

# Athens Historian

Volume 15

2015



## **In This Issue:**

*The Lucy Cobb Institute for Girls and the Carl Vinson Institute of Government - A Grand Convergence*

*The Founders Memorial Garden and the Women Who Loved It*

ATHENS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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# Athens Historian

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## About the author:

Melvin B. Hill, Jr., is the Robert G. Stephens, Jr., Senior Fellow in Law and Government Emeritus in the Carl Vinson Institute of Government and the Institute of Higher Education of the University of Georgia. He served as the Director of the Carl Vinson Institute from 1983 to 1996 and was a faculty member in the Institute of Higher Education from 1996 to 2009, during which time he also served as the editor of the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*. During his tenure as Director, Mr. Hill was responsible for overseeing the renovation of the historic Lucy Cobb Institute as the new central administrative home of the Carl Vinson Institute. This was a fortuitous turn of events in his life, because it gave him the chance to be directly involved in a significant historic preservation project, after having co-authored the Georgia Historic Preservation Act and co-teaching a historic preservation law course with Professor James Reap in the College of Environment and Design for over fifteen years. Mr. Hill holds a B. A. degree from Bucknell University and a Master of Public Administration and a Juris Doctor degree from Cornell University. He is a member of the State Bar of Georgia, as well as the Constitutional Law, School and College Law, and Local Government Law Sections of the State Bar. He can be reached at mbhill@uga.edu.

## Editor's Note:

Mel Hill's article on the Lucy Cobb Institute and the Carl Vinson Institute of Government is written from his personal experience as a faculty member and director of the Vinson Institute. He sets up the history of the Lucy Cobb Institute, provides information on the Carl Vinson Institute and how it was decided to house it on this historic campus and details the efforts to raise funds and rehabilitate the principle buildings. The narrative gets more informal as Mel shares his personal experiences during this transformative period. This is what is most original about the article and should be most interesting to the readers, as it was to the editors.

## The Lucy Cobb Institute for Girls and the Carl Vinson Institute of Government – A Grand Convergence

### Prologue

Peter W. Martin, the Jane M. G. Foster Professor of Law and former dean of the Cornell Law School, provided the narrative for a 2012 video prepared for entering law students entitled "Messages from Some Cornell Law School Ghosts." If Professor Martin lived in Athens, Georgia, he might be persuaded to narrate this story about how the historic Lucy Cobb Institute for Girls became the central administrative home of the Carl Vinson Institute of Government of the University of Georgia.

If the ghost of former United States Congressman Carl Vinson wandered into the home offices of the Carl Vinson Institute of Government of the University of Georgia at 201 North Milledge Avenue in Athens, Georgia (near fraternity and sorority row, just behind the Varsity Restaurant) and ran into the ghost of Lucy Cobb, the eldest daughter of Thomas Reade Roots (T. R. R.) Cobb, who died of scarlet fever in 1858 at the age of 13, the following exchange might ensue:

"Well, hello, young lady. What are you doing here?"

"This is my daddy's place, sir. In fact, my portrait is hanging in the parlor. If you don't mind my asking, what are you doing here?"

"Now that's a good question. I'm not really sure myself. But I noticed that my name was at the entrance to this complex and my own portrait is hanging in the front room. It is a mystery to me. Let me see what I can find out, and I'll get back to you."

"I'd appreciate that, sir. Have a good day."

## The Lucy Cobb Institute for Girls<sup>1</sup>

The following note appeared in the "Local Matters" section of the January 13, 1859, issue of *The Southern Watchman*: "Lucy Cobb Institute"

It gives us pleasure to announce that this female institution opened on Monday morning with one hundred pupils, and a prospect of many more. We learn from the Trustees that it opens under more favorable prospects than they anticipated, and gives every assurance of success. They have labored to make it a first-class institution, and deserve success.<sup>2</sup>

The opening of the Lucy Cobb Institute marked the culmination of a long struggle to establish a secondary school for girls in Athens, Georgia, in an era when education for young women seldom continued past primary school. The *Southern Banner* brought attention to the need for such an institution through a letter in the August 24, 1854, issue. The letter, signed only "A Mother," charged that the primary-school education available to local girls was not sufficient. "We are conscious that our daughters merely skim the surface of all their studies without deriving solid information from any...Shame upon classic Athens! Shame upon the seat of science and literature! Shame upon the wealth and erudition of our citizens!"<sup>3</sup> The level of education that the letter called for was available to young ladies in the North, and should Athens fail to act by providing this service to its own girls, the Mother cautioned, parents would have no choice but to send their daughters away where they were at risk of "[returning] home with minds half prejudiced against their native State." Providing education to young ladies here in Athens, the letter urged, would produce women "more capable and better fitted...for filling their

allotted stations in society."<sup>4</sup> This proposed institute became an iconic place in Athens for young women, and it now has a history that stretches from its antebellum origins to the present day. The Institute would go on to bear the names of the prestigious Cobb family and noted Georgia Congressman Carl Vinson. Within these famous eras of the Institute's history are other iconic figures in the local history of Athens that are still admired in the city today, and they had an important part in bringing the Institute to its present fame.

The clarion call for a girls' school in Athens was a timely issue for T. R. R. Cobb, whose eldest daughter Lucy was about to complete her studies at a local primary school. Cobb was a prominent Athenian and, according to E. Merton Coulter, "one of the ablest men in the state's history."<sup>5</sup> Born in Jefferson County, Georgia, in 1823, he graduated from the University of Georgia in 1841, and became a well-respected constitutional lawyer. He worked with Joseph Henry Lumpkin to establish the School of Law at the University of Georgia, but he was perhaps best known for his participation in the establishment of the Confederate States of America during the Civil War. Cobb served as a Confederate Congressman and was the principal author of the Confederate Constitution.<sup>6</sup> Though the Confederate cause was ultimately unsuccessful, Cobb died fighting for it. He was mortally wounded during the Battle of Fredericksburg, Virginia in 1862, and died at the age of 39.

With the help of fellow Athenians, Cobb raised the \$25,000 that the letter had proposed toward the opening of a school for young ladies. It was only after meeting this initial funding goal that the author of the letter identified herself as Mrs. Williams Rutherford, Cobb's sister, and the wife of a mathematics professor at the University of Georgia. Like Lucy Cobb, the Rutherford's daughter Sarah Elizabeth, or "Sissie" to friends and family, was about to graduate from a primary school with no local options for furthering her education.<sup>7</sup>

A joint stock company formed in 1855 due to Cobb's efforts, for the purpose of constructing and operating a female high school. Over 200 shares of stock sold at \$100 each, and stockholders began

the process of electing a five-member self-perpetuating Board of Trustees. The Board chose T.R.R. Cobb as its first secretary, and the incorporating act that he wrote for the school passed in 1858. T.R.R. Cobb personally purchased the two-block parcel on which the school would be built from the University of Georgia for \$800. The school's grounds initially consisted of the block on North Milledge Avenue where the Institute now sits, as well as the block behind it, which would be retained for many years and later sold to raise money for repairs to the school.

Tragically, neither of the two girls whose lack of educational opportunities inspired the formation of the Lucy Cobb Institute would ever get to enroll. Lucy Cobb died of scarlet fever in 1858 as the school's main building was under construction, and her cousin Sissie Rutherford passed away the same year as the result of a fall. After considering names such as Athens Female College and Athens Seminary for Young Ladies, the Board of Trustees decided to honor Lucy Cobb, who had been such a significant motivator for the school's creation, by naming it in her memory. When the Board first sought Cobb's permission to do this he said no, but, on further reflection, he embraced the idea. In a letter to Dr. H. R. J. Long, one of the Trustees, he shared these poignant thoughts:

"The suggestion to connect my dear child's name with that of the school when made to me was perfectly new to my thoughts. It had been talked of before it was mentioned to me. While it surprised me I must confess it gratified me. You do not know – my Friend – no man that had not drunk the cup can know – the feelings of my heart of the memory of that child. To know that my friends and associates were willing to administer this cordial to my bleeding wound was extremely gratifying. At the same time I felt as if thereby some memory of her virtues might be perpetuated in the community even when my name was forgotten. I had often told her that I intended her to perfect her education by teaching in this school and the obedient young heart was already looking to it as a field of future

labor. I mention these facts to you only as an excuse for the feeling which you may find manifested in this note."<sup>8</sup>

Although initial plans called for completion of construction in 1858, the year that is still displayed above the school's entrance, the main building's construction was not finalized until shortly before the first day of classes in January 1859. The school's finishing touches and its early years of operation especially involved T.R.R. Cobb's influence. He personally selected mahogany desks for the school and the furniture for its halls and parlors. His wife gave up her vacation the year of construction, instead using the money to purchase silverware for the school's dining room. Cobb visited often during the early years of the school's operation. After Cobb's death his wife would continue to send a cake to the Institute for all the girls in attendance each year, and books for the library to commemorate her husband's birthday, April 10th.

