

Alethea Jane Macon (1882-1977): A Biographical Sketch

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Preface

This biographical sketch about Jane Macon is limited to information that could be found in the University of Georgia's Libraries, on the internet (e.g., information about Christ Church and two Glynn Academy websites), via personal communication, or in the author's personal library (e.g., I have long owned a copy of her Uncle Tuck's book about his years as a student at the University of Georgia (see References).

Largely missing was information about Jane Macon's 50-years career as a teacher in the Glynn County public schools and, especially, Glynn Academy in Brunswick, GA. Subsequent to writing this sketch, I received many materials from the Brunswick Library, courtesy of Reference Librarian Diane Jackson, including two documents that will accompany this one. At some point I hope to add some of that material and othr that Ms. Jackson found to this biographical sketch.

Jane Macon's "A Brief History of Glynn Academy" dated July 2, 1952, may be seen at the Glynn Academy Website 1 (see References).

Except when otherwise noted, all information used in this biographical sketch can be found in the References.

Family History

Alethea Jane Macon was born 8 January 1882, in the Puryear District of Clarke County, Georgia. Clarke County is also home to the city of Athens and the University of Georgia. Her parents were Robert Edwin Macon (1853-1896) and Sarah Josephine Tuck (1852-1897); both are buried in Oconee Hills Cemetery in Athens, GA. Jane Macon had three siblings, Iwanona (Nona) Macon (born 1884), Robert Edwin Macon (1887-1961), and Joseph Tuck Macon (born 1892). No further information about Iwanona or Joseph has been seen, but Robert attended Young Harris College, lived much of his life in Atlanta as "a railroad man," and retired to Clayton, GA, in 1947. Jane Macon's uncle, Henry C. Tuck (1864-1939) published a book, *Four Years at the*

University of Georgia: 1877-1881, about his student years; he also served as Mayor of Athens, as a state legislator, and as a Judge of the City Court in Athens.

Extensive information about Jane Macon's family and some facts of her life may be found in three book-length genealogies that she compiled and published after she retired from teaching in 1952. One book focused on the descendants of Gideon Macon, one focused on the descendants of John and Edward Tuck, and one focused on the descendants of the "Four O'Kelley Sons." Jane Macon's great-grandfather, James O'Kelley, married Dicey Stamps, Jane Macon's maternal great-grandmother. The Macon family genealogy published originally in 1956 was "Revised and Edited" in 1979 by Jarvis Woods, a seventh generation descendant of Gideon Macon. The Tuck family genealogy received a "second edition" and "second printing" in 1978, but it is unclear whether anything was revised or edited. All three genealogies are listed in the References. Alethea Jane Macon tended to use her full name in formal publications such as her M.A. thesis and the three genealogical books she compiled and published, but she tended to use Jane Macon in other contexts and was, perhaps, better known to her many students and friends as Jane Macon or Miss Macon.

College and University Education

Jane Macon studied at Georgia Normal and Industrial College in Milledgeville, GA, a college that was later renamed the Georgia State College for Women and that is presently known as Georgia College and State University. Dates of attendance have not been determined, but as she began teaching in public schools in Glynn County and Brunswick, GA, in 1903, it seems reasonable to speculate that she studied in Milledgeville prior to 1903. In 1922, she earned an A.B. degree in Social Science at the University of Georgia, and she earned a M.A. degree in English and history at the University of Georgia in 1926.

Jane Macon's M.A. degree thesis, *Francis Robert Goulding: Georgia Author*, involved both literature and history which was consistent with her graduate school major in English and minor in history. Her English mentor, Steadman Vincent Sanford, was also the long-time athletics director at the University of Georgia as well as the University's President from 1932-1935. Because Sanford Stadium was dedicated in

1929, it was likely for his long service as athletics director and his significant involvement in the construction of Sanford Stadium that it bears his name. Jane Macon's mentor in history was William Oscar Payne. Payne succeeded Sanford as athletics director, and when the Milledge Hall Annex became the dormitory for UGA athletes in 1953, it was renamed Payne Hall to honor William Oscar Payne. Jane Macon also studied at Columbia University, William and Mary College, and the University of California.

