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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 balance of mankind. You have doubtless heard that I go to Houston, *in September*.

May God bless and preserve you and yours and direct you in all things.

Yours fraternally

R. H. Byers.

S. McKinney to Müller

La. Institute New River July 23rd 1857

Rev and dear Brother.

I have just had the pleasure of hearing a letter read from you to Mr Thompson, informing us of your election to the Presidency of Austin College, etc. I do not know that I have anything to communicate, that would be new or valuable, that induces me to write, but to express my hope that you will accept the office, and that under your administration it may prove what we all desired and prayed,—a useful nursery for rearing valuable men both for church and state. I might add that it is a pleasant task to renew and perpetuate the recollection of our happy intercourse and friendships while in Texas.

At the last meeting of the Board at which I acted, I acting as Dr Red's proxy, nominated you, but as the whole matter was arranged as to a successor months previously, my vote was the only one dissenting.

I left the College and Funds in a healthy state, how they have been managed since I have not been advised. You are doubtless acquainted with these things much better than I am, being a member of the Board all the time.

You speak of difficulty of finding a suitable person to carry on your school, in case you should leave. What are the prospects for permanent success? If you should sell or rent your homestead what would be the different estimates? I am acquainted perhaps with some brother that could occupy the position successfully.

I shall be pleased to hear from you. I have expected to go to Texas to see after some interests I have there, this vacation, but find it difficult to get away from home. If I go I shall hope to see you.

With affectionate regard Your Bro. in Christ

Saml McKinney

Daniel Baker to Miller

Austin 23rd Nov. 1857

Dear Brother Miller

We had a very interesting meeting of the Synod: but, we did wish *you* were there! The New School Presbytery, was, by a

unanimous vote, received, *prospectively*, and the members annexed to the presbyteries within whose bounds they were. *Prospectively!* you say, what is the meaning of that? Why, it is this; If the General Assembly of our Church, and the United Synod to meet at Knoxville next Spring, should form a union—then, this arrangement will stand—if otherwise, then it becomes a nullity, and if afterwards, our New School brethren, of this state, wish to join us—they must come in “one by one, and two by Couples.” Our meeting at Palestine was very harmonious—very delightful! The report touching the College gave great satisfaction. The *Internal* condition as good as it ever was— And the *Financial* condition much better than was expected. The property of the College, valued at \$62,000— Debt, 1st July last about \$4,000—chiefly due to teachers. Some 17,000 acres of land in all donated to the College—of this, about 6000 acres have been sold for something like \$19,000. Since the first of January last—I have received for the Endowment, by subscriptions, and sale of land, in *notes*, to the amount of \$25,890. (This is included in the estimate of the property of the College.) The affair of Smith relinquishing the land which had been sold to him for \$5000—when Sorley offered for it \$15,000 was magnanimous, and I suppose you know, that the Trustees, as a compliment, voted to each of the parties, two Perpetual Scholarships—to be handsomely prepared on parchment—and also voted that their names, together with the name of the Rev. Benjamin Chase, should be written, in *letters of gold*, upon an ornamented page of the Records of the Institution!

You recollect, my brother, you were one of the subscribers to the endowment—the subscription \$200—to be paid *on*, or *before*, or *after*, the 1st Jany. 1861. The *interest to be paid at the close of each year*. As we have given *our notes* with appropriate Coupons—I have sent you the printed forms, which I hope you will have the goodness to sign, and forward to me, by mail to Wheelock, where I expect to be in about two weeks from this time. I have also enclosed another blank note which I hope you will get Doctor Red to sign—and, if Mrs. Lipscomb will see good to patronise the Endowment Scheme—please let me know and I will, with pleasure, attend to the matter, and that without delay. Heaven seems to be smiling upon our College. And now is the time for all its friends to do for it what they can. I am happy to say that our prospects for obtaining Legislative aid, are better now than they ever were before! Our new trustees are Col. Murray, Doctor Lawrence, Col. A. M. Branch and our good brother Fullenwider—yes, and also our good brother James Wilson, of Wheelock. Mr Atcheson, Doctor Branch, and Mr. McGregor have been left out. I did wish to pass through Independence, on my way home but,

I believe I must go around by the way of Wheelock and Lexington. The idea has been suggested of my going to London and Edenburg next Summer!!!! It may prove a bright idea, or, it may not! I mention the thing, in time, that the trustees may think upon the matter before the period arrives.

My son William has been very *very* sick! but, God be thanked, is now convalescent. You were appointed to preach the dedication sermon for our new and very beautiful church, in Huntsville, on the 3rd Sat. in Nov. but the whole affair has been postponed—until the debt has been fully paid. The building has cost us about \$4,000. Our subscriptions were about that amount—but, some three or four hundred dollars of it have not been collected, and by reason of the hardness of the times, etc., I suppose never will. The church is really a beautiful one! one of the chief ornaments of our town!

With christian Salutations Yr brother in Christ

Dan'l Baker.

Mrs. Twichell has most generously made a donation of her late husband's library to our College—with the cases which contain the books. This donation is a very valuable one.

Do get *all* the blanks signed, and forwarded to me at Wheelock; or Huntsville—and I will give you one of my best Texas bows!

R. H. Byers to Miller

Houston Texas Dec 30th 1857

Rev J. W. Miller

Dear Bro—I have had no further information, that is reliable, since your letter regarding the Presidency of our College. I still hope the way may be opened up for you to accept Is there any prospect? The matter must be determined shortly—at least in the course of the present session. If you cannot accept Who can you fix upon—that we can get? And I need not say to you that one of the first considerations—is that he shall be a man calculated to exercise a possitive, religious influence in the institution. Without this we cannot expect our College to become a school of the Prophets. Dr Bakers death—I fear will be a great loss to the College. I am utterly at a loss to know who to put in his place. And yet I think it very important that we should have an Agent immediately—for unless we can secure endowments—we will allways be in difficulties. Dr Baker has heretofore taken the lead in the matters of the College generally. I do not know who is to take his place, we must try and get a President, by the next session if possible. I have been trying to fix my mind on some one in case you refused the office And I have been told that you