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## ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS OF THE CONFEDERATE POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT

### I

L. R. GARRISON

#### I. ORGANIZATION AND RELATED PROBLEMS

When John H. Reagan, delegate from Texas to the Provisional Congress of the Confederate States, on March 6, 1861, accepted his appointment as postmaster-general in Jefferson Davis's cabinet, he was first confronted with the task of providing, in its entirety, a central office force for the general administration of the great postal system which had not yet been taken over from the United States government. The energetic Texan lost no time. On the way home from his meeting with the President, Reagan met H. P. Brewster, a lawyer of South Carolina, whom he immediately engaged to go to Washington on business concerning the organization of the post office department. That same day Brewster was sent to Washington with letters to various important persons, among whom were St. George Offutt, chief clerk in the office of the sixth auditor; Benjamin Clements, chief clerk to the postmaster-general; Joseph Lewis, head of the bond division in the post office department; Captain Schwartzman, head of the dead letter office; Mr. McNair, of the finance bureau; and Mr. Hobby, the third assistant postmaster-general. These men Reagan asked to accept positions in the Post Office Department of the Confederate States, and to bring South with them "copies of

EARLY PRESBYTERIANISM IN TEXAS AS SEEN BY  
REV. JAMES WESTON MILLER, D. D.

ROBERT FINNEY MILLER, M. D.

My father, the Rev. Dr. James Weston Miller, came to Texas in December, 1844, as a missionary of the Presbyterian church to the First Presbyterian Church of Houston. He arrived at Houston on the steamer *Captain Wood*, having come by boat down the Ohio from Steubenville, and down the Mississippi to New Orleans, then by water to Galveston and Harrisburg. He was born in Erie County, Pennsylvania, on French Creek, near Mill Village, November 15, 1815, the eldest of nine children of Jeremiah and Elizabeth Weston Miller, and was christened James Weston for his maternal grandfather, Esquire James Weston, a descendant of the Westons of Duxbury and Plymouth, Massachusetts. James Weston Miller's family were pioneers in northwestern Pennsylvania. His grandfather, Stephen Miller, came early to Erie County and settled at Waterford.

James Weston Miller began his education in the old log school houses of Erie County, and studied night after night by the blaze of a pine knot. He later entered Waterford Academy, six miles away, and walked the distance to and fro for some years. In 1835 he finished the academy course and won a scholarship which gave him two years free at Jefferson College, Canonsburg, Pennsylvania. At the end of his sophomore year he was out of funds, so returned to Waterford Academy as principal during 1837-38. Returning to Jefferson in 1838 he graduated in 1840. There were forty-two graduates that year, and he took first honors and the valedictory September 14, 1840. For the next year he was assistant to Rev. Dr. Mathew Brown, President of Jefferson College. In the fall of 1841 he accepted the principalship of the Grove Academy at Steubenville, Ohio, for a year, and here began the lifelong friendship with Dr. C. C. Beatty, President of the Steubenville Female Seminary. Dr. Beatty was one of the greatest Presbyterian divines of his day. After a year at the Grove Academy, Miller entered the theological seminary at Allegheny, Pennsylvania, to prepare for the ministry. Here he graduated in

the Bap. We must act through the intellect. Who then can wield a more powerful influence for good than the president of a College?

Do let me entreat you to *Come*, and be assured you will receive a cordial welcome from your bro.

Wm. C. Somerville.

*Daniel Baker to Miller*

Huntsville 27th June 1857.

Dear Brother Miller,

We have had a harmonious, delightful, and most important meeting of the Board of Trustees. Amongst other matters of special interest was your election as President with a salary of fifteen hundred dollars. As Chairman of the Committee appointed to notify you of your election, I have written the letter, and it will be mailed this day. But I thought that in addition to that official communication, I would drop you a line, in an *unofficial* way—that I might mention sundry things that might be interesting to you. And first: I am happy to inform you, that the College is in a highly prosperous condition, both in relation to its internal and external affairs. At our late annual convocation, we have had quite a flourish of trumpets! and a good impression was evidently made upon all classes of persons, those at home, and those from abroad! The students have returned to their homes, with feelings of enthusiasm, in favor of Austin College! Some think that they can bring two or three students back with them next September, at any rate, they mean to *try*. I am happy to inform you that the financial condition of the College is decidedly better than it ever was before! At the meeting of the Board, in January, it was determined that we would *strike for the endowment of one professorship*—on the old plan modified. In prosecution of my agency I entered upon this work with new zeal and hope, and at our meeting on the 24th inst. I reported something more than twenty-two thousand dollars secured! This not only answers for one endowment but leaves some seven thousand dollars to go towards a *Second* endowment!!! Is not this encouraging? But even this is not all. Besides *notes* obtained to the amount of twenty-two thousand dollars (fifteen thousand at 8 per cent interest—and seven thousand at ten per cent interest). Besides this—the agent has reported an addition to the resources of the College in *lands* to the amount of more than four thousand dollars. Of this Mr. McCormick has given a tract, on the San Bernard, for which he was offered fifteen hundred dollars but which he values at twenty-two hundred. Moreover Mr. Austin Bryan has