Dozens of dedicated faculty members contributed to the Lucy Cobb Institute's esteem through their hard work, but the school's early years saw the leadership of several principals in quick succession. The school's first principal, Dr. R.M. Wright, had been educated in the North and left after only one school year because of the pro-secession feelings of most Lucy Cobb patrons. The school's next leader, Washington Muller, left after five years, finding both his personal finances and those of the school in dire straits due to the hard times at the end of the Civil War. It wasn't until 1870, when Mrs. E.A. Wright was appointed to the role of principal, that any one person held the position for longer than five years.

The principal best known for her effect on the school, however, was Mildred Rutherford, who was more commonly known as "Miss Millie." Miss Millie was a graduate of Lucy Cobb's class of 1868, and had been teaching history in Atlanta when the Board of Trustees approached her with the position of principal.<sup>9</sup> She insisted that the Institute pay off its debts, and that the trustees have the main building's interior repaired and repainted, as conditions of her acceptance. To accomplish this, the city block behind the school, which had been owned by the Institute since T.R.R. Cobb initially

purchased the land in the 1850s, was sold.

When Miss Millie became principal of the Lucy Cobb Institute in 1880, there were eight teachers, six boarding students, and twenty day students. Though the school's financial situation would remain difficult for several years, Miss Millie steadily increased enrollment. The number of boarding students rose to thirty in 1880, and to sixty-two in 1882. By 1883 there were eighty-two boarders and over two hundred local students. Miss Millie also began working to increase the number and quality of faculty members immediately. By 1889 there were fifteen teachers, including several part-time lecturers who were professors at the University of Georgia. Throughout her time at the Institute Miss Millie would strive to build a close relationship between the Lucy Cobb Institute and Athenians who had contributed to the academic nature of the town.

A fundraising campaign began in the early 1880s for the construction of a chapel for commencements and formal gatherings. During a Friday composition period, then-principal Miss Millie had each student write a personal appeal for funds to a prominent philanthropist. One young Athenian girl, Nellie Stovall, chose to write to George I. Seney, a New Yorker who was known to be a contributor to Emory and Wesleyan Universities. By stroke of luck, Reverend T.S. Burke, of Macon, was in Seney's office when the letter arrived. Reverend Burke knew about the Lucy Cobb Institute and Nellie Stovall, and spoke highly of them both. Mr. Seney wrote a check for \$10,000 to the school with the condition that another \$4,000 be raised in Athens. This goal was easily met, and well-known Athens architect W.W. Thomas designed the chapel, which would hold a crowd of 700 people. The Seney-Stovall Chapel was dedicated in 1885 and named for the two people responsible for its existence.

Miss Millie favored high expectations of decorum over written rules and regulations. She sought to teach the girls at the Institute to behave as good Southern ladies should. The students learned to use a low tone of voice, and their accents became refined in elocution classes. A column titled "Shoulders" monitored Good

posture in a monthly progress report. Miss Millie believed in the "Lost Cause" interpretation of Southern history. Over the span of her career she wrote twenty-nine books and pamphlets, and was an active member of organizations such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy in addition to the prominent role she played at the Lucy Cobb Institute. Miss Millie stepped down from her role as principal in 1895, but remained at Lucy Cobb as a teacher. Her sister, Mrs. Mary Ann Lipscomb, succeeded her, and made great strides in expanding the school's elementary-level classes.

As was the case before Miss Millie's arrival at the school, several principals served relatively brief tenures after her departure. After Mrs. Lipscomb's resignation, co-principals Miss Anne Wallis Brumby and Miss Susan Golding Gerdine served from 1908 to 1911, making several notable changes to the school's curriculum, as well as additions to the buildings and grounds. During their short tenure Miss Brumby and Miss Gerdine removed the "elective class" option which had allowed students to graduate without taking classes in math or Latin. They additionally separated two categories of girls who would receive Certificates of Proficiency or no degree at all upon completing their studies. By modifying the curriculum in this way, girls with a full degree from the Lucy Cobb Institute could enter the junior class at the University of Georgia without having to take any entrance exams, after the University began admitting women in 1918.

Miss Millie would resume her role as principal briefly several times before the school's final closure, from 1907 to 1908, from 1917 to 1922, and from 1925 until 1926. The first time, during the Golden Jubilee commemorating the school's fiftieth year, was for reason of celebration. Miss Millie's second and third returns to leadership of the Institute, however, were during continued financial crises faced by the school. The Board of Trustees began discussing acquisition by the University of Georgia in the face of heavy debt as early as 1917, but Miss Millie vehemently opposed any such proposal. She added her own funds to money used to make repairs to the school when soliciting donations from alumnae was not enough.

In 1925, when Miss Millie once more assumed the role

of principal, the Board of Education considered plans in which they would run the school in conjunction with the City of Athens and the University of Georgia. In all cases, Miss Millie feared that the school would entirely lose autonomy and refused to consider the proposals. Throughout the 1920s, she attempted to raise the required endowment of \$500,000 to have the Institute accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. This accreditation was becoming increasingly necessary for the school's survival, as girls with degrees from unaccredited schools faced difficulty furthering their education or even applying for jobs. Unable to raise the money and facing increasing resistance from the Board, Miss Millie resigned for the last time in 1926.

Though the Elementary School was able to remain open until 1941, the High School and Junior College departments of the Lucy Cobb Institute closed in the spring of 1931 during the height of the Great Depression. Although the main building stayed vacant for barely a year before the University of Georgia leased it for use as dormitory rooms in 1932, it was not well maintained by the University during the early years of its lease. Indeed, by 1936, only five years after classes ceased in the Main Building, the National Parks Service's Historic American Buildings Survey surveyed the building and noted it in only fair condition.<sup>10</sup> The University acquired the property in 1954.

Increased University enrollment in the wake of the Second World War created a high demand for dormitory space, so the University repaired the Lucy Cobb Institute's main building, and it became highly coveted living quarters for junior and senior female University students.<sup>11</sup> As the University continued to expand, purpose-built dorms eliminated the need to use the space for housing, and by the early 1970s the main building became faculty offices. The Lucy Cobb Institute's campus was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places in 1971, at which point the main building's condition was not of immediate concern, but the Seney-Stovall Chapel had fallen into disrepair after being modified for use as offices and then abandoned.<sup>12</sup> Noted University of Georgia history professor B. Phinizy Spalding created the "Friends of Lucy

Cobb," which was a group of alumni and other interested parties, to encourage the renovation and continued usage of the Lucy Cobb Institute. Friends of Lucy Cobb spearheaded a drive to obtain a federal grant to restore the exterior of the Seney-Stovall Chapel, and the group accomplished its goal in the early 1970's. The main building and other exterior buildings in the Lucy Cobb complex sat essentially idle for many years, however, and their condition deteriorated rapidly. The University simply did not know what to do with the property, given the high cost of repair. The complex was literally on the verge of either extinction or distinction.

### **The Carl Vinson Institute of Government**

The Carl Vinson Institute of Government can trace its roots back to the summer of 1927, when it opened its doors to, "provide a forum to study international, national, state, and local affairs and to make recommendations for improved governance."<sup>13</sup> Then called the Institute of Public Affairs, the Institute was a unique organization that combined research, technical assistance, training, and publications. The University of Georgia established the Institute at a time when the University had only 1,500 students and the state population was a modest 2.8 million.

Over the next two decades, Georgia's population grew and so did the needs of its citizens. In 1938, the Institute of Public Affairs took on a larger role as the Institute for the Study of Georgia Problems. Its public service activities ranged from holding forums on constitutional reform to publishing studies on county road administration, forms of government, and voter registration.

