Ibid., 152. Wood's circular letter was mailed to parents April 7, 1835 and Dearing's editorial printed in Mobile's *Commercial Register* was printed June 6, 1835.

³²¹ Harrison to Tutwiler, February 3, 1835. Tutwiler/McCorvey papers, Manuscripts Collection, W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, The University of Alabama.

³²² Sellers, *ibid.*, 210-211.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 211.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

By the close of 1835 professors Saltonstall, Wallis, and Hilliard, tutor Calvin Jones and the steward P.P. Ashe had resigned or left the institution. This may have been a wise move as 1836 was no better than the previous two years. Once again, the Steward's Hall proved to be a continual hotbed of violence. Alexander Lalande was expelled after getting into a fight with another student in which "The faculty said that he had used abusive language, threatened violence, and drawn a deadly weapon, and they added that he had a quarrelsome disposition anyway."³²⁵ "Lalande sustained the last of these charges by refusing to obey the rule that suspended students must leave the campus immediately. He was, therefore, expelled in disgrace."³²⁶ In the spring of 1836, George Lister was recommended to the trustees for not only having been found to have intoxicating liquors in his room, for refusing to leave the campus, for having "used language of abuse and defiance to one member of the faculty and offered personal violence to another," but also for carrying out those threats by assaulting a professor with a deadly weapon.³²⁷ He was also bound-over for trial by the circuit court, but the trial never took place as Lister confessed, apologized, and left Tuscaloosa.

Gambling

Gambling had become a general concern for both the community of Tuscaloosa and the University. Greenberg notes that honorable men played numerous "games of chance" on everything from cockfights to horse races to simple card games. However, in a seeming paradox, southerners constructed a contrast between a "gentleman's powerful love of gambling and his equally powerful hatred of professional gamblers."³²⁸ Across the South, professional gamers were harassed, tar-and-feathered, and in some instances were lynched. Professionals were

³²⁵ Ibid., 233.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Ibid., 209.

³²⁸ Greenberg, *ibid.*, 136.

viewed as a well-spring for extreme criminality and accused of robbery and murder and for cheating “naïve” youth. Customarily, in the fall of 1835, about one-quarter of the University’s student body drew up a petition condemning the vice, but these twenty-one students did not speak for their peers and their public pledge did not reflect their private practices. For in the same year, University officials “were ordered to alternate in visiting, as often as was judicious, all the places in Tuscaloosa in which students might be meeting for the purpose of gambling.”³²⁹ But gaming could not be wrestled easily from the youth. As Greenberg stresses, “For Southern men of honor, gambling was closely related to dueling. The duel, in fact, can be seen as a form of gambling for extremely high stakes.”³³⁰ Wagers in a duel were made in spite of any fear of death, thus by taking the ultimate risk a man could achieve the highest honor. In the games of gentlemen, betting men wore masks, bluffed, and dared others to call those bluffs (i.e. to unmask them); they risked shame, embarrassment, and reputation. The stakes were high, but so were the rewards

The Circus

1836 was also the year when the events on campus overtook the faculty and Woods’ administration. Ironically a circus provided the cause of breakdown. Oran Roberts recorded in his *Reminiscences*: “It was against the rules of the University for students to go to such places, indeed to leave their rooms at night without permission. Bowden and I were in the habit of observing the rules strictly. Our curiosity was excited, not being much accustomed to such things in the up-country, where we had lived.”³³¹ They were not the only boys whose curiosity got the better of them. Roberts noted that he and Bowden, whom he had remained friends with after the fight outside the Steward’s Hall, went together to the circus—sometime in April—knowing if

³²⁹ Sellers, Article, *ibid.*, 290.

³³⁰ Greenberg, *ibid.*

³³¹ Roberts, *ibid.*, 15.

they went with a larger group they would most certainly get punished. “We went and behaved very quietly, and of course we were seen there by other students that had gone that night. There were about eighty or ninety students who visited the circus.”³³² On April 20, a few days after the circus had left town and directly after morning prayers, a “sentence” was handed down to six students for having attended the circus. They were suspended and told not to come back to campus until February 1, 1837. “An uproar followed.”³³³

Roberts’ account, albeit written decades later, still contains the emotional response the circus incident stirred in the young men on campus:

Much excitement was engendered amongst the students generally, because of the ground assigned for the dismissal of a few students, when there were so many others equally guilty. It seemed to be an invidious distinction against them. It was believed by some of the students, that if the Faculty were informed of the great number of students, that were equally guilty, they would reconsider their action and take back the dismissed-students, rather than, by dismissing so many, break up the school for the balance of the session. For if all of them, who had gone to the circus, should be dismissed, there would be only ten or fifteen students left in the University.³³⁴

To right the injustice, students circulated a petition through the student body, where all who attended the circus would declare their guilt. To the surprise of many students, only half—about forty—signed the document. Roberts was one of many who refused to sign, arguing, “I had not gone in a crowd upon any concerted understanding to stand together in any consequence that might follow from the violation. That if the Faculty found out that I was guilty I would abide the consequence, but that I would not voluntarily tell them of it.”³³⁵ Another petition was sent from townspeople including B.F. Porter and future Governor Collier. The University responded to the

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Sellers, *History*, *ibid.*, 63.

³³⁴ Roberts, *ibid.*, 15-16.

³³⁵ Ibid., 16.

people of Tuscaloosa saying they could not re-instate the suspended students and urged the townspeople to stand behind the decisions of the administration.³³⁶

As the student petition circulated around campus, the student body split into two camps. Those who wanted the petition signed even formed an organizational committee, and visited non-jurors (i.e. those who had not signed the petition) one-on-one. There was a rumor that non-juror names would be added to the final document, against their wishes. Students were threatening to unmask each other. Threats of violence were made, and “both sides went armed for any extreme emergency.”³³⁷ The two camps, not trusting each other, monitored each other, refusing to attend classes, prayers, or lectures. Unable to brow-beat the remaining students into signing the petition, the students submitted their document to the faculty. Non-jurors had no idea if their names had been forged, if they had been unmasked. Roberts lamented, “A deadly conflict seemed imminent, and unavoidable. I had intimate friends on both sides and while I was not willing to make any concession to the other side, I could but regret to witness such a conflict.”³³⁸ In the end, only the forty names appeared on the petition and the petitioners did not give up their peers. Those who did sign hoped the faculty would see that a large group had attended and that it was arbitrary to punish just six students. They also hoped the suspended students would be reinstated. To everyone’s surprise, the faculty suspended the forty forthwith. Between one-third and one-half of the student body was gone. With the campus stunned, Sellers notes that between May and August, only three entries were made in the ledger of Faculty Minutes.³³⁹