given a tract on the Buffalo Bayou, near Houston, of 306 acres, which he values at eight hundred dollars. Thus, more has been done within the last six months, to add to the resources of Austin College than within any three years preceeding! Surely my brother, we have now, emphatically, much reason to thank God and take courage! I may here also mention, that should good crops be made the present season—there is a prospect of two additional endowments, the next year. I do think, brother Miller, that heaven is smiling upon our beloved Institution; and, I hope, that you may see your way clear to accept of your appointment, as the President of Austin College: and, God grant that under your administration the Institution may prosper yet more and more. Professor Thorn retains the chair of Mathematics—Salary \$1500—and Mr. McKnight has been elected to the Chair of Languages—Salary \$1300. With regard to Mr Somerville, he has been appointed Principal of the Preparatory Department, which is to be separate from the Collegiate Department, and he to have all the emoluments thereof. This arrangement seems to give general and great satisfaction. Our prospects are bright! It is true, we owe some four thousand dollars, chiefly to the Professors. We are on a bar—with deep water all around!—and, I think a plan has been adopted by which our Craft will be “sparred off,” within a few weeks from this time. I would like to write more but I have a wretched pen—and I am almost continually interrupted. In a few days, I am to visit Marshall, and operate in that region, as a minister of the Gospel, and Agent of the College. Shall probably go as far as Shreveport—La.

I believe, I told you about Mr Smith, purchasing two thousand acres of the College land for \$5000—and Mr Sorley’s subsequent offer of \$15000—if Mr Smith would reconvey the land to the College. He has had the great magnanimity to do it! In consequence, the Trustees have voted two perpetual Scholarships to each party concerned—as a compliment— And as an additional compliment, directed that, upon the Records of the College, there should be an ornamented page with a “*Roll of the distinguished Patrons of Austin College*” upon which should be placed in gilt letters their names, and that of Rev. Benjamin C. Chase. This I think is a good idea—and I would like you to see what Mr. De Lone has sketched. With kind remembrances for all the members of your domestic circle

Yrs fraternally

Dan’l Baker.

P. S.—I have rec’ letters from several persons in the old States who would like to be engaged in some Female Institute. I think

should you come to Huntsville you could very easily get some one in your place at Independence.

The trustees by a unanimous vote conferred the degree of Doctor of Divinity upon the Rev. Hugh Wilson of our State—and have made a record of their determination to confer the degree of A. M. upon the members of the first graduating class.

*R. H. Byers to Miller*

New Danville July 3rd 1857

Rev J. W. Miller

Dear Bro You have doubtless heard already of the action of the Board of Trustees of Austin College, so far at least as your election to the Presidency. And as the proposition was mine I wish to lay before you, the grounds on which I acted. I had no patience with the notions of some men. The talk about great men, etc., it was too childish. I considered all efforts to get such men as vain, besides I am by no means sure they are the kind of men for our Institution. In my judgment what we want for President is a man, acquainted with our people, with their character, habits, modes, etc. A man fully aware of the *status* of our College in all things, whose heart is enlisted, and who will take hold, with his eyes open, fully posted in the nature of the work he will have to perform, and with the determination to do it. Of scholarship sufficient to guarantee that by application he could soon make himself all that would be needful. A man of gentleness, yet of firmness and perseverance. And last but not least he must be—in a large sense a Texan. I consider this as almost indispensable, to the Judicious Administration of the government of the College. In view of these premises, after the resignation of Dr. Baker, my mind turned to you and after mature and prayerful consideration, under all the circumstances, and after making inquiry amongst leading business men in Houston and elsewhere, and hearing all that was to be said in the Board for others, my mind was but the more confirmed. I proposed your name in the Board, and it was unanimously and heartily responded too. And so far as I heard outside, there was but one sentiment—*it was a wise, a good choice* leading Business Men at Houston assured me it would give new character and influence to the *College*. These my Bro. are the leading points of thought which governed me in my action. I am not insensible to the sacrifices you will have to make, in accepting. But experience has taught me that by far the largest share of these sacrifices, consists in the surroundings which we gather about any given matter, in our own minds. The sacrifice can only at most include those things which you must soon or later give up. Your salary as President will support you.