In 1943, the University of Georgia created the Bureau of Public Administration, coinciding with the extensive reform of state government by Governor Ellis Arnall and employing the service of political science faculty to teach short courses to local government officials. This unit merged with the Institute for the Study of Georgia Problems in 1953 to become the Institute of Law and Government. Some veterans in the state legislature still refer to this title today.

The Institute conducted the first Biennial Institute for

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Georgia Legislators in 1958; the 28th Biennial Institute for Georgia Legislators was held in December 2014 at the Georgia Center and Conference Hotel. The Biennial Institute remains one of the longest-running educational programs for legislators in the United States.

In 1965, the organization became the Institute of Government when it began reporting to the new Office of the Vice President for Services. The final name change occurred in 1983 when the Institute became the Carl Vinson Institute of Government in honor of Georgian Carl Vinson who served in the U.S. House of Representatives for more than 50 years.

From that modest beginning, the Carl Vinson Institute grew to have a faculty as large as the law school and a constituency that encompasses local, regional, state-wide, national, and even international audiences.

The mission, goals, and work program of the Institute are not handed down from on high, but crafted by each director to define the direction and needs of the organization as they exist at that time. During the 1980s and into the mid-90s, the mission statement was straightforward: "to improve the understanding, policymaking, and administration of government in a democratic society." In carrying out this mission and meeting its goals, the Vinson Institute engages in a comprehensive work program of instruction and continuing education (including training); research, including policy and applied research; technical assistance, or consulting with individual clients; citizen education; publications; and international outreach.

One of the great strengths of American democracy is the multiple access points for citizen participation and involvement. One might call them governmental "power points." Officials elected or appointed to public office arrive with a wide range of knowledge and skills on a variety of topics, but they often lack information about the responsibilities they assume upon taking office. That's where the services of the Institute have been most effective and useful. In fact, recognizing this important role of the Institute, in 1990 the Association County Commissioners of Georgia and the Georgia Municipal Association came together to request a law mandating newly elected county commissioners, mayors, and council members

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to participate in training programs provided by the Institute. This was probably the first – and last! - time in history that a group of local government officials requested an unfunded mandate from the state legislature!

Dr. Delmer D. Dunn served as the Director of the Institute of Government from 1973 to 1982, and one of his goals was to find a new location for the Institute that would allow all of its respective units to merge in one place. The Governmental Training Division was at the Georgia Center for Continuing Education; the Human Service Division was in the Academic Building near the historic campus Chapel; the Governmental Research and Services Division, the Legislative Services Division, and the Director's office were in Terrell Hall. Dr. Dunn thought that it would be preferable if these units consolidated in one place to promote organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Dr. Dunn explored several options for this idea, but he could not identify an appropriate site. After Dr. Dunn returned to full time teaching and research in his home department of Political Science in 1982, the Institute hired a new director after a national search. Dr. Robert Crew concurred with Dr. Dunn about the need for a new home for the Institute, but he thought that the first thing that needed to happen was a name change that would elevate the Institute's stature and prominence. He learned that the Congressional District of legendary former Congressman Carl Vinson had once included the City of Athens and Clarke County, and he decided that it would be fitting to name the Institute of Government in his honor.

## Carl Vinson<sup>14</sup>

At Carl Vinson's ninetieth birthday celebration, held as part of the one hundredth anniversary of the Walter F. George School of Law in Macon, Georgia, then-President Richard Nixon paid tribute to Vinson by saying:

I am honored to be here for two reasons. First, because it is the 100th Anniversary of a great educational institution;

and second, because it is the 90th birthday of a man who has served longer in the House of Representatives, in the Congress, than any man in our history, and one who is a legendary figure for those who did not know him, and one who is a loved figure for those like myself who had the privilege of knowing him.

A great deal of attention has been paid to the fact that Carl Vinson was a man who stood for a strong national defense. He was Mr. Armed Services, he was Mr. Navy, he was Mr. American, and he was Mr. Congressman. He was all of those things, but he must not be just remembered and thought of that way, because Carl Vinson was a broad-gauged man. In his first speech, listen to what he said: "I devoutly hope that the casting of every gun and the building of every ship will be done with a prayer for the peace of America. I have at heart no sectional nor political interest but only the Republic's safety." In those words, we capture the life of a very great man. "I have," he said, "at heart no sectional nor political interest."<sup>15</sup>

Mr. Vinson served eight Presidents, four of them Republicans, four of them Democrats. Every one of them had confidence in him, and he served each one of them as loyally whether they were of his party or the other, and it is the kind of service, which puts America above party, that he represents and that the American people still expect.

Only once in his entire lifetime did Mr. Vinson set foot outside the United States, and that was when he went on an inspection trip of the Panama Canal Zone in the early 1920s. Mr. Vinson used to say that his responsibilities in the House of Representatives kept him too busy to go traveling all over the world. Mr. Vinson was known by the military establishment as "the Admiral" because of his early affection for the United States Navy. By his colleagues in the House he was known as the "Swamp Fox" because of his masterful grasp of parliamentary procedure and virtual unerring strategy in getting important legislation through Congress. Mr. Vinson was

known and loved in Georgia as "Uncle Carl."

In his own remarks that day, Carl Vinson expressed sincere gratitude for all the kind words offered about him and responded:

I cannot give you the secret of longevity, for I do not know what produces it, except perhaps to suggest that maintaining a vigorous pace in all my mental and physical activities has played a very important part. However, if I had to select one factor that may have played a dominant role in reaching my years, I would name the challenge of Public Service.<sup>16</sup>

It was this record and this spirit that led the University of Georgia in 1983 to name its Institute of Government in honor of this great Georgian. At the time Mr. Vinson held the record for being the longest-serving member of the United States Congress (although this record would be surpassed a few years later). Prior to making this name change, of course, the Institute sought and obtained permission from Mr. Vinson's family and received the requisite authorization from the University of Georgia and the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia.

### A Fortuitous Lunch

Serendipity has often played an important role in history, and this story is no different. After having lunch at the Varsity at the corner of Broad Street and Milledge Avenue one cold December day in 1981, Dr. Joseph Whorton, then administrator of the Governmental Research and Services Division of the Institute of Government, and his wife, Kathy, drove by the Lucy Cobb property. She asked Joe what it was, and he told her what he knew about the location. He recounted this conversation to the Institute Director, Bob Crew, the next day, and, after viewing the site, the Director immediately realized that a potential new home for the Carl Vinson Institute of Government had just been spotted. But how was this going to be accomplished?

## A Trip to the Nation's Capital

Because the historic Lucy Cobb property's renovation would be expensive and difficult to fund, the university had not included the project in its capital budget. Dr. S. Eugene Younts, then Vice President for Public Service and Outreach and the Vice President to whom the Director of the Institute of Government reported, knew that outside sources of financial support would be needed. In September 1983 Dr. Younts asked the author (who became interim director of the Institute after Bob Crew left to accept a faculty appointment at the University of Houston) to accompany him to a meeting in Washington, D.C., which he had arranged with the senior United States Senator from Georgia, Sam Nunn. Dr. Younts thought that Senator Nunn might be willing to take the lead in the United States Congress to obtain federal support for the Lucy Cobb Institute's renovation, so that it could become the new central administrative home of the Carl Vinson Institute of Government. Dr. Younts believed that Senator Nunn would be delighted to do this, since Carl Vinson was the Senator's great-uncle! Senator Nunn was very gracious in the meeting and was very pleased with the overall concept proposed. He liked renaming the Institute of Government in honor of Carl Vinson and he thought that Mr. Vinson himself would be pleased with it. While he was ready, willing, and able to promote this effort informally and behind the scenes, he was not willing to take the lead in the Congress, however, for one simple reason: Carl Vinson was his great-uncle. Since the day was still young and Dr. Younts and I were already at the United State Capitol, Dr. Younts decided that we should make a courtesy call on our newly-elected United States Senator Mack Mattingly. Senator Mattingly was relatively unknown at the time, having just been elected on the Republican ticket to the seat formerly held by legendary Senator Herman Talmadge. We explained our project and our proposal to Senator Mattingly and he seemed interested in it. In passing, I mentioned that the Lucy Cobb Institute was on the National Register of Historic Places. Senator Mattingly's face lit up. He smiled and told us that he had a special interest in historic

preservation. Would we mind if he took the lead in the United States Senate in getting a special appropriation for this project? Needless to say, with the help of Senator Mack Mattingly and others in the United States Senate and Congressmen Wyche Fowler and Doug Barnard and others in the United States House of Representatives, the Carl Vinson Institute of Government received appropriations from the United States Congress totaling \$4.5 million dollars to support the former Lucy Cobb Institute's renovation as the new central administrative home of the Carl Vinson Institute of Government. An additional \$1.5 million was raised privately, and the Lucy Cobb Institute still stands as a tribute to Carl Vinson today. Let the record reflect that this fortuitous turn of events was a great victory for historic preservation in Athens.