In the days following the mass-suspension Woods and the faculty wrote and announced a new, more stringent set of *Ordinances* for the University. However, the rules were overly harsh

³³⁶ Sellers, *ibid.*

³³⁷ Roberts, *ibid.*, 17.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*

³³⁹ Sellers, *ibid.*, 64. Oran Roberts’s account notes that the students that were not suspended, returned to their classes and their studies as expected and required.

in the eyes of the students that remained on campus and they protested them vehemently. “Particularly obnoxious was the provision that students should be marked daily in each class and that a record of their merits and demerits be published monthly.”³⁴⁰ Some students viewed this system as one of favoritism. Roberts notes that the new rules would be seen as a reflection on the students remaining at the University, that they were needed to maintain good order for the students on campus. Roberts felt such a reflection imposed by the University was a betrayal of his good conduct. He was keen enough to understand the University’s position in needing to make a public statement and stand on being able to control the youth in its care, but for Roberts, this was still wrong. “It produced a general dissatisfaction amongst the students, and caused them to discuss its effect upon them personally in view of difficulties that had just happened with the students that had been dismissed.”³⁴¹ Many of the students made plans to leave the University, including Roberts. The University had either suspended or alienated the majority of the student body; recovery seemed impossible.

Roberts, with his own trunk packed, decided to call upon Woods to discuss the situation. He expressed his concerns, explaining that he was willing to abide by any rule the University instituted as long as it was prescribed when the whole student body was enrolled. Woods listened attentively to Roberts as the young man explained that the suspended students were angry at the “submissionists” who remained. There was no doubt that when the next session began, the feud between the students would be renewed. He pleaded with the president to wait and enforce the new *Ordinances* at the beginning of the next term, putting all students on equal footing. Roberts left the president, not knowing what to expect, however, the next morning an announcement was

³⁴⁰ Sellers, *ibid.*, 64. Historical records show this practice was in place in 1831; however, apparently sometime during the tenure of Woods this practice was abandoned thus the students’ outrage when this provision was (re)introduced. The students would not have reacted—if Sellers is correct—as they did had this practice been normal to them.

³⁴¹ Roberts, *ibid.*, 17.

made that the new rules would be enforced at the next session. According to Roberts, several suspended students—hearing what had taken place—returned to campus and “expressed to us a full reconciliation as to our past differences; and when most of them returned at the next session, the same association and friendships were renewed, without any reference to our former difficulty.”³⁴² Despite making amends, troubles continued. Only twelve students graduated in December 1836, and freshmen enrollment was down. Moreover, while the groups of students may have set-aside their differences, their disdain for Woods and the faculty remained as vehement as ever. The coming session would challenge Woods’ leadership and government of The University of Alabama. By 1837 his moral authority over the student body was bankrupt, and Alva Woods accepted failure.

³⁴² Ibid., 18.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DECLINE AND FALL

On December 1, 1838 Tuscaloosa's *Independent Monitor* announced to its readers,

We deem this a fitting occasion on which to express our gratification at the apparently rising prospects of an institution, in which, in common with our fellow citizens, we feel a deep interest. Unfortunate circumstances, have, in past years, had a tendency to depress the standing of the University, far below the hopes of its friends, and below the rank which the University of a State like Alabama should maintain. Under the new organization, however, we have thus far seen a better state of things.³⁴³

By the time of this publication, Basil Manly had been leading the University of Alabama for a year. With a philosophy and style of government quite different from Alva Woods', he had seemingly quelled the waves of student violence. Astonishingly, just months into his tenure, the *Independent Monitor* had noticed a great change at the University. Manly reviewed the state of discipline and reported boldly to the trustees, "The faculty has sought to establish mild and gentle, but firm, steady, and impartial discipline; the object of which is to establish habits of self-government among the students, rather than to rule by rigid supervision and absolute authority—to operate rather by the prevention of evils than by their cure."³⁴⁴ It was change indeed, and the *Monitor's* editor marveled that citizens would "find no longer within the walls of the University, any of the sounds of discord which have so often heretofore filled them with perplexity. They will find diligence and good order among the students; faithfulness and harmony on the part of

³⁴³ *Independent Monitor*, 1 December 1838.

³⁴⁴ Basil Manly, *State of Discipline*, Presidents' Reports to the Board of Trustees, December 4, 1838, W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, The University of Alabama.

the faculty; and mutual cordiality of feeling characteristic of both.”³⁴⁵ Thus was the state of affairs, or so it would seem. In fact, Manly’s time at the University would be little better than had been Alva Woods’. When coupled with the horrific tales of mistreatment suffered by University slaves, the Manly years are arguably more deplorable and dark than the first six years of University history. While the *Monitor* and Manly both were some-how impressed by the apparent change in student behavior, and as they hoped for continual improvement, some citizens shirked the boosterism. One of those citizens included a member of the board of trustees. Un-named by newly elected faculty member F.A.P. Barnard, the trustee told him, “You will never be able to govern those boys at Tuscaloosa while the world stands.”³⁴⁶

Indeed, the situation in 1838 was not as auspicious as the newspaper or Manly portrayed. The trustees had confirmed Manly as president then recruited, elected, and installed a new slate of faculty members (including Barnard) all while trying to recoup community support and recruit new students. Alone, each of these tasks would have been a challenge; collectively, they were a great burden for the University. Indeed, it was a time of turmoil for the school and the community. In addition to the Panic of 1837 that gripped the state and nation, the University’s land-sale books had been investigated by B.F. Porter and the findings of his audit were depressing to say the least. President Manly’s task seemed Sisyphean. The failures of Alva Woods left the University of Alabama with little hope of recovery. This chapter will detail the events that besieged the University, caused Woods to resign, and ultimately resulted in the reorganization of the school.

