

REMINISCENCES OF MY EARLY DAYS

AT STILLMAN INSTITUTE

Tuscaloosa, Alabama

(Copy of statement written by Rev. William H. Sheppard, D.D., a few years before his death. Secured from Mrs. Sheppard October 16, 1933 by Henry H. Sweets, Louisville, Ky.)

As I recall now, I started to Tuscaloosa, Alabama, to attend the Theological Seminary at the suggestion of my Pastor, Dr. Frank McCutchen, who was the Pastor of the Waynesboro Presbyterian Church in Virginia.

I was a candidate for the ministry and Stillman Institute was the school provided for my church to give me my Theological training.

I well remember how lost I felt when I stepped off the train in Tuscaloosa at 2 o'clock in the night. No one was there to meet me. I made inquiries of a man who was driving a street-car drawn by mules and he told me that he could direct me to a place where I could spend the night. I got on his car and he drove me up Greensboro Avenue to the corner of Tenth Street, stopped and told me, if I would walk a block and a half East and knock on the door of a house that was occupied by a family named Jones that they would take me in for the night. I followed his direction and found a happy lodgement in the home of the Jones family.

Early the next morning Mrs. Jones directed me where to find the Institute which was located only one block from her home.

That morning I conferred with Dr. Charles Stillman and he arranged my course of study. Dr. Stillman was the Superintendent of the Institute and, at the same time, Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church. He only taught a few hours in the week. Most of the teaching was done by Dr. Sanderson and Professor Anderson.

That afternoon I got my suit-case from the home of Mrs. Jones and arranged to board in the family of Nathan Luffboro and boarded with them during my stay in Tuscaloosa. They were most excellent people, showed me many kindnesses and introduced me to friends who, afterwards, became warm friends for life.

Stillman Institute, at this time, was a small institution with about fifteen students and located in a three-room frame building on 20th Street. Two of the rooms were used as class-rooms and the third room as a library.

I cannot recall the names of a great many students but will name some I remember: Macklin; Clark; McKellar; I.C.H. Champney; Washington; Gibson; Bardwell; Hardy; May; Covingtons; Garen and Taylor.

It is an interesting fact to note that Dr. Charles A. Stillman, who was then Superintendent of Tuscaloosa Institute, lived in the house where Bishop John H. Vincent was born. The school was then called 'Tuscaloosa Institute' but was changed to Stillman Institute in honor of Dr. Charles Allen Stillman who died in Tuscaloosa, after a fifty-years pastorate in the Presbyterian Church, in the year 1895.

The thing that made the strongest impression on me, at the time, was the consecrated lives of the Professors and the earnest interest which these white friends took in the group of colored boys. I was also impressed by the fact that the money for the support of this Institution was contributed by our Southern white friends.