

# LIGHT OF M. Z. I. NOT DIMMED

## Modern New Building to Enhance Usefulness of Historic Institute

(By Fitz Hugh McMaster)

What a far cry it is from a one-room log cabin in the wild woods to a great high school building with auditorium and gymnasium and an adjoining grammar school building equipped with conveniences undreamed of by those who attended the school in the one-room log house!

But it is equally a far cry from the early 1770s to 1936!

The story is that one time a man—possibly he was a biased man—asked Dr. James H. Carlisle, himself a graduate of Mt. Zion, why it was that so many unusual men and women came from Winnsboro? This was 50 or 60 years ago when the contrasts, if there were really any contrasts were more distinct than they are today. At any rate the question is said to have been asked and the answer that Dr. Carlisle is said to have given was, "That light on the hill"—meaning Mt. Zion college as it was then called, academy now.

A quotation from an address by Dr. Edward S. Joynes at a memorial meeting to Prof. R. Means Davis is apt here: "Returning to Winnsboro, he took charge of the historic Mount Zion academy. Here he founded and developed the first graded school in South Carolina (circa 1878) outside the city of Charleston. Of the then state superintendent of education, the honored Hugh S. Thompson, he was the right arm—his chief counsellor and aid. At that time the Mt. Zion academy was 'facile princeps' among the schools of the state. Its boys won all the prizes at West Point and Annapolis, and Superintendent Thompson once said, in a joke, that it was no use to hold competitive examinations, he might as well ask Means Davis to name his man at once."

### More Than 160 Years

The feeble light lit in the early 1770s or before has been burning through the 160 years since, some times with great brilliance drawing students from all over the state especially from the low country, doubtless causing the large numbers of those with Huguenot blood to make Fairfield their home and with their gentle and refining influences to commingle with the liberty-loving English, Scotch and Scotch-Irish and make the county

alive in many ways.  
Living in mind its glorious  
and encouraged to believe  
ed on Page Two).

## MORE ABOUT MT. ZION

(Continued from Page One)

that greater days are ahead for Mt. Zion and Winnsboro.

One recalls the classic epigram that a university was a student on one end of a log and Mark Hopkins on the other.

In that log school house of the 1770s and in the buildings which have followed there have been many men of the Mark Hopkins type.

There was the Rev. T. N. McCaule in 1784; J. W. Hudson in 1834; Gen. John A. Alston in 1858. J. A. Leland in 1861; G. A. Woodward in 1869; W. M. Dwight in 1875; R. Means Davis in 1877; Patterson Wardlaw in 1883; W. H. Witherow in 1886; Leonard T. Baker, now Dean of the University of South Carolina, in 1902; J. H. Thornwell, grandson of the great divine of same name, now superintendent of the Hartsville schools in 1906; and by every token of confidence the school board believes the present superintendent, G. F. Patton, to be a worthy successor to the great teachers who preceded him.

### World Famous Teachers

And these were not all. S. D. Dunn, himself once a brilliant assistant in the school in an article in 1907 wrote: "Of the many bright young men who, as assistants to Mr. Hudson contributed to the fame of Mt. Zion, and honor on the school may be mentioned William Bratton, Thomas McCants, D. Wyatt Aiken, George H. McMaster, James H. Rion, J. Wood Davidson, Ellison Capers."

To these may be added worldwide known names as Edward Maturin, the Bible translator, and Henri Harrise, the distinguished Parisian bibliographer, the first named having taught Greek and the latter French at Mt. Zion.

Another instructor who afterwards became world famous as a theologian was Dr. William P. DuBose, one time professor at Sewanee.

Two women pre-eminently should be mentioned. Miss Emily Obear and Miss Nannie Phinney. Both taught well into the second score of years. "Taught well," yes, indeed their gentle and inspiring influences will pass on to succeeding generations, doubtless after the walls of the present buildings shall have fallen and their bricks crumbled to dust.

Now as to the history of Mt. Zion. There are no records, but it is very certain that a school existed in Winnsboro for about ten years before the Revolutionary war. This may have been the rea-

son for the selection of Winnsboro as the site for the establishment of Mt. Zion college, when an act was passed in 1777 incorporating the Mt. Zion society, February 12, 1777. It had been organized in Charleston January 9, 1777.

Whether this was the conception of men outside of Fairfield, principally in Charleston, it cannot now be determined. Certain it is, however, that the following named citizens of Fairfield joined with Col. Thos. P. Taylor of Richland and others from Charleston in applying to the general assembly for a charter in 1777; John Winn, Robert Ellison, Thomas Woodward, Richard and William Strother, Joseph Kirkland, John Milling and John Kennedy. The first officers were: John Winn, president and William Strother and Robert Ellison, wardens.

### Charleston Influences

The head office of the society was in Charleston and remained so until its 47th annual meeting in 1825, and a committee managed the affairs in Winnsboro. Three members from Fairfield, William McCreight, William L. Kirkland and John Buchanan, attended the meeting in Charleston in 1825. The following named Fairfield men were admitted to membership that year: Philip E. Pierson, Isaac Means, Alexander Young, David Aiken and John McMaster.

While the purpose of the Mount Zion society was the maintenance of the school yet, before the Confederate war it seems to have been in the nature of a today "service" club. Its annual dinner for many years was the great event of the year in Winnsboro. It did certain charities educationally. In the early days it held from 14 to 45 meetings annually.

With the exceptions of the South Carolina society in Charleston organized in 1737, and which may have influenced the chartering of the Charleston college in 1777, and the Georgetown Winyan Indigo society, organized in 1757, the Mt. Zion society organized in 1777, is the oldest of its kind in the state. Its record for service is unexcelled.

Its membership always contained the leading men of the town and county. The following are the names of the presidents and secretaries from the beginning:

### Officers of Society

Presidents: John Winn, 1777; John Huger, 1783; (Col. Richard Winn of Winnsboro committee, 1783); James Lynah, 1800-1809; W. H. Gibbes, 1809-1810; Peter Smith, 1810-1824; David R. Evans, 1825-1831; Gen. William Strother, 1831-1834; Col. Wm. McCreight,