³⁴⁵ *Independent Monitor*, *ibid.*

³⁴⁶ John Fulton, *Memoirs of Frederick A. P. Barnard* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1896), 85

The Final Year

The 1836 calendar year closed with about 50 students on campus. The University had suspended more than 40 students for admitting they had attended the circus. Following the mass-suspension, new rules were read to students but they seemed “very onerous” to those who remained on campus. Orin Roberts notes that many were bent on leaving the University because of the recent troubles amongst the students and the heavy-handed tactics of Woods and the faculty. Roberts met with Woods and the following day it was announced the new rules would not go into effect until the commencement of the next session. When the suspended students heard of this change, they made amends with the students who had not turned themselves in for attending the circus. While a peace was struck, the troubles between students and administration continued. In January 1837 Tutwiler wrote to his friend Gessner Harrison indicating his intention to leave the University.³⁴⁷ He was upset with the board of trustees and his fellow faculty members. He disapproved with the way Woods handled the circus incident and mass expulsion. He had received a copy of a faculty resolutions detailing the punishments imposed on riotous students at UVA, and it seems he was interested in suggesting similar punishments for students at Alabama. However, his opinion remained in the minority at faculty meetings. Aware of his friend’s bewilderment, Harrison responded in March, imploring Tutwiler to remain at the University, reassuring him that his reputation in Alabama would be a great asset to him despite the troubles.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁷ Henry Tutwiler to Gessner Harrison, January 16, 1837. Papers of Gessner Harrison, Special Collections, University of Virginia.

³⁴⁸ Gessner Harrison to Henry Tutwiler, March 31, 1837. Papers of Gessner Harrison, Special Collections, University of Virginia.

Merit/Demerit System

On February 1 victims of the mass-suspension returned face the new *Ordinances*, including a merit system. The faculty were charged with recording daily attendance and student participation in recitations and class activities. Each month the merits and demerits for each student were to be published. The students were incensed. They argued it encouraged favoritism by the faculty, and would unfairly “unmask” their behavior and grades. A questioning of their character, they were to be graded by a system in which they had little-to-no agency. This would have been unacceptable to any southern man.³⁴⁹

Additionally, at the commencement of the term the students had to make the pledge:

We solemnly promise to obey all the laws and ordinances of this Institution, so long as we are connected with the same. We specially and solemnly pledge ourselves, that so long as we are members of this Institution, we will wholly abstain from using & from having any kind of fire-arms, or deadly weapons, whatever; and that we will make no aggressions and encourage none, upon either persons or property. These declarations we make upon our faith and honor.³⁵⁰

However, students paid little more than lip-service to this promise. And, just one month into the term, after the first merits and demerits were announced, they petitioned for the abolition of the merit system. The faculty met, discussed the issue, and ruled that as a University law it could only be repealed by the trustees. The students were informed of the decision with the justification that similar systems were employed at other colleges.

Meetings were held and the student body resolved “to take the government of the Institution into their own hands” by refusing to adhere to the merit system.³⁵¹ The faculty responded with the declaration that “any combination of the students to violate or evade any

³⁴⁹ James B. Sellers, *History*, *ibid.*, 64.

³⁵⁰ *Report of the Committee of Investigation who were instructed to enquire into the causes which have produced the late disturbances in, and decline of the University of Alabama*. (Tuscaloosa: M.D.J. Slade, 1837), 17. Tutwiler, as secretary of the faculty, recorded the pledge which he notes was adopted by the trustees in 1836 and imposed at the beginning of the 1837 term.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

College regulation, shall render every individual concerned in such combination, liable to suspension by the Faculty, and expulsion by the Board of Trustees.”³⁵² Again, the students refused to obey. Riots erupted. The faculty aggressively sought to put them down, but “they were insulted, violently assailed,” and when the faculty approached the dormitories, they found the doors barred. No attendance could be kept or log of study hours could be made, the merit roll could not be maintained.

Perfect Anarchy

Nightly the students ran about campus blowing stage-horns and firing their pistols into the air. On April 11 the faculty met to inquire into the troubles, but before the meeting had concluded the 11 o’clock bell rang for recitations. The faculty adjourned to their respective classes, however, to their surprise they found few students in attendance. The boycott was repeated for the noon classes. “Most of the students were collected together in front of their several dormitories, hissing, hooting at, and otherwise insulting those who had the firmness to go to their recitations.”³⁵³ The faculty had the bells rung for the afternoon classes, but again few attended. The faculty faced an unfamiliar challenge. Their moral authority had been checked by the resolve of the students. Facing up to the rebellion, they issued a resolution suspending more than half of the student body, about 70, who “absented” themselves from their recitations. The students’ privileges at the University were forfeited and they were told to remove themselves from campus and not to come within five miles of Tuscaloosa. Parents were informed of the suspensions via a circular letter issued April 12th.

The following day, without consulting the faculty, Governor Clay met with many of the suspended students and offered them lenient terms for reinstatement. However, they rejected his

³⁵² Ibid. It is not clear when this “Law Against Combinations” was enacted; however, it is probable that it was adopted after the 1834 riot or the 1835 Dearing incident.

³⁵³ Ibid.

offer. Clay then called a faculty meeting and had them offer the same terms he outlined. Those who accepted would make a written pledge to the University:

We do solemnly pledge ourselves punctually to attend all our college exercises, unless prevented by sickness, or other like necessary cause; and that we will submit to all the existing rules and regulations of the Institution, including the merit-roll system, until the meeting of the Board of Trustees. We do especially pledge ourselves that, either we have no fire-arms or deadly weapons whatever, or that if we have, we will immediately deliver them up to the Faculty till the close of the session, as was done on a former occasion: that we will make no disturbance or disorder, either bly [sic] blowing horns or in any other way: that we will never make or encourage any aggression upon the person or property of any individual: and that we will not, either by barring the doors, or in any other way, interfere with the Faculty in the discharge of their duty.³⁵⁴

Very few accepted. F.W. Bowdon wrote to a former University classmate, Washington D. Miller, “I had occasion to go to Tusc about two weeks ago, and found to my sincear regret the University in a state of perfect anarchy... Alas!! Poor Alma Mater! I fear you are uttering your dying groans!! I fear you are destined to share the hard fate of Sodom & Gomorrah!!!!”³⁵⁵

Many students left campus, leaving some 40 or so defiant hold-outs. “The faculty were defeated,” yet the students continued their assault.³⁵⁶ The *New Orleans Picayune* reported, “Some of the Professors of the Alabama University at Tuscaloosa, lately fired several pistols at some refractory students. The students returned the fire, and the Alma Mater of our sister State was suddenly converted into a scene of commotion and smoke. We have heard of above a dozen rows at this college, and should suppose, from their frequency, that ‘Plato’s philosophic care’ is not much regarded at this seat of learning.”³⁵⁷

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 20.

