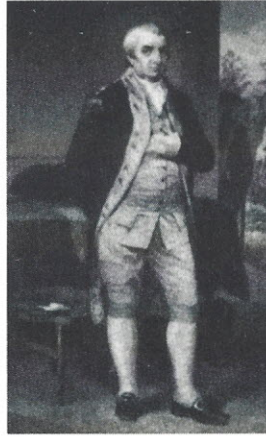




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HISTORY OF MOUNT ZION

The history of Mt. Zion is so closely interwoven into the history of the county and county - seat that the three are inseparable. It is an interesting fact that the first instance in which names of English churchmen and Huguenots on the coast and Scotch-Irish Presbyterians of the Up Country are mingled is in the organization of the Mt. Zion Society in Charleston in January 1777, for the purpose of founding, endowing and supporting a public school in Camden District. Thus out of a common scheme for general welfare Mt. Zion was conceived. Of the thirteen members of the Board of Directors seven were from the Up Country and six from the city of Charleston. First President was John Winn of Winnsboro. The preamble of the constitution is prefaced by these lines from Isaiah: "Arise! Shine! for thy light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." "To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called the trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that he might be glorified."

The school was carried on un-

til after the fall of Charleston when Cornwallis invaded the state and made his headquarters in Winnsboro from October 1780 to the spring of 1781. On one of the General's daily rides down Camden road he was heard exclaim, "What fair fields!" Such an expression from an invading enemy made an impression and when Camden District was divided and this section made into a county it was called Fairfield."

There are no records of any school activities for two years, but early in 1785 the Society met, reorganized and resumed work. In 1784 Col. Winn and Col. John Vanderhorst gave lands to the school. For some years Rev. Thomas Harris McCaule was put in charge. He was an able educator, improved the school, and proposed enlarging it to a College.

In 1785 the General Assembly of S.C. granted charters to colleges — one being "Mt. Zion College at Winnsboro". Though the school never perhaps functioned under this charter, through the years Mt. Zion has always been referred to as "The College".

From the reopening of the school after Cornwallis' sojourn here until 1834, nothing of special note happened.

In 1834 a new era began for Mt. Zion. Professor James W. Hudson took charge and his dominant character and instructive ability made Mt. Zion famous. Among Professor Hudsons' assistants were Wm. Bratton, Thomas McCants, D. Watt Aiken, Geo. H. McMaster, James H. Rion and Wood Davison. This great educator died while in service here and was buried on the campus in front of the school building. A large monument was erected to his memory and it stands directly in front of the school.

Mount Zion did not close during the War Between the States. But toward the end of the war the buildings were used as a military hospital and during Sherman's raid they were occupied by Federal troops. But with unflinching courage the trustees of Mount Zion carried on. Classes were held in the Thespian Hall, some of the local churches, anywhere a roof to cover the pupils could be found.

Just two years after the war in the midst of reconstruction the Society suffered a terrible blow in the loss of the Mount Zion buildings by fire, but the spirit instilled by the founders made the Society one of enduring courage. A smaller building with classrooms for day school only was erected. Mt. Zion being a boys school was very military minded.

The Board of Trustees decided to change Mt. Zion College into a public graded school for girls as well as boys. The school was still to be connected with Mount Zion Society. This idea was put into practice in 1878 with R. Means Davis as principal and Misses Emily O'Bear, Maggie Blaine, and Nannie Phinney as teachers. Thus Mt. Zion became the first public graded school in the State outside of Charleston.