## The Renovation

Fortunately for historic preservationists, the federal grant to the university came with one major stipulation, namely, that the renovation be carried out according to the requirements of the state and federal historic preservation offices.<sup>17</sup> Dr. Elizabeth ("Liz") Lyon, then the chief historic preservation officer in the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, and members of her office were consulted on numerous occasions for their advice and consent. The final agreement reached called for restoration of the historic core of the main building, namely, the front entrance (including the front porch and railing), the two front rooms, the hallways on both the main and second floors, and the stairway to the second floor. Renovation of other areas of the main building, and of the other buildings on the grounds, would be undertaken with a sensitivity to the historic character of the premises, but with the understanding that the office needs of the Institute of Government took priority. While some had wished that more had been done to preserve the historic character of the buildings, the original desire of some university officials had been to completely gut the interior of the buildings and leave only the exterior walls.

As one enters the Lucy Cobb Institute today, it looks much

as it did in 1859 when the door first opened. There is a "parlor" on the left and a "parlor" on the right, and an interior stairway to the second floor that incorporates original fabric where possible. The parlor to the left as one enters the main building is "The Lucy Cobb Memorial Room;" the parlor to the right is the "The Carl Vinson Memorial Room." The latter contains a portrait of Mr. Vinson commissioned by the same artist who did a similar portrait for the Carl Vinson medical facility in Dublin, Georgia. The paintings hanging behind the receptionist's desk portray scenes from Mr. Vinson's beloved farm in Milledgeville, Georgia. The American flag hanging in the corner was a gift from the crew of the U. S. S. Carl Vinson.

A great philosopher once said that a man who knows what he knows and knows what he doesn't know is a man who knows. With that thought in mind, I asked a committee of three active members of the Friends of Lucy Cobb, Margie Spalding, Laura Ann Secrest, and Elinor Terrell, to oversee the refurbishing of the Lucy Cobb Memorial Room.<sup>18</sup> The committee was able to find furnishings suited to the era. The Friends of Lucy Cobb acquired most of the furnishings in the room through donations, including a significant contribution by Mrs. Marion Mathis Allen in memory of her mother. (Mrs. Allen also made another generous donation to support the Seney-Stovall Chapel's renovation, and her name appears on a plaque at the left of the stage in the Chapel) The Victorian sofa and matching chairs, piano, and the ship painting in the Lucy Cobb Memorial Room are on loan from the university. The portrait above the mantle is that of Miss Mildred Rutherford. The painting titled "Gather Ye Rosebuds While Ye May" and the gold-leaf-pier mirror were part of the original furnishings of the room. The Georgia Museum of Art received a large and magnificent painting called "La Confidance," which had hung in the Lucy Cobb Room originally, for safe-keeping and special exhibits.

It is not an exaggeration to say that a visitor entering the Institute today is walking in the footsteps of the girls of Lucy Cobb in the mid-19th Century.

### The Portrait of Lucy Cobb

Soon after the Lucy Cobb Institute's renovation concluded, it occurred to me that it would be fitting to have a portrait of Lucy Cobb in the Lucy Cobb Memorial Room. I inquired about this and discovered that a portrait of Lucy Cobb did exist, but that it was hanging in the law office of Alex Crumbley, who was a Georgia state senator at the time. I happened to run into Alex at the State Capitol during the swearing-in ceremony for Lewis Massey as Secretary of State, and asked Senator Crumbley if he still had the painting. He told me no, that his brother had it, but the painting had gone to his brother's wife in his divorce! I asked him if I would be able to contact her about it, and he gave his consent. So I called Sally Crumbley and explained the situation. I asked her if I could come by her home some time to take a picture of the painting, which could then be enlarged and mounted in the Lucy Cobb Memorial Room. She said that would be fine.

Several weeks later Sally called to say that she was coming to Athens on other business and would put the painting in her car for us to see. I invited the Lucy Cobb Room Memorial Committee (Laura Ann Secrest, Margie Spalding, and Elinor Terrell) to join me in greeting Sally, as well as the late Donald Keyes, then a curator at the Georgia Museum of Art; Ed Jackson, the Institute's resident historian and photographer; Hart Shiver, a charter member of the Friends of Lucy Cobb, and Carolyn Wynes, the Secretary to the Director. When Sally arrived at the Institute, she had a surprising announcement: on the way to Athens she had decided to donate the painting to us! She said that it would be one less thing for her children to worry about when she died.

This news delighted us, of course, but Donald Keyes noted that the painting needed cleaning. Donald knew an art restorer in Florida whom he wanted to send it to, and Sally agreed. It took a long time for the painting to return, but when it came back to us I was irate! The painting looked very different from when it had left, and I marched over to Donald Keyes' office to demand an explanation. Donald told me to calm down and said that the art restorer had

called him repeatedly to ask him if he wanted all the over-paint to be removed and Donald told him we wanted the original painting restored. When Hart Shiver heard about this she said that she suspected that someone in the Cobb family who had possession of the painting at one time – someone who fashioned herself an artist – had decided to “pretty up” Lucy Cobb, since in the original portrait she was rather plain and plump. I was worried about Sally’s reaction, but when I called to tell her what happened she was pleased. She said that the restoration revealed the “real Lucy Cobb” again after all those years in hiding.

## The Seney-Stovall Chapel

Some have called the Seney-Stovall Chapel the “crown jewel” of the Lucy Cobb complex. It received some notoriety in 1986 when hometown music legend REM featured it in one of their music videos: “Swan Swan H” from their album “Life’s Rich Pageant.” During the Chapel’s exterior renovation the original federal grant required the original wood and metal armchair’s removal, so the University Physical Plant moved those pieces to storage. When the entire complex gained approval for a federal grant, a Michigan company entered into a contract to restore the chairs to their original condition, with padding added for the seats. One prototype chair was created and displayed in the director’s office. A decision was also made that the Chapel auditorium should become a theater. The Institute of Government did not need a theater, but the space cried out for it.

The first condition imposed on the Chapel renovation was that the original chandelier be returned to its original location in the center of the auditorium. Phinizy Spalding had maintained this relic in his possession for safe keeping for decades, and he even used to carry it with him to meetings of the Friends of Lucy Cobb. It seemed only fitting that it be returned its proper place.

When the interior restoration of the Chapel concluded, and it was time to install the refurbished chairs, management called the Michigan company that was doing the work to schedule delivery. To

the dismay of all, no work on the chairs had begun. Rather than lose our Southern composure, we decided to rethink the chairs entirely. Since the Chapel was now a theater perhaps it needed a different kind of chair. Margie Spalding and I took a trip to the Fox Theater in Atlanta, and decided that the chairs there were a more suitable model for a theater. So management of the restoration entered into a new contract and ordered new chairs.

While planning a dedication ceremony for the Chapel, I happened upon some video footage of a conversation between Phinizy Spalding and Professor John English. In this video Phinizy talked about the Chapel and said, almost in an aside, that he thought the chairs were hideous – narrow and uncomfortable! Margie and I were both relieved to hear this. This marvelous footage allowed Billups Phinizy Spalding, though deceased, to open the dedication ceremony for the Seney-Stovall Chapel on December 7, 1997.

Because of his long-standing dedication to the renovation and restoration of the Lucy Cobb Institute and the Seney-Stovall Chapel, the Chapel auditorium became the “B. Phinizy Spalding Theater.” A plaque hanging at the left rear of the theater carries this inscription:

## B. Phinizy Spalding Theater

This theater is dedicated in memory of  
Dr. Billups Phinizy Spalding  
Grandson of Nellie Greta Stovall Phinizy,  
Founder of the Historic Cobbham Foundation,  
And founder of the Friends of Lucy Cobb.