³⁵⁵ F.W. Bowdon to Washington D. Miller, April 17, 1837, Texas State Archives, Austin Texas.

³⁵⁶ Sellers, *ibid.*

³⁵⁷ Suzanne Rau Wolfe, *ibid.*, 21. Here Wolfe quotes the *New Orleans Picayune*, June 23, 1837. Although dated June, it is likely that the New Orleans paper was reporting on the major events that took place in April or May 1837. James Sellers’ text and the letters of Henry Tutwiler indicate April and early May was the period when University faculty members and Dr. Woods were being assaulted.

The Public Call

In early May Henry Tutwiler wrote to his friend at Virginia that the situation in Tuscaloosa was so deplorable that other faculty members had pleaded with him to take up arms against the students. Tutwiler refused, disagreeing with the idea of resorting to guns except in a case where he would defend his life or the lives of his family. He also told his old friend that the board of trustees was to meet in July to address not only the students' "high-handed measure" of refusing to attend classes, but also a petition—signed by 62 citizens—demanding Woods' resignation. "I understand that it has been signed by nearly all the most respectable citizens—Many who have heretofore been his friends & were some of his Baptist brethren have signed it. I have no expectation that the object will be accomplished nor do I believe that the petitioners expect it but I am told that they say that they are determined to persevere until they bring about that consummation."³⁵⁸ Tutwiler, impressed by the public petition, noted that Woods "has been losing ground very rapidly for some time—some of his private transactions have thrown light upon his character & I do not think it possible that he can gull the community much longer."³⁵⁹ Tutwiler apparently refused to mask his dislike of Woods in gentlemanly prose any longer; the Virginian, like those 62 citizens, had had his fill.

The public petition carried so much weight that the trustees created an Investigative Committee. Composed of a member from each Judicial Circuit, the Committee's tasks included investigating the riots of April and May and attempting to ascertain the root cause of those incidents, reporting on the loss of public confidence in the University, and to investigate the petition put forth by the citizens against the president. A sub-committee was selected to examine University buildings, fences, and grounds. Their report for repairs and improvements was

³⁵⁸ Henry Tutwiler to Gessner Harrison, May 5, 1837, Papers of Gessner Harrison, Special Collections, University of Virginia.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

extensive and depressing; in just six years of operation, University property was—much like student behavior—in a sorry state.³⁶⁰

The Report

Former Governor John Gayle chaired the investigating Committee and their report was favorable to both President Woods and the faculty, but favorable to a fault. Indeed, some members of the Committee issued a formal protest to the official and published findings. The majority found no blame could be awarded the faculty for the recent disturbances.

the Committee cannot too much admire the firmness which characterised the conduct of the Faculty, through the whole of these disgraceful riots—nor can they withhold the expression of their approbation, at the forbearance with which they received the insults, abuse and open assaults of these young men, who, without any adequate cause, have inflicted a deep and lasting wound on an Institution which is the fondest hope of the parent, and the proudest boast of the country.³⁶¹

For the Committee, it was not President Woods, the faculty, the University's *Ordinances* or the enforcement of those rules that caused the 1837 riots. The *Report* argues the students were “ripe for rebellion” and almost any impediment to their freedom would have ignited a riot.

Gayle's Committee laid much of the blame at the feet of parents for giving their sons every extravagance or vice affordable. Unlimited credit led the youth to pursue pleasures and amusements. “It is not to be wondered at, that thus supplied, they neglect their studies, and become impatient of the restraints and discipline of the University.”³⁶² Sons of the wealthy sought high fashion, jewelry, dirks, pistols, Bowie knives all in an attempt to claim “that they are entering on a theatre where they are to appear as men of the world.”³⁶³ Moreover, for the Committee, it is this very “theatre” that owned some of the blame. “If the Students are returned

³⁶⁰ *Report of the Committee of Investigation*, *ibid.* 3. The *Report* has no specific date of publication; however, it was published in Tuscaloosa's *Flag of the Union* on August 9, 1837.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 5. As an aside, it should be noted that Woods and Gayle had a strong friendship. The Gayle children even lived with the Woods while Gayle was in Washington, D.C.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*

to their parents, tinctured with the despicable vice of gambling, it is because gambling is allowed to be carried on here;" if students "go to the parental mansion, with their pockets filled with dirks and pistols," it is because firearms, "which are the appropriate companions of the coward and the assassin, is sanctioned by public sentiment;" if—upon their return home—parents find that their sons are in debt to the merchants and tailors, because they sell the lads "useless and extravagant articles," it is because these vendors encourage the extravagance; "and finally, if they leave the University with immoral, dissipated and intemperate habits, it is because temptations, to embrace these vices, are allowed to be offered to them here."³⁶⁴ They argued that there was too much temptation and not enough teaching in the lessons of fiscal moderation and modesty.

Being financially responsible was yet another characteristic of an honorable man. "To southern parents, money mattered far beyond the bottom line. Spending patterns afforded men the opportunity to display their refinement and self-mastery."³⁶⁵ Financial affairs belonged to the adult world of the great planters, thus a young man striving to become such a man could display an element of his reputation by walking the fine line between "keeping way" with peers and not seeming extravagant. Excessive spending could empty the family's coffer and ruin a man's reputation. Therefore, as Wyatt-Brown stresses, "honor resides in the individual as his understanding of who he is and where he belongs in the ordered ranks of society."³⁶⁶

Students were at the University during a stage of their lives when they attempted to become "men of the world." Thus, as Philip Greven describes, while their spending practices and gambling habits make them seem "undisciplined, too free in their behavior, spoiled in their clothes and diet, vain, arrogant, and unchecked," the genteel-bred young men in Tuscaloosa—

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Craig Thompson Friend and Lori Glover, *ibid.*, 37.

³⁶⁶ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South*, *ibid.*, 14.

and across the South—were not reckless with money just because it was available. They were testing the fiscal grounds of masculine gentility and honor.³⁶⁷ It was a behavior that Alva Woods found unnerving. In numerous speeches, he pleaded with the students to maintain a Christian mission, to uplift their character, serve their neighbors through civic duty, and to rescue the nation as it faltered from the goals of the faithful fathers. As Greven shares, “Evangelicals believed that a truly gracious Christian was a person who was self-denying, will-less, subject and submissive, humble and meek, chaste and pure;” however, these attributes were viewed by the genteel as feminine, and as such were shunned by the youth.³⁶⁸ As Wyatt-Brown and others note, students had to spend to keep up their appearance, to perpetuate their reputations, and make their sociable claims to an adult world.