Teaching Career

Jane Macon's teaching career began in the public schools of Glynn County and Brunswick, GA, in 1903 and continued until her retirement in 1952. From 1928 until 1952, she was head of the English Department and Dean of Women at Glynn Academy. Glynn Academy, founded in 1788, is Georgia's second oldest public school. As noted in the Preface, too little information has been obtained about her teaching career, but it was obviously a well loved and distinguished one, because upon her retirement her students and former students raised \$2,400.00 to send her on a trip to England. It had been her long-time wish to visit the homeland of the authors about whom she had taught for so many years, and her students made her wish a reality. A report of this gift appeared widely in Georgia newspapers including those in Brunswick, Atlanta, and Athens. Additionally, she reported in the 1964 Tuck genealogy that she had been honored by having the "Jane Macon Junior High School" in Brunswick named for her (subsequently renamed Jane Macon Middle School).

Another widely admired and respected teacher, Malcolm O. Magaw, arrived at Glynn Academy in 1950, in time to have some acquaintance with Jane Macon before she retired in 1952. Before quoting his reminiscences of Jane Macon, some readers may be interested to know that Mr. Magaw subsequently earned a Ph.D. in American literature at Tulane University and had a distinguished career teaching in the English Department at the University of New Orleans. At the author's request, Dr. Magaw provided the following reminiscence of Jane Macon via electronic mail on 24 October 2008. It is included here with his permission.

I came to Glynn Academy in 1950, just having graduated that June from Duke. Miss Jane Macon was the grand dame of the English Department if not of the whole school, and I soon came to know her quite well and to enjoy her company at lunch and at department meetings. She was a stern but reasonable and much admired teacher who that year was winding down a 50 year career in teaching. In 1951-52 she stayed on as an assistant to Miss Sarah Stevens, the head librarian at Glynn Academy. She had a second home in Clayton in the mountains and often spoke of her love for that part of Georgia as well as there in Brunswick. She owned a home on the corner across from the auditorium entrance side of the Academy (and the County Superintendent's offices). I do not recall seeing her after the '51-'52 school year. All of her teaching when I knew her was in senior English. As one often hears it said of celebrities, "Miss Macon was a legend in her own time." The whole city and county knew her and viewed her as something of an icon.

Retirement Years

As indicated in Dr. Magaw's reminiscences, Jane Macon acquired a summer residence in Clayton GA. Clayton is in mountainous Rabun County whose motto is "Rabun County, where Spring spends the Summer," and it is Georgia's most northeast county. It has not been determined when she acquired a summer residence in Clayton, but it may be recalled that her brother Robert had retired to Clayton in 1947. Clearly, Jane Macon was in Clayton by 1952, because that is the address she provided at the end of "A Brief History of Glynn Academy" which she wrote and dated "July 2, 1952". A note by Jane Macon dated "13 May 1964" to John Bonner, a University of Georgia librarian, was written on letterhead notepaper that bore the following address (this address also appeared in her Introduction to the Gideon Macon genealogy):

Miss Jane Macon
 "The Perch"
 Screamer Ridge
 Clayton, Georgia

The note began, "Here is another book for you to include in your list of Georgia publications. She also wrote, "When you have finished with it, please turn it over to the

library for its genealogical collection.” Given the date, it seems likely that Jane Macon was donating a copy of her Tuck family genealogy to the University of Georgia Library. Considering further the address on Jane Macon’s letterhead above, Screamer Ridge likely refers to a location on Screamer Mountain, parts of which extend within the city limits of Clayton.

Also consistent with Dr. Magaw’s recollection about Jane Macon’s home in Brunswick, her residence there extended well into retirement, she had written in the Introduction to *Four O’Kelley Sons and Some of Their Descendants* (1969) that her address was “809 Monck Street Brunswick, GA.” A contemporary map of the Glynn Academy Campus may be seen at the following website. If you examine the campus map after consulting with Mapquest’s (<http://www.mapquest.com/>) street map location for 809 Monck Street, Jane Macon’s residence on the campus map would have been in the lower left corner, below and to the left of the box identifying the location of the Board of Education.

<http://glynn.schooldesk.net/Default.aspx?alias=glynn.schooldesk.net/academy>

Jane Macon’s retirement years were highly productive ones, as she compiled and published three book-length genealogies, one each of the Macon, Tuck, and O’Kelley families. In the Introductions for each she noted that there was so much more that needed to be done, and it seems likely that her genealogical research may have continued as long as she was able.

As mentioned earlier, the Macon family genealogy was revised and edited in 1979 by Jarvis Wood, who was also a descendant of Gideon Macon. Wood reported that Jane Macon died 8 October 1977 and that she is buried at Christ Church on Saint Simons Island, GA.