His clear vision, steadfast determination,  
fierce loyalty, and forthright spirit saved the  
Seney-Stovall Chapel and the Lucy Cobb Institute  
for renewed service and grandeur in the 21st Century.

A beautiful portrait of Nellie Stovall hangs at the right rear of the Theater. As discussed previously, Nellie Stovall was the

young student at Lucy Cobb who petitioned George Seney for the financial support that led to the Chapel's construction originally. Coincidentally, Nellie Stovall was Phinizy Spalding's grandmother. The Lucy Cobb Institute's renovation was not only in Phinizy Spalding's mind and heart; it was in his blood.

The Chapel was the last building scheduled for renovation, and it received financial support from many sources. In fact, many of the windows include tributes to major donors, and many of the chairs in the Chapel have name-plates honoring those for who made donations of \$1,000 or more. Dr. Laura Meadows, the current director of the Carl Vinson Institute, would like everyone to know that additional chairs and windows remain for those who would like to join this prestigious assembly!

Other significant donations came in to support the renovation effort (see Appendix). One donation deserves special mention.

Not long after being appointed interim director of the Carl Vinson Institute I received word that a former Coca-Cola executive in Atlanta might have an interest in donating money to the Lucy Cobb renovation. I made an appointment to see Mr. Deloney Sledge at his residence. He invited me to come in and have a seat. I noticed that he had a palm tree on his sport shirt, and I asked him if he had gotten this shirt in Hawaii. He said "No, my Hawaii days are over. My exercise program now consists of three things: I jump to conclusions, I lift weights off my mind, and I wrestle with temptation."

Mr. Sledge asked me about our project and I explained what we were trying to do. He listened politely and attentively, and then he said this. "Well, let me be honest with you. I don't care about the Carl Vinson Institute of Government. I don't care about the University of Georgia. I don't care about the Lucy Cobb Institute. I care about my mother. She went to Lucy Cobb, and I think she might like me to do something. What do you think I should do?"

"Well," I said, "that's up to you, of course, but I can tell you what our needs are. As I was leaving campus today I was told that to finish the Seney-Stovall Chapel's renovation we are going to need an

additional \$248,000."

Mr. Sledge was incredulous. "\$248,000?!," he exclaimed. "For heaven's sake! If I squeezed a lemon, I might be able to come up with \$100,000, but not a quarter million dollars!"

"Well, that would be wonderful," I said. "This would go a long way toward meeting our goal, and we would be thrilled to receive it. It could spur other gifts to fill the gap. You could pay it all at once, or you could pay it over time. That would be up to you."

He stared at me. "What do you think I should do? What do you want me to do?"

"I can't make that decision for you, Mr. Sledge. You'll have to decide what makes sense for you."

We sat looking at each other for several minutes, and then his little black dog came up to me to be petted. I reached down and petted the little fellow.

"You should be flattered," he said. "That dog doesn't take to strangers. All right, I'll give you \$248,000. But I want it to go for the renovation of the Seney-Stovall Chapel, and I want my mother to be properly honored. It will be from both me and my brother."

I returned to campus with a signed pledge card for \$248,000. I received some credit for this, of course, but the little black dog really did it. A plaque hanging to the right of the stage ("stage left") carries the following tribute:

In memory of  
Mary Newton Cobb  
Granddaughter of Howell Cobb  
Grandniece of T. R. R. Cobb  
Cousin of Lucy Cobb  
Who walked these grounds in life  
and graduated from this institution in 1884  
With love and appreciation by her sons  
Edward Deloney Sledge, Jr. and  
Lamar Cobb Sledge

## The Chairman

One of the best decisions made in the entire effort to raise funds to support the Lucy Cobb Institute's renovation was Bob Stephens' appointment as the Chairman of the fund-raising committee. During the course of his career the Honorable Robert G. Stephens, Jr., served as a professor, city attorney, state legislator, United States Congressman, author, and Nazi war prosecutor. When he died over a decade ago, Athens and Clarke County lost a true friend. And "friend" is the right word to describe him. For, despite achieving significant positions of power, influence, and responsibility at the local, state, national, and even international levels, Bob Stephens never forgot who he was; he never became someone else. And, of course, much of the credit for Bob keeping his bearings must go to his beloved wife Grace, who was there to help keep him on course every step of the way. And now Grace has rejoined Bob.

Bob was a serious history buff, and he was active in many local historic preservation organizations, including the founding of the aforementioned Friends of Lucy Cobb to keep the legacy of the former Lucy Cobb Institute for Girls alive. Bob had an interest in this not only because of history, but because his mother had attended Lucy Cobb and had even performed on the stage at the Seney-Stovall Chapel.

No one who ever met Bob could miss his sense of humor. As his son Lawton (currently the Chief Superior Court Judge of the Western Judicial Circuit in Clarke County) said in his poignant eulogy, Bob had a positive spirit. He loved life, and it showed. He laughed often, and those around him laughed often as well. His stories are legend. In fact, we could probably fill a good book with all of our stories about Bob.

Because of his many ties to Lucy Cobb, and because Bob had held the Congressional seat that once belonged to the venerable Carl Vinson, he was asked to serve as the chairman of the fund-raising campaign for the Carl Vinson Institute of Government in its efforts to raise money to restore and renovate the historic Lucy

Cobb Institute in Athens as its new home. Not long into the Vinson Institute's fund raising campaign, Bob and I were invited to attend a meeting in Bibb County with a potential donor. This donor had been a personal friend of Carl Vinson, and he had a few questions he wanted to ask us about the Institute of Government being renamed in honor of Mr. Vinson.

Bob and I headed to Macon, with visions of a major gift dancing in our heads. Ed Sell Jr., the Bibb County Attorney at the time, convened the meeting. In addition to Bob and I were the Honorable Buckner F. Melton (former Mayor of Macon), Sanders Walker (a prominent Bibb County businessman and philanthropist), and the prospective donor, who, for the purposes of this story, we shall call Mr. Hall. The meeting began with Mr. Hall asking a question.

"Why did you name the Institute of Government for Carl Vinson? I don't think he would approve. Let me ask you this question, for example: do you teach anything over there in that Institute about the theeeeeeory of government? The theeeeeeory of government?"

I didn't realize that "theory" had so many e's in it. I thought about this question for a minute, and then I said, "well, yes, we discuss the 'theory' of government from time to time."

"Well," said Mr. Hall, "that's just what I thought! Mr. Vinson was a practical man; he wasn't interested in theories!"

I responded quickly that most of our programs were practically oriented, but Mr. Hall was on to his next question.

"What makes you think that Carl Vinson would want this? He never heard of the Institute of Government." "Well," I said, "this is not uncommon. Many states have named their institutes of government for favorite sons. For example, there's the Hubert Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, the JFK School of Government, the Lyndon Johnson School..."

Mr. Hall stopped me in my tracks. "Lyndon Johnson! We don't need to hear about him!"

I thought it might be time for a coffee break, but Mr. Hall wanted to know how we were going to keep this building going after it was renovated. He was afraid that it would end up in disrepair over time. I assured him that our fund-raising campaign anticipated

the need for continued maintenance, and that the university would take care of everything else. And anyway, I said, we had many prominent Georgians on our fund-raising committee who would want to make sure that the building was properly preserved over time, including Governor Joe Frank Harris, Lieutenant Governor Zell Miller, Speaker Tom Murphy...

Mr. Hall stopped me in my tracks. "Speaker Murphy! We don't need to hear about him!"

Bob was beginning to feel sorry for me, so he decided to shift gears. He thought he remembered that some of Sanders Walker's family members had strong ties to the Lucy Cobb Institute. He turned to Sanders Walker, and said, with an air of confidence, "Now, Walker, isn't it true that both your mother and your wife attended the Lucy Cobb Institute?" He sat back in his chair with a sense of triumph.

"Yes, it is, Bob," said Sanders. "Thank you for asking. Both my mother and my wife did attend Lucy Cobb." There was a brief pause. "And they hated it there!"

Bob and I were beginning to wonder if we should take this show on the road. We returned to Athens with the feeling that fund-raising was not our calling.

The following Monday morning a check arrived at the Carl Vinson Institute of Government in the amount of \$1,000. The check was from Mr. Hall, of course. Despite his many reservations, Mr. Hall had decided to help us out, in honor of his friend Carl Vinson. The fund-raising campaign was off and running. Under Bob's leadership, it culminated in the \$5.5 million renovation of the historic Lucy Cobb Institute and Seney-Stovall Chapel.