The citizens of Tuscaloosa thus had a hand in the demeanor of the students; “they are called upon and required, from their very position, to extend a helping hand, in enforcing obedience to the laws of the University...they have it in their power, in all controversies between the Faculty and the Students, to reduce the latter to order, and to enforce discipline.”³⁶⁹ The Committee suggested, “Let them withhold from their sons the means of contracting extravagant and vicious habits—let them impress on their minds, when they come to College, that they are to enter upon a course of difficult and laborious study.”³⁷⁰ Citizens should also urge students to respect the faculty, to dismiss rumors sent out by “evil-disposed persons,” and “above all, let them always be on the side of the University.”³⁷¹

Protest!

³⁶⁷ Philip Greven, *ibid.*, 124-125.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 269.

³⁶⁹ *Report of the Committee of Investigation*, *ibid.*, 12.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

The final point of emphasis for the Committee—that of investigating the president—was never fully carried out because during the course of the investigation Woods announced that he would step down in favor of Basil Manly. The Committee’s *Report* notes that with Woods’ resignation, the public petition was withdrawn; therefore the group was kept “from a disagreeable and unpleasant duty.”³⁷² And with the Committee placing the blame for the riots with the students while defending the faculty’s actions, Woods was spared scrutiny. The Committee used the faculty’s April 12th circular letter to show that University law had been applied and that they “have discharged their arduous and complicated duties, with unremitting zeal and industry, and in a manner altogether satisfactory to the Committee.”³⁷³

Despite the white-washing of the events, three Committee members signed a formal protest to the *Report*. They were upset by the Committee’s claim that “enquires had been extended to every quarter” to determine the cause of the riots. The protest berated the Committee, saying those in the majority “flattered themselves, that they had detected the true causes of the decline of the University.”³⁷⁴ They also argued against the *Report’s* reference to the 1834 rebellion and Professor Wallis’ dismissal from the University. The Committee used Wallis’s role in the earlier rebellion as a cause for the public’s poisoned view of the school. The protest challenged the Committee’s unfair use of the 1834 investigation and noted “one of the most prominent causes of the decline of the University might be found in the conduct of the President.”³⁷⁵ Overall, “in the opinion of the minority, after the citizens had withdrawn said memorial [their petition], in the spirit of compromise, all true causes of the decline of the

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 21. The protest was signed by Tho. Crawford, John L. Hunter, and James E. Saunders.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

University could not have been ascertained...therefore, the prosecution of the enquiry, after leaving this *fruitful field of investigation*, could not promise success.”³⁷⁶

These men were clearly upset that a full investigation into both Alva Woods’ methods of teaching and ideas on discipline had undermined. A bargain seems to have been struck. In a June letter to Harrison, Tutwiler shares “I believe I mentioned to you in a former letter that a paper signed by a number of the citizens had been sent to the President, requesting him to resign. He has answered it & raised the old cry of persecution. The current of public opinion has set itself against him so strongly that I hardly think he will be able to resist it. As for myself I will be governed by circumstances.”³⁷⁷ Woods for some time had been trying to affect a Baptist control over the University. In 1834 he was in correspondence with T. J. Conant about possibly taking over for Tutwiler, in 1835 he writes Reverend C. S. McPherson—a fellow “brother” from Columbian College—about a position in Tuscaloosa, and in 1837 in a letter to James Hall of Paris College he boasted of getting several Baptists elected to the board of trustees as well as selecting two principles and one teacher from the denomination for the Alabama Female Athenaeum. Woods seemed to be recruiting these men in order to stock the faculty and board of trustees with allies; with their support he hoped to impose a hard-line, northern and Baptist-based pedagogy at Alabama. However, it was a plan that could not be fulfilled.³⁷⁸

Frustrated and defeated, Tutwiler explained that prior to the summer meeting of the trustees, the faculty, including Woods, tendered their resignations. However, shortly thereafter, Woods sent a second note to the trustees explaining that he did intend his resignation to be

³⁷⁶ Ibid. The italics were a part of the printed protest’s text.

³⁷⁷ Henry Tutwiler to Gessner Harrison, June 14, 1837. Papers of Gessner Harrison, Special Collections, University of Virginia.

³⁷⁸ Alva Woods to T. J. Conant, October 9, 1834, Alva Woods Family Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, Rhode Island. Alva Woods to C. S. McPherson, January 1835, Alva Woods Family Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, Rhode Island. Alva Woods to James Hall, August 12, 1837, Alva Woods Family Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, Rhode Island.

immediate. Rather, he hoped to stay until his successor could be installed. Tutwiler told Harrison that

the majority of the present Board are decidedly friendly to him, which is not surprising when it is known that by his electioneering & low intrigue he has generally succeeded in having members of his own church elected & many of them, very ignorant men—when the board first met, a petition of the citizens was laid before them in which they had requested Dr. Woods to resign & some comments made by a committee of citizens—One of the Pres friends moved that a Committee should be appointed to investigate the whole matter—this was done—& I have never in my life seen as much management & intrigue as was practiced on that occasion. When it was found that the citizens were not disposed to back out, but were prepared to prove an utter destitution of moral principles in the Pres, a compromise was proposed. They were told if they would withdraw their petition, Dr. Woods' letter should be accepted as a resignation & that he would leave the Univ. With this understanding the petition was withdrawn, & the next step of the Board was to elect a Pres who was to enter upon his office at the beginning of the next year.”³⁷⁹

Despite the compromise, Tutwiler tells Harrison (in the June letter) he would like to stay at the University, especially if some rumored changes were to go into effect; there was talk that the presidency would be abolished and a governing structure on par with Virginia's would be adopted.

