

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF GLYNN ACADEMY BY JANE MACON

Aside from the fact that the operation of Glynn Academy has been uninterrupted throughout its entire existence, the history of this Georgia high school shows it to be unique in at least two other respects. First it is one of the three oldest high schools in the state of Georgia. Second, it is probably the only school in the state which throughout the years has consistently furnished free education to its boys and girls.

The first constitution of Georgia adapted in 1777 provided for the state of superior system of public schools. Had its provisions for education not been rescinded by a later constitution, Georgia's rank in the educational world would today be much higher than it is. Each county of the state was to have its own Academy in which children were to be taught through college preparatory grades. At the head of all the county Academies was to be the State University under the control of the senatus academicus within a few years after the adoption of the constitution, the plan was put into operation. The University of Georgia first of all state universities to be chartered (1785), and some twenty county academies were soon functioning. Among these early academies was that of Glynn County, which with Richmond Academy and Chatham Academy (now called Savannah High School) alone survives – the three oldest high schools in Georgia.

Revenue for the establishment and maintenance of these Academies was provided for in the same constitution of 1777. The lots within the county seat were to be sold and the town commons surrounding it were to be rented or leased for a period of ninety-nine years, all income to be applied to the support of the educational set-up.

The newly laid-out town of Brunswick, consisting of 383 ½ acres was surrounded on three sides by a large acreage of commons, so there was ample revenue for the support of schools. Until 1911, these town commons continued to supply revenue for educational purposes. Then the State Legislature empowered the Board of Education of Glynn County, successors to the commissioners of 1788, to relinquish all claim to the commons, giving fee simple titles to the holders of all lots. In lieu of income lost by this change, the Board was given the right to levy taxes on city property. Thus, throughout its entire history Glynn Academy has provided free schools to all boys and girls.

Other schools in the state were not so fortunate. The State Constitution which replaced that of 1777 did not recognize education as a duty of the state. Accordingly only those children whose parents acknowledged themselves as paupers were to be educated at state expense and for them "poor schools" were provided. Glynn Academy organized and functioning under the provisions of the Constitution of 1777, continued throughout the years to give free education to all its children – probably the only school in Georgia with this enviable record.

Now for a hasty view of Glynn Academy from it's founding down to the present:

Although Brunswick was laid out in 1771, her population was so depleted during the American Revolution that it was not until seventeen years later that application was made for a county Academy. On Feb. 1, 1788, the General Assembly of Georgia passed an act appointing ten commissioners and directing them to survey and sell lots in Brunswick and to use the money realized there from for the erection and maintenance of an Academy.

Thus came into existence the first Glynn Academy, one year before George Washington took oath as first president of our republic.

Unfortunately, we have no record of this first building, even its location being unknown. But that it did exist is indicated by the fact that during the next quarter of a century, the Commissioners were empowered three times to sell lots in Brunswick and to lease town commons for its maintenance.

In 1819 was erected the first Glynn Academy of which we have record. Located on what is now the corner of Ellis and L Streets in the center of a five-acre tract known as Academy Range, this building cost ten thousand dollars and was in use for more than twenty years.

In 1840, three hundred acres of commons in that part of Brunswick now known as New Town having been sold, a part of the sum realized was applied to the construction of a new Glynn Academy which for more than half a century was the only public school building in Brunswick. It was situated near the south-western corner of the northern half of Hillsborough Square, abutting Egmont Street which it faced.

It was in this building that a great tragedy occurred as a result of a political quarrel over the control of town commons. Col. Carey W. Styles, a candidate for mayor of Brunswick, in a political meeting held in the Academy in December of 1857, accused Jacob Moore, Glynn County's representative in the State Legislature, of having acted dishonorably, in acquiring for himself and his friend, James Houston, mayor of Brunswick, control of these public lands. Pistols were drawn and in the quick exchange of shots that followed, Moore was killed. Styles was never brought to trial and two months later was triumphantly vindicated by his election as mayor. (In 1866 this same Col. Styles, having moved to Atlanta, became the founder of the "Atlanta Constitution.")

This Glynn Academy on Hillsborough Square was superseded in 189\_ by a large brick building facing Mansfield Street and with its grounds occupying the entire city block bounded by Carpenter, Wolfe, Monk, and Mansfield Streets. The former building continued to be used for various school and civic purposes until 1915 when it was removed to Sterling for use as a school for Negroes.

For more than a century the name "Glynn Academy" embraced all grades of the public school from beginners until graduation. But in 1909 the large enrollment of pupils made it necessary to erect another building. It was then that the high-school grades were removed to a new and still larger brick building on the southern half of Hillsborough Square,

facing Mansfield Street. With them went the name "Glynn Academy," leaving the old building to be occupied by the lower grades under the name "Glynn Grammar School." Much later when Sidney Lanier Grammar School was built, this old building, completely renovated and greatly improved, became an annex to the present Glynn Academy.

As the school population of Glynn County continued to increase, new quarters were imperative. At the conclusion of World War 1, it was decided that a new school building be erected as a memorial to the men of Glynn County who participated in that struggle. A bond election provided the funds and the present building, designed to include a memorial auditorium, administrative offices, and an enlarged Glynn Academy, was erected. The architect, Hendrik Wallin, in carrying out the memorial idea used as his motif, the architectural design of the celebrated Louvain Library in Belgium, whose destruction by the Germans so infuriated the civilized world. The resulting building – a beautiful and dignified structure- was erected on the northern half of Hillsborough Square, Glynn Academy facing Mansfield Street on the south and the Memorial Auditorium facing the north, its entrance being the center of Norwich Street which it blocks.

Since September, 1923, this memorial building has been the home of Glynn Academy; but so great has been the increase in students and so numerous have been the courses added to the curriculum, that several additional buildings are now in use. They are the A.V. Wood Gymnasium, erected in 192\_; the renovated Glynn Academy of 189\_, now know as the "Annex;" a large class room building erected on Wolfe Street during World War 2; and wood and machine shops.

From this sketchy survey of growth of Glynn Academy throughout its long existence, it is evident that the school has at all times been unflinching in its services to the children of Glynn County and that at no time has it failed to move forward.

May it continue this proud record!

Clayton, Georgia  
July 2, 1952