This, then, is how the former Lucy Cobb Institute for Girls became the new central administrative home of the Carl Vinson Institute of Government. Mr. Vinson could hardly wait to find Lucy and tell her what he had learned.

## Endnotes

1. The author wishes to thank Laura Duvekot, then a graduate student in the College of Environment and Design at the University of Georgia, for her able research assistance in the preparation of this section of the article. He also wishes to thank Dan Evans, Facilities Manager at the Vinson Institute, for his help in compiling the photographs included in this article, and Dr. James Kundell for his helpful review.
2. *The Southern Watchman*, January 13, 1859, "Local Matters," p. 3.
3. See also Thomas, Jr., Samuel N., "T.R.R. Cobb's Fingerprints," *The Legacy, Watson-Brown Foundation*, Thomson, GA, Volume 13, Issue 3, pp. 24-25.
4. A Mother, "Female Education In Athens," *Southern Banner*, August 24, 1854. Reprinted in Phinizy Spalding, *Higher Education for Women in the South: A History of Lucy Cobb Institute, 1858-1994*. (Athens: Georgia Southern Press, 1994), 59-60. Not everyone was happy with this letter. On October 19, 1854, a retort appeared in the same newspaper from "A Scholar From the Last Half Century" rebuking the idea of a public education for women.
5. See Thomas, p. 24.
6. "Home Site of Brigadier General T.R.R. Cobb Camp #97, Sons of Confederate Veterans, Athens, GA." Accessed December 8, 2015. <http://www.trrcobb.org/page2.htm>, Accessed Sept 27, 2013.
7. Phyllis Jenkins Barrow, "History of Lucy Cobb Institute 1858-1950," reprinted in Phinizy Spalding, *Higher Education for Women in the South: A History of Lucy Cobb Institute, 1858-1994*. (Athens: Georgia Southern Press, 1994), p. 11. Phyllis Barrow was the wife of the Honorable James Barrow, Superior Court judge of the Western Judicial Circuit for nearly thirty years, and, according to Donald E. Wilkes, Jr., in "A Brief History of the Western Judicial Circuit," *Athens Historian*, vol. 13, 2013, p. 7, "was regarded by some scholars as the finest Superior Court judge in Georgia in the 20th Century," and the mother of John Barrow, a former member of the Athens City Council and formerly a United States Congressman for the 12th Congressional District of Georgia.
8. Letter from Thomas R. R. Cobb to Dr. H. R. J. Long, March 28, 1858.
9. Anne E. Marshall, "Mildred Lewis Rutherford (1851-1928)," *New Georgia Encyclopedia*. Accessed September 27, 2013. <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/mildred-lewis-rutherford-1851-1928>.
10. Harold Bush-Brown, "HABS Number GA-1120," *Historic American Buildings Survey*, 1858, accessed October 4, 2015, <http://cdn.loc.gov/>

master/pnp/habshaer/ga/ga0100/ga0101/data/ga0101data.pdf.

11. Spalding, p. 83. Many of the upper class students who got engaged etched their names into the windows with their new rings; since the original windows were restored and retained in the front rooms, these names are still visible.

12. Waters, John, National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, "Lucy Cobb Institute Campus." Accessible at <http://focus.nps.gov/pdfhost/docs/nrhp/text/72000377.pdf>.

13. See also Hill, Jr., Melvin B., "At the Juncture of the Academy and the Community: The Story of the Carl Vinson Institute of Government of the University of Georgia," *Metropolitan Universities*, Spring/Summer issue, 1999. Some of the information about the history of the Carl Vinson Institute of Government can be found on its home page, [www.cviog.uga.edu](http://www.cviog.uga.edu). Accessed December 8, 2015.

14. For a brief biography of Carl Vinson, see Hill, Jr., Melvin B., "Carl Vinson: A Legend in His Own Time," accessible via the home page of the Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia. Accessed December 8, 2015.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. This was not music to the ears of some of the staff in the office of the university physical plant. A former director of that office had once met with the state historic preservation officer to show her how dilapidated the buildings were; he knocked out a piece of exposed brick and crumbled it in his fingers. "See! See!" he triumphantly told the state official. "Yes," she said. "That's antebellum."

18. The committee took its job seriously. T. R. R. Cobb was the author of not only the Confederate Constitution but also of the Georgia Constitution of 1861. In doing research for another project I discovered that the first principle in his Declaration of Fundamental Principles included in the first section of the Constitution of 1861 was this: "The fundamental principles of Free Government cannot be too well understood, nor too often recurred." This seemed like an excellent inscription for the Institute of Government itself, so I had it framed. When I told the ladies on the committee that I wanted to put it in the Lucy Cobb room, they said that I shouldn't, since it wasn't authentic. I moved it to the Carl Vinson Room.

## Photo Credits

The following photographs were provided by Daniel Evans of the Carl Vinson Institute of Government, from the Institute's photo albums.



Seney-Stovall Chapel, 19th century



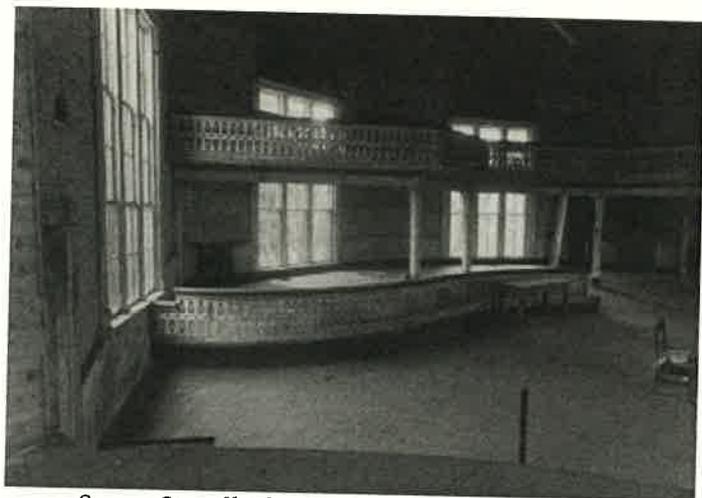
Lucy Cobb Institute, 19th century

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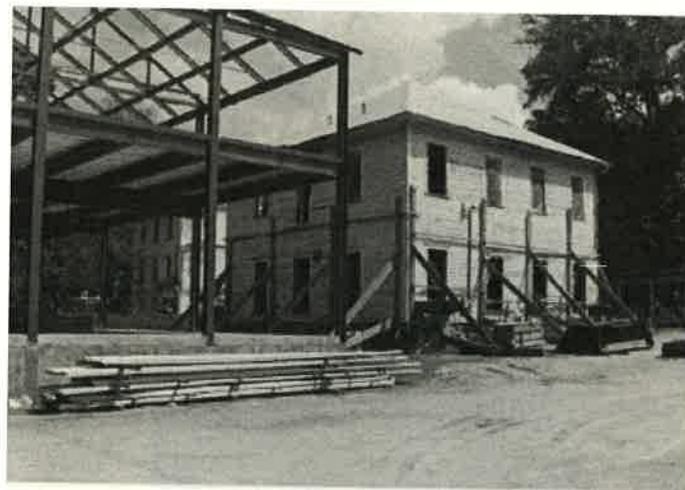
Lucy Cobb Institute, interiors, 19th century



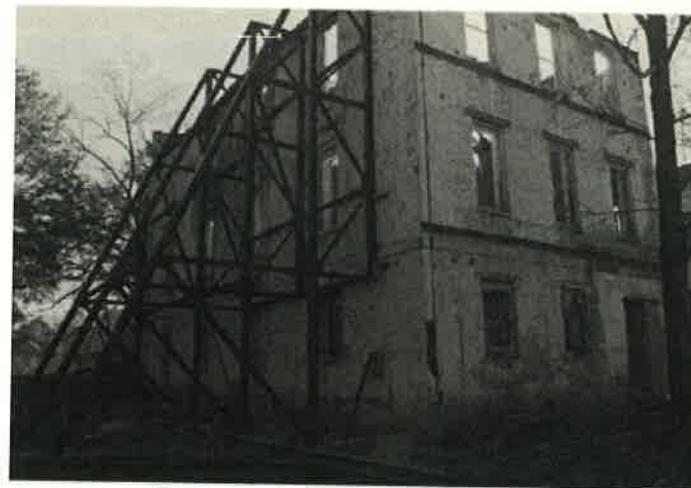
Seney-Stovall Chapel, interiors, 19th century