Fallout

By summer, the University was a very confused place. The faculty, trustees, legislature, and the citizenry were consumed with important questions, including: would the University adopt the Virginia plan of governance, was Woods' resignation immediate or would he leave at the end of the term, and, would the suspended students be allowed to return early? Each of these questions would be addressed by the board of trustees at their July meeting. Nonetheless, with only about 40 students on a campus where the president was powerless and the faculty divided, recovery seemed impossible. The Professor of Modern Languages, Sauveur Bonfils, who had been a target of student aggression, addressed a letter to Governor Clay that was subsequently

³⁷⁹ Henry Tutwiler to Gessner Harrison, August 25, 1837, Papers of Gessner Harrison, Special Collections, University of Virginia.

printed in the *Flag of the Union*; this letter of resignation captures the crisis shadowing the University. He wrote:

The question with the board will naturally be on the causes of this moral derangements, and on the necessity of a prompt remedy of the causes. Yout [-sic] perceive, Sir, to lay down this question is to put into motion the Trustees; it is to make them examine the evils which surround the University every where; it is to cause them to trace to its origin the studied and determined opposition of the students. It is, sir, by thus justly and impartially examining, the condition of the institution in all its moral aspects, and intellectual results, from the time it went into operation to the present, that the Trustees will be able to render to every man his due, to secure the public confidence, and restore that happy harmony so necessary for the final and lasting success of the State University. I am aware, Sir, some sacrifices are required, in order to accomplish this most desirable result; the Trustees mus [-sic] be left free in their action and deliberation; they must not be retarded by any consideration, either political, religious, or personal. Impressed with these views, I feel constrained, so far as depends upon myself, as a man of honor to relieve the Trustees from any embarrassment by which their freedom of action might be impaired, and I have consequently decided to withdraw from the University at the close of the present term, on the 21st of July next.³⁸⁰

One week later, in mid-August, Bowdon wrote to Miller informing his old friend that the faculty had met and decided to resign en masse with the exception of Professors Bonfils and Brumby. Brumby, like Bonfils, would remain until his successor was elected and on campus. Bowdon also told that Basil Manly had been elected to replace Woods as soon as he could remove from Charleston to Tuscaloosa.³⁸¹ Manly wrote to Woods confident that the trustees' unanimous decision to name him president was a signal from Heaven that he has important work to do in Alabama—he would be fulfilling God's will. He expressed interest in Woods' council and experience, and his choice of textbooks. Familiar with the University's troubles he told Woods he planned to examine the mode of administration in Northern schools during the fall to see how best to proceed once at Alabama. Manly was also concerned with his quarters in Tuscaloosa—or

³⁸⁰ *Flag of the Union*, Tuscaloosa, August 2, 1837.

³⁸¹ F. W. Bowdon to Washington D. Miller, August 10, 1837, Texas State Archives. Bowdon's information came from an "Acklen," which is probably a alternate spelling for board of trustee member William Acklin. According to Tutiwler's August 25th letter to Harrison the trustees meetings concluded on July 24.

rather the one planned for him—and if it would contain rooms for servants. The President’s Mansion would be completed in 1841 and he would be the first president to occupy the home. Nonetheless, before formally taking over on January 1, 1838, he wanted to spend several weeks talking with Woods specifically about the appointment of the new faculty. He has some people in mind but did not want to appear uppity to the trustees.³⁸²

Basil Manly

Manly’s election was a relatively easy affair; the process seemed to be absent of any political wrangling or intrigue. Recruiting the Baptist minister had, surprisingly, begun earlier than the presupposed 1837 date. In December 1835, Woods began—unbeknownst to trustees or the faculty—to search for his replacement, and he found Basil Manly, a one-time candidate for the presidency of South Carolina College. With his wife’s family moving to Alabama, Manly was open to doing God’s work in the new state. Francis Wayland seems to have made a profound influence on Manly in considering the Alabama position. By autumn, Manly was gathering letters of recommendation—including one from Wayland—in support of his candidacy. He was certain that Wayland’s support would seal the appointment. Woods considered Manly as both his Christian brother as his natural replacement in Tuscaloosa. Manly declared in November 1836, “If I am fairly elected, I will accept,” and in July 1837 the trustees made it official, he would replace Woods at the end of the calendar year.³⁸³ He had his work cut out for him. Writing to Wayland, he shared that the University was in “the most miserable state of disorganization that you can conceive.”³⁸⁴ He was able to forgive “Brother Woods,” given his struggles with the

³⁸² Basil Manly to Alva Woods, July 31, 1837, Alva Woods Family Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, Rhode Island.

³⁸³ Basil Manly to Alva Woods, November 29, 1836, Alva Woods Family Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, Rhode Island. See also letters from Manly to Woods dated December 1835, May 10, 1836, October 31, 1836, and November 29, 1836. Each of these letters is housed in the Rhode Island Historical Society.

³⁸⁴ James A. Fuller, *Chaplin to the Confederacy: Basil Manly and Baptist Life in the Old South* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2000), 160.

faculty, but confessed “no set of men under Heaven can take the college and succeed on the plan they were pursuing.”³⁸⁵

Due to their denominational and intellectual affiliations, Manly’s curricular and pedagogical design for the University differed little from Woods’, a fact that is seen in his *Inaugural Address*, a fusion of Baconian principles and progressive Christian ideals. Through this intellectual marriage, a religious society could embrace scientific study. Knowledge of the physical world reinforced submission to God’s will. Moreover, by elevating the thoughts and minds of the people, the American republic would be preserved and moral order promoted. Agreeing with Woods’ philosophy, he emphasized the importance of pious or devout scholars leading the University’s curriculum. Yet he also embraced the ideals of southern honor, and most famously, the region’s commitment to slavery, ideals Woods did not share.³⁸⁶

Finding piety a complement of the ideals of genteel social graces, masculinity, and southern honor, Manly’s thoughts on the “refinement of feeling, delicacy of sentiments, tender and soothing sensibilities, decencies of deportment, proprieties of outward habit, and civilities of intercourse and address” were perfected through the study of the classics, like Tutwiler’s.³⁸⁷ He understood that in the Deep South, cultivating refined Christian leaders required a moderate disciplinary regimen. He experimented with an honor code, modeled on the University of Virginia’s system of self-government. The trial made him quite popular with students and faculty, but it ultimately failed as waves of violence erupted throughout his tenure. Overall, Manly was described as “upright and honest, faithful and laborious. He was a man of rare

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 161.

³⁸⁶ Arthur Pendleton Bagby, *Address of his Excellency Governor Bagby: When Inducting into Office the President of the University of Alabama. Together with the Address of the President, Rev. Basil Manly, D.D., Delivered in the Rotunda on Commencement Day, December 6, 1837* (Tuscaloosa: Ferguson & Eaton Printers, 1838).

³⁸⁷ Fuller, *ibid.*, 158. A full examination of Tutwiler’s plan can be seen in the curriculum he designed for his Green Springs School.

practical wisdom, entering heartily into sympathy with the young men intrusted to his guidance and counsel.”³⁸⁸ Despite making empathetic overtures towards the students, he kept a keen, evangelical gaze on his charges. Chapel attendance remained compulsory and professors continued to inspect and monitor dormitories. Manly struggled with many of the same problems Woods had faced. The University’s records are riddled with tales of knife fights, riots, drunkenness, insubordination, and destruction of school property. In a prime example, Moses, a University-owned slave, was so severely beaten he nearly died—all for unmasking the student who stole one of Manly’s turkeys. The boy was never punished for the attack. In other instances of misdeeds, firecrackers were tied to a dog, a professor’s horse had its tail shaved, and thirty-four students were suspended for trashing a laboratory and destroying a Bible.³⁸⁹ Manly’s ability to inject southern mores into his disciplinary design allowed him to exercise a greater level of control of campus than Woods. He relied on Woods’ advice and restricted enrollment to the more academically prepared. He also suspended or expelled students who caused trouble—albeit with a degree of political caution.

Like Woods, Manly pleaded with parents to begin the discipline of children early, for the home to be an example of right behavior. He begged students to take heed and embrace the “dignity and responsibility of [their] station.”³⁹⁰ Despite those appeals, neither the prevalence of religion on campus nor the manipulation of the code of honor tamed the students on Marr’s field. Martial order was required, and it was instituted under President Landon Garland, the University’s third president, who borrowed heavily from both West Point and Virginia Military Institute. Sellers reports that the change came quickly:

³⁸⁸ Sellers, *History*, *ibid.*, 67. Here Sellers is quoting from Dr. James P. Boyce’s “Funeral Address” delivered upon the passing of Basil Manly.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 197-257.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 160.

Students who flouted the mild regulations of the old regime to prove their spirit and independence...became “brass button conscious,” and adopted, as soldiers, all the restraints that were unbearable before. They developed habits of order, punctuality, obedience to authority, and personal neatness. The new order was conducive to study and, study to higher standards of attainment.³⁹¹

Now honor was not juxtaposed discipline; it was part of it; discipline became a means to achieving the end result of honor.

Tutwiler's fate

The news of the faculty resignations traveled quickly. Harrison wrote to Tutwiler, “I am anxious to know from yourself whether as is rumored the whole faculty of Alab Univ have resigned, and if so under what circumstances. Is there any prospect of the immediate reorganization of the school and do you mean again to commit yourself with the institution?”³⁹²

Harrison's letter was one question after another; he was deeply interested in the welfare of Tutwiler and was anxious to know if his friend would attempt to hold his position at the University or if he would turn to what Harrison dubbed his “profession,” meaning law. The response came two weeks later in a letter dated August 12: “You will have probably heard before you receive this that my connection with the Institution is dissolved or rather will be on the 1st of October. Since the proceedings of the last meeting of the Board of Trustees I have scarcely any hope that the University will ever do any good, and if I could make you understood the situation of affairs here, you would, I know, congratulate me on my escape.”³⁹³

Tutwiler, disgusted with the trustees and Woods, had finally decided leave the University but not before the he was approached by Governor Clay, who pleaded with him to stay. Even so

³⁹¹ Ibid., 262.

³⁹² Gessner Harrison to Henry Tutwiler, August 11, 1837, Papers of Gessner Harrison, Special Collections, University of Virginia.

³⁹³ Henry Tutwiler to Gessner Harrison, August 25, 1837, Papers of Gessner Harrison, Special Collections, University of Virginia.

he told Harrison “I could not consent to remain even until the end of the year with the Pres. I am almost certain that there will not be 20 students here & these will be mostly boys. The object of a majority of the board was to save the President & put the whole faculty on common ground.”³⁹⁴ He sent his friend a copy of the Investigative Committee’s report as well as a copy of the protest signed by Committee members. He wanted Harrison to see the particulars of the situation, the intrigue and manipulation. He was proud to share that while the *Report* gave no satisfaction, he had come to realize that the public knew too much “to be too hoodwinked in this way. The protest which is appended to the report & signed by those of most intelligent members of the Board completely demolishes it. Gov Clay approved of the protest & was disposed to have made it even stronger but did not sign it because he said it was not customary for the Presiding officer to sign a Protest.”³⁹⁵

Clay was not alone in trying to woo Tutwiler back to the University. He told Harrison

I was requested a few days since by a gentleman in Tuscaloosa to inform him whether I wd accept the Chair of Mathematics &c...in the U of Ala. He thinks there would be no doubt of my election—but I have no wish to go back to that Institution. In the first place I should be unwilling to put myself again in the hands of such men as the present board of trustees & secondly, I should have no security that my colleagues could be gentlemen. I consider the U of Ala therefore out of the question.³⁹⁶

Tutwiler had taken a position at Marion’s Manuel Labor Institute of South Alabama and he remained at the Perry County school until 1840 when he removed to north Alabama and accepted a position at LaGrange College. In 1847 he moved to a section in Green (now Hale) County near Havana that possessed hotels near springs reported to produce medicinal waters. He purchased the land and buildings and established Green Springs School for boys. The school was

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Henry Tutwiler to Gessner Harrison, November 15, 1837, Papers of Gessner Harrison, Special Collections, University of Virginia.

very popular, drawing students from across the South. His reputation even brought him to the attention of President Franklin Pierce who appointed him to the Board of Visitors at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Impressively, he was twice—in 1868 and 1874—offered the presidency of The University of Alabama, but he declined—just as he did when offered the position of state superintendant of education. Tutwiler remained at the head of the Havana school until he passed away in 1884.³⁹⁷

Back to Brown

The state senate noted in a reflective report the abysmal situation: “Abandoned by all its officers, brought into extensive discredit by a series of misfortunes unprecedented in the history of literary institutions here or elsewhere, and regarded by most as an institution on which some unaccountable fatality rested, the prospect presented to those who attempted its resuscitation was, to say the least, unpromising and doubtful.”³⁹⁸ In awaiting Manly’s arrival, Woods—who had bargained to remain in Tuscaloosa after Tutwiler and others resigned—along with Professors Brumby and Bonfils, Mr. Smith of the Preparatory Department, and tutor John L. Gay held daily recitations with the remaining students. It seems that the autumn months at the University were quiet, and this gave Woods the time to consider his options, opportunities that had arisen as early as February 1837. In the early Spring, he had asked an old friend, Ira Chase, about a position at Andover-Newton Theological Seminary; however, there were no positions available. From summer and into October, Paris College (outside Nashville), a Baptist college in Franklin, Indiana, and Indiana University offered him their presidencies. However, by winter he had declined their offers and decided to return to New England. He was able to be selective due to