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Lucy Cobb Institute, renovation



Lucy Cobb Institute, renovation



Seney-Stovall Chapel, post-renovation



Lucy Cobb Institute, post-renovation

## **The Founders Memorial Garden and Women Who Loved It**

by Maureen C. O'Brien

Articles about the Founders Memorial Garden usually feature men influential in its history, such as Ross Crane, who in 1857 designed and built the three existing structures (Lumpkin House, kitchen building and smokehouse), and Dr. William Leroy Broun whose family were the first residents. Professor Charles Morris and family were the second residents for almost 30 years, and son Sylvanus who grew up in the house, also became a professor, and later spent 27 years as dean of the University of Georgia School of Law.<sup>1</sup> Hubert Bond Owens established the first professional study of landscape architecture in the southeast, and used the site as a facility to develop his fledgling program into today's vibrant UGA College of Environment and Design. Beside Dean Owens, there were many men who had a hand in designing the grounds, such as 1930s professors Frederick W. G. Peck and Brooks Wiggington. Their influence is still found throughout the site, as is that of Professor Robert J. Hill, the garden's first director, whose 30-year commitment to the program is memorialized in the naming of the Robert J. Hill Courtyard in the center of the garden.

This article addresses some of the many women who also had a say in the management and development of the site and enjoyed the views out the windows and the scents, sounds and pleasures of this wonderful place. One of these was Miss Mary Dorothy Lyndon who, with the advent of women being allowed to attend regular sessions on campus, became the first UGA Dean of Women.<sup>2</sup> The Lumpkin House (named for its location on Lumpkin Street and not to be confused with the Wilson Lumpkin house on South Campus) was remodeled to become her home and a place of comfort for the sixty-four new female students. In 1920, Dean Lyndon opened the wide door of this rose brick, plantation plain style house with Greek Revival detailing and welcomed visitors into her parlor, as had Mrs. Sallie Fleming Broun and Mrs. Mary Minor Morris, the faculty wives who previously lived here.

But Dean Lyndon's house was not the four- and five-room structure cared for by these earlier residents, Mrs. Broun from 1854 to 1856, and Mrs. Morris from 1860 to 1890. In those early years, the house supported the work of the faculty husbands, provided a place of solace to homesick student visitors, was home for the wives and children, and was the centerpiece of a social and utilitarian food- providing landscape. The original two-story house contains two rooms on each floor and a central hall and staircase. The 20' x 40' rear addition, which was added by 1894, provided more space for the Morrises and their six children.<sup>3</sup> After the Morris family left, the house, kitchen building, smokehouse and outhouse supported a student mess hall (1898-1906), a male student residence hall, and for a short time, an athletic dorm.<sup>4</sup>

A clapboard wing was constructed on the south side of the house for Dean Mary Lyndon to provide an indoor kitchen and bathroom. This modernized building was suitable for the visitors that came through the doors: fellow University faculty, her Athens friends and family, and the many young women who came for comfort, advice, and inspiration. Dean Lyndon, the first female graduate of UGA, had much to tell. This property had always been a social place, but now it became even more important to the women (and single men) attending the University after World War I. A photograph indicates that an ornate garden created at the turn of the century by Mrs. Morris was still providing a pleasant place to gather in front of the house.<sup>5</sup> The barns and food gardens in the rear and western side of the site, which supported the previous families and student food service, became an ornamental landscape for the visitors' enjoyment.

The direct influence of Dean Lyndon on these young lives ended abruptly when she died of pneumonia in 1924.<sup>6</sup> Many young women had become attached to this landscape, so when Dean Lyndon's national sorority requested access to the University property, Phi Mu became the first sorority to have a house on campus and the site was again filled with female laughter. Starting with ten women, the chapter outgrew its home in four years and moved,<sup>7</sup> but the site continued as a women's dormitory until the mid-1930s. We

may wonder how many meetings occurred in this landscape when Joe Brown Hall, the men's dormitory, was constructed in 1932 on the southern edge of the property.

While this house on Lumpkin Street became filled with people and anecdotes, an associated story was created at the E.K. Lumpkin House on Prince Avenue. In 1891, Mrs. E.K. (Mary Brian) Lumpkin and eleven women friends officially began a club, soon named the Ladies' Garden Club. As the first garden club in the United States, it began a strong movement across the country that knitted landscapes and people together.<sup>8</sup> By 1928, the Garden Club of Georgia, Inc. (GCG) was founded with 29 garden clubs across the state of Georgia, and by the mid-1930s this burgeoning organization was looking for a special way to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the garden club movement. Athens became the focus of that search.

Dean Hubert B. Owens responded to the quest as he had worked closely with the GCG president, Mrs. Mattie Hatcher Flournoy, since 1928 to help his fledgling landscape architecture program grow.<sup>9</sup> By 1938, the landscape architecture program had moved into the Lumpkin House and a one story, one room, brick wing was added to the north side for Dean Owens' office. The next year a commitment was made between the GCG, the University and the Board of Regents to use the Lumpkin House, its outbuildings and 2.5 acres of surrounding land to create a special teaching garden, called the Founders Memorial Garden, as a living memorial to America's first garden club.<sup>10</sup> As described in *The Garden Gateway*, the periodic publication of the Garden Club of Georgia:

Besides being a suitable memorial to this first club all Georgians are so proud to claim, the Memorial Garden will be an excellent example of landscape design which can be visited and observed by the garden clubs of Georgia, and its location served the additional purpose of giving future landscape architects a model garden, complete with many varieties of plants which they can study first hand.<sup>11</sup>

The students and faculty of the landscape architecture program used the house and the kitchen building for classrooms and offices while they designed and oversaw construction of the garden. The Garden Club of Georgia financed the construction, and the University adopted the maintenance.<sup>12</sup> Miss Nina Scudder, one of UGA's first female landscape architecture graduates, was a member of the Athens Ladies' Garden Club and the secretary of the GCG during the early years of the garden development. She dutifully recorded the construction progress with script and photographs, and was co-chair of the effort with Mrs. Rosena White Bradshaw, who coordinated the fund drive. Women from over 127 garden clubs in the state<sup>13</sup> and over 20,000 members and friends contributed funds to this project.<sup>14</sup> Brick and sandstone pavers were donated to embellish the existing courtyard, and 2,000 boxwood plants came for the boxwood parterre and the perennial garden. A pond and fountain, an herb terrace, an allée of camellias, an elegant lawn, and a gravel terrace overlooking a formal staircase and walled perennial garden were installed.<sup>15</sup>

Dean Owens, his faculty, and students designed the formal garden areas; the first of three landscape styles that are featured in the garden, is the Colonial Revival style, complete with balanced geometric beds, strong focal points, mixed herbaceous borders, and brick, wood and cast iron site furnishings. The earlier women who had loved this landscape would have once again been able to find an intimate formal garden to enjoy now away from the front of the house and the bustle of a developing campus edge, in quiet spaces embedded into this secured green oasis. The earlier formal garden was replaced by an entry court of granite pavers, repurposed from Athens' block streets, and is now an enclosed area with a time capsule to be opened in 2091. This entry court beautifully complements the double spiral staircase added to the front of the Lumpkin House.<sup>16</sup>

Dean Owens was satisfied that the bones of the garden were completed and the ladies were delighted with the partnership and the results. The garden was officially dedicated in 1939, although not finished for a number of years. Individuals and garden clubs continued to provide plants, urns, benches, staircases, and statuary

in memory of loved ones, and plaques and a sundial were added to show gratitude to those who contributed to this lovely place.

After World War II, the north and southwestern areas of the garden became a living memorial dedicated to WWII veterans. The dedication plaque reads to "Those who gave much and those who gave all." These informal arboretum areas represent a second style, a picturesque landscape with high tree canopies, flowering understory trees, and sweeping shrub borders with a multitude of groundcovers and bulbs. Accented with benches, stone retaining walls, and a small pool with a statuary fountain, the northern arboretum was designed to provide a respite where one can sit and enjoy the beauty of this rich, educational landscape. Along the western side of the site, bordering the signature north campus iron fence, is a trail that expresses a third landscape style, a woodland walk. There, using plants in mixed layers, one species spills onto another, texture upon texture. This woodland walk was called the "Sneak Path" by students and is still enjoyed today.