³⁹⁷ Thomas Chalmers McCorvey, *ibid.*

³⁹⁸ *Corolla, 1895* (Cleveland: Cleveland Publishing Company, 1895), 70. The *Corolla* is The University of Alabama’s yearbook. Here the editor is quoting from the report on education issued by the Alabama state senate in 1843.

his liberal salary and wise investments, and while contemplating his job offers, he returned to his wife Almira and son Marshall and even lived with his parents for a while before settling into a house near Brown University.

Once back in New England, he hoped to purge Marshall of the vices of Southern society acquired while in Tuscaloosa. He also sought to reestablish academic relationships and to reenter the intellectual and religious community he had been a part of twenty years earlier. He was eventually named a trustee and later a member of the Board of Fellows at Brown. In addition to these duties, he worked with the less fortunate at the Rhode Island State Prison teaching, preaching, and holding weekly Bible study sessions for inmates. He championed literacy and helped build a library stocked with books primarily concerned with moral issues. Furthermore, he provided a Sunday school at the Dexter Asylum and helped with their annual Christmas party. Each of these endeavors fit well with a man who was both dedicated to disinterested benevolence and who hoped to use his philanthropy for good works. Alva Woods continued working with and through Brown's Baptist community until—at age 93—he passed away in 1887.³⁹⁹

Reflections

The rhetorical question remains of how to interpret and judge Alva Woods' life and works. Sellers writes that he was a Yankee schooled “in the shadows of New England Puritans” and never gained the upper-hand with his wards in Tuscaloosa. While this characterization unveils the social distance between Woods and the students, it cannot be taken as an indictment of Woods' unfamiliarity with the passions of youth. He understood the grammar of Southern society as well as the students' motivations. They arrived on Marr's field as mere boys, but they attempted actions and behaviors they considered adult. Wyatt-Brown illustrates their attitude

³⁹⁹ See Ira Chase to Alva Woods, February 1837; James Hall to Alva Woods, August 12, 1837; James Hall to Alva Woods, September 11, 1837; Jessie Holman to Alva Woods, October 1837; and W. C. Foster to Alva Woods, June 22, 1838. These letters are all housed in the Alva Woods Family Papers at the Rhode Island Historical Society.

with the credo “A man ought to fear God and mind his business. He should be respectful and courteous to all women; he should love his friends and hate his enemies...eat when...hungry, drink when...thirsty, dance when...merry...and knock down any man who questioned his right to these privileges.”⁴⁰⁰ Armed with such a mind-set, southern culture demanded students to face life outside the classroom—where the real world existed and where, as Horowitz notes, the real lessons were taught. The lads sought excitement, sexual experimentation, gaming, drinking, and other luxuries and vices of adult life. Yet as they experimented, they were trapped by their own childish approaches and intentions. The result was often comedic and horrific. And this is no surprise as we understand that the students hailed from homes of the genteel where free-will, self-expression, and boldness, were applauded. For these students—as Greven notes—“Self-love was not a sin, nor self-gratification a vice.”⁴⁰¹ Woods understood the students, but his shortcomings at Alabama stemmed from his premise that in no way could honor substitute piety as the prime principal of life. Woods’ rearing and intellectual experiences had helped him come to the revelation that a compromise on that principal was academically wrong, unethical, immoral, and ungodly—it was the path to sin and the condemnation of the soul.

The South’s political, social, and cultural attachments to worldly power and wealth was anathema to Woods. For the pious Baptist, the region’s emphasis on these attributes perverted God’s design and poisoned the Christian spirit of humanitarianism. As Greven explains, evangelicals such as Woods were prepared from earliest childhood to deny their own passions, to “subdue the self, and obey the word and will of God.”⁴⁰² However, as this study has shown, “The inability of people [i.e. the genteel students] to relinquish their own wills and to give up their

⁴⁰⁰ Wyatt-Brown, *ibid.*, 78. Here Wyatt-Brown is quoting the Mississippian writer Reuben Davis who wrote on the themes of nineteenth century Southern culture.

⁴⁰¹ Greven, *ibid.*, 317.

⁴⁰² Greven, *ibid.*, 99.

personal will to the will of God sometimes caused extraordinary anguish and intense despair”⁴⁰³

Therefore, to exact the necessary changes, Woods brought a hard-line pedagogy and instituted an austere disciplinary regimen at the University. It was part of his design to engineer a new Christian society. He sought to usher in the reforms and spur the revival that was essential for the democratization of Christianity and the success of the American Republic.

Woods constructed an environment on campus that demanded conformity and submission. Students most certainly felt the constant, cold gaze of the president. And as his philosophy ran counter to the home-life of the plantation bred and genteel reared students, they rebelled. Constantly confronted and challenged by the mores of southern society, manifested in the students’ actions, Woods refused to meet them on their terms. He would not yield. He stood by the belief that total submission to God’s will was the requisite for a proper Christian society’s foundation, not a chivalric joust for gentlemanly honor. Indeed, it seems he had more success in his works with Rhode Island criminals than with the southern youth. Conclusively, his time in Tuscaloosa should not be seen as the failure of one man, but a great clash of two irreconcilable cultures. While student violence was pervasive across many campuses of American colleges and universities throughout the antebellum era, in the South the game was much more dangerous. The youth were not just acting out. They were not just “boys being boys;” they were in a struggle to achieve manliness, mastery, reputation, and honor. Their rearing had taught them from the cradle to let nothing or no-one stand in opposition to those goals. Student behavior was rooted in a logic that proved quite difficult to harness, and Woods’ mission to break the will of the lads in Tuscaloosa and to Christianize the Alabama frontier ultimately failed. Viewed as a clash of cultures, the first six years of The University of Alabama saw southern honor and northern piety

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 94.

battle for something deeper than principle, yet in this struggle Alva Woods lost his battle for the souls of the students at Alabama.

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