A few of the women in school during the design of the garden were Mary Ferguson, BLA '36, Nell Paulk, BLA '40, and Jeanne Guggenheim, BLA '42. These women may have influenced the design as throughout the garden's history students and faculty have had a voice in what plant materials should be used. As an example, Mrs. Weir "joined the faculty and tried to do the [perennial] garden in all white," presumably to teach a new trend in garden design touted by garden writers of the era.<sup>17</sup>

The Founders Memorial Garden soon became well established and served as an excellent teaching garden. However, the Department of Landscape Architecture overflowed the antebellum structures into three other locations on north campus. In 1956, the program was consolidated into Denmark Hall, the former dining hall of the University uphill from the garden. With the garden buildings empty, the Garden Club of Georgia came forward. Now 738 clubs strong, the GCG needed a state office. From 1958-1964, the kitchen building of the Founders Memorial Garden served this role until the house could be reconditioned from classrooms and faculty offices into their new state headquarters. The renovation

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work took place under the excellent oversight of Mrs. Jennie Tate Anderson, and again the Founders Memorial Garden became a special place for women.

To commemorate the first twelve founders of the garden club movement, the smokehouse was turned into a Memorial Room. This Memorial Room was later redecorated in 2009 under the presidency of Mrs. Charlotte Waters of the Ladies' Garden Club. One of its interesting adornments is the brass door knocker, donated by Miss Moina Michael, the Poppy Lady, who initiated the worldwide use of the red corn poppy flower as a symbol of remembrance for war veterans. Miss Michael was a UGA professor who lived in the downtown Georgian Hotel, and was a member of the Ladies' Garden Club. She enjoyed introducing young WWII Navy and Army trainees temporarily housed in Old College and the Georgian Hotel to the Founders Memorial Garden, some of whom affectionately called it "Miss Moina's garden."<sup>18</sup>

For 27 years the Garden Club of Georgia used the buildings and the gardens almost daily, enjoying the amazing facility that they had helped create. Many events were held in the gardens, many walks were taken along the paths, and many visitors were entertained with stories of past residents or the beauty of the diverse botanical collections. Eventually the GCG also outgrew the buildings and relocated their headquarters to the State Botanical Garden of Georgia.<sup>19</sup> The garden buildings did not stay vacant for long, as some of the College of Environment and Design faculty and staff moved back into these now elegantly appointed spaces.

Presently, Dr. Dorinda Dallmeyer, Director of the Environmental Ethics Certificate Program, shares the upstairs rooms of the Lumpkin House with Ms. Sara Ross, Director of the Wormsloe Institute. Ms. Maureen O'Brien, the garden's horticulturalist and curator, has her office in the kitchen building.

As a teaching garden, the Founders Memorial Garden provides a diversity of garden design, construction materials and plantings, and over 1,500 student visits were made during the past school year by the College of Environment and Design alone. It is also a place of wonder for students, faculty, veterans, gardeners,

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photographers, parents, and children. The long history of women who followed their interests and their passion to nourish and create this environment is still felt today by those who visit it and enjoy its charm.

## Side Note

Still furnished with antiques, draperies and lighting donated by the previous users, the lower rooms in the Lumpkin House provide a unique and beautiful space for meetings and classes and are offered as a venue for weddings and other special events. The Founders Memorial Garden Endowment Fund was established to provide funds to restore the historic features, and tell the historic stories of the house and gardens.

## About the Author

Maureen O'Brien is the Curator of the Founders Memorial Garden, an historic teaching garden on the UGA North Campus, and a part-time faculty member in the UGA College of Environment and Design. Trained as a horticulturalist and landscape architect, she is a member of a number of organizations focused on preserving the heritage of Athens, the city she lovingly adopted 40 years ago. The Founders Memorial Garden provides her a forum to tell Athens stories to students and visitors while maintaining and managing a 2.5 acre collection of historic plant materials and structures.

## Endnotes

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## Photos



Figure 1. Miss Mary Dorothy Lyndon, the first female UGA graduate, and a professor of English, was the first Dean of Women and lived in the Lumpkin House before the Founders Memorial Garden was built.



Figure 2. Dean Owens and faculty made sure that students were educated in the construction of the gardens.



Figures 3 and 4. The garden fountains have provided places of relaxation for decades.



Figure 5. The formal areas evoke Colonial Revival design.



Figure 6. The Lady with a Rose statue was dedicated in 1954 by the National Council of State Garden Clubs and is located in the Perennial Garden. Left to right: Mrs. Rosena Bradshaw, National Garden club representative, Dean Owens, Miss Nina Scudder



Figure 7. The old smokehouse was made into a Memorial Room to honor the first garden club in the U.S., established in Athens, GA in 1891. It is open by appointment. Left to right at the ribbon cutting of the recent award-winning remodel in 2009: Mrs. Ginnie Denson, Mrs. Charlotte Waters, Mrs. Kathryn Gruetter of the Ladies' Garden Club.

## Photo Credits

Figure 1. UA0045, Box 1, *Mary Dorothy Lyndon Papers*, 1915-1964, UGA 92-105:152, Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscript Library, University of Georgia Libraries. *Mary Lyndon.jpg*

Figure 2. UA93-042:4-5, *Records of Hubert Owens 1959-1987*. RG2-14 Env. Design. Box 4, Folder 4A & 5 Photographs of FMG. Photographer unidentified.

Figure 3 UGA College of Environment and Design FMG Historic Photo Collection: Sue O'Kelly, age 16, 1960s, Photographer unidentified. *FMG.60.O'Kelly*

Figure 4. UGA College of Environment and Design FMG Photo Collection: Gooseboy Fountain. Photograph by Maureen O'Brien, Spring 2013. *FMG.13.gooseboy.jpg*

Figure 5. UGA College of Environment and Design FMG Photo Collection: Bldgs/Gardens From Above. Photograph by Maureen O'Brien. *FMG.13.bldg above.jpg*

Figure 6. Adamson, W.C and Canupp, J. T. *The Founders Memorial Garden, Athens, GA. Athens: Dedication of the Lady with the Rose statue.* UGA BLA Thesis, 1960. Photographer unidentified. *FMG.54.statue dedic.jpg*

Figure 7. UGA College of Environment and Design FMG Photo Collection: Ribbon Cutting of Memorial Room Remodeled, 2009. Photograph by John Waters, March 30, 2009. *LGC-CED2.jpg*

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## Appendix Major Donors to Seney-Stovall Chapel Renovation

Stage right, in theater:

Lucy Leah West  
Class of 1907  
In loving memory of our mother  
Henry Edward Mathis  
Marion Mathis Allen  
Morgan Roby ("Bucky") Redwine, Jr.

Stage left, in theater: See on page 23.

Windows:

Mary Allen Lindsey Branan Foundation  
Lettie Pate Evans Foundation  
Francis Wood Wilson Foundation, Inc.  
In loving memory of  
Anne Phinizy Johnson Billing  
Martha Phinizy Percy  
Bolling Phinizy Spalding  
Nellie Phinizy Fortson  
Louise Phinizy Tillman  
Daughters of  
Nellie Stovall Phinizy  
and  
Billups Phinizy  
In loving memory of  
Our maternal grandparents  
Laura Williams Rutherford and  
Joshua Cornelius Hutchins  
Who married in this Chapel

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October 9, 1883

And our wonderful parents

Lydia Slye Hutchins and

Morton Strahan Hodgson

With gratitude for our Christian heritage

Morton Strahan Hodgson, Jr.

Nell Woodruff Hodgson Watt

Conference Room/Green Room:

The iron and brick fence

at the rear of the Lucy Cobb Complex

was made possible in part by a generous grant from

David Morgan

In loving memory of his brother

Marion Gordon

Who served as

Senior Assistant Attorney General

of the State of Georgia

1965 - 1991

Iron and wood bench in front of Chapel:

In Honor of

Harold E. (Hal) Holtz, Jr.

For Dedicated Service

to Local Government

Georgia City-County

Management Association

April 1, 1998

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