Readers who may be unfamiliar with the church may be interested to know that Christ Church Episcopal was founded in 1736 by Charles Wesley who accompanied Georgia’s founder, James Edward Oglethorpe, to Frederica on St. Simons in 1736; Oglethorpe founded the colony of Georgia beginning in Savannah in 1733. Charles Wesley was the younger brother of John Wesley, a founder of the “Methodist

Movement” that led to the formation of the Methodist Church. The website used for this paragraph indicated that Charles disagreed with his brother on many theological matters and that he preferred to remain closer to the practices of the Anglican Church. However, for example, Stephen Prothero in his book, *Religious literacy: What every American needs to know – and doesn't*, reported that John and Charles were co-founders of Methodism. However, untangling that bit of history is another matter for another time.

The End...

...With Hope That More May Be Added in the Future.

Annotated Primary References Directly Relevant to Jane Macon

All print References cited among the Primary References are available in the Hargrett Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, a division of the University of Georgia Libraries. Additionally, the Hargrett Library has a small file of materials pertaining to Jane Macon. When the author examined that file in early October 2008, it contained two newspaper articles about her retirement gift and the letterhead note from “The Perch” discussed in this biographical sketch; subsequently photocopies of this biographical sketch and of both the handwritten and typed “A Brief History of Glynn Academy” written by Jane Macon provided by the present author have been added to that file.

No materials may be taken from the Hargrett Library, but materials may be examined on the premises. In many cases it is possible to make photocopies or in some cases request to have librarians skilled in handling rare materials make photocopies.

Both Copy 1 and Copy 2 of Jane Macon’s M.A. thesis are presently housed in the Libraries’ Book Repository. Copy 1 may be requested from and examined in the Hargrett Library only. Copy 2, which is in fragile condition, may be checked out to authorized persons, but it is not known whether Copy 2 might be obtained via interlibrary loan. The author has requested that attention be given to its fragility.

Bulletin of the University of Georgia, Vol. XXVI, March 1926, The Graduate School Announcement 1926-1927. Page 27 confirms Jane Macon’s A.B. degree and date and that her major was Social Science. It confirms her M.A. degree major in English and minor in History and her principal mentors, Steadman Vincent Sanford (English) and William Oscar Payne (History).

Glynn Academy Website 1:

<http://www.usgennet.org/usa/ga/county/glynn/schools/glynnacad/index.htm>

This website has a copy of Jane Macon's "A Brief History of Glynn Academy."

Glynn Academy website 2:

<http://glynn.schooldesk.net/Default.aspx?alias=glynn.schooldesk.net/academy>

This is the official Glynn County website for Glynn Academy, and among other items of interest, it includes the map of the current Glynn Academy campus.

Macon, Alethea Jane. (1925). *Francis Robert Goulding: Georgia Author*. Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the M.A. degree at the University of Georgia. She was awarded the degree in 1926.

Macon, Alethea Jane (1956). Revised and Edited by Jarvis Wood (1979). *Gideon Macon of Virginia and Some of His Descendants*. Macon, GA: Press of the J. W. Burke Company (1956); Washington, GA: Wilkes Publishing Co.(1981). Many of Jane Macon's ancestors may be identified, and some facts of her life from birth to 1956 may be seen on page 116 in the former and facts from 1956 until her death have been added in pages 83-84 in the latter.

Macon, Alethea Jane (1964). *John and Edward Tuck of Halifax County, Virginia and Some of their Descendants*. Macon, GA: Southern Press. A second "edition" and "printing" of this book was made possible by two of her nieces in 1978 using the Wilkes Publishing Company in Washington, GA. It is not obvious whether it was edited or revised.

Macon, Alethea Jane, (1969). *Four O'Kelley Sons and Some of Their Descendants*.
(Place Published and Publisher were not specified.)

Tuck, Henry C. (1938). *Four Years at the University of Georgia: 1877-1881*. Athens, GA: The McGregor Company (Privately published by H. C. Tuck.

Annotated Secondary References Indirectly Relevant to Jane Macon

Boney, F.N. (1984). *A pictorial history of The University of Georgia*. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press. Among many things pertaining to UGA's history, this book contains many references to Steadman V. Sanford, Jane

Macon's major advisor for her M. A. degree, and to Sanford Stadium. Interesting for present purposes, on page 155 is a photograph in which then Governor Eugene Talmadge and Sanford, when he was UGA president, are standing in front of Talmadge's son, Herman, during his student days, William Oscar Payne (Jane Macon's minor advisor for her M. A. degree), and Robert Preston Brooks (see next reference). Herman Talmadge later served as Governor of Georgia and as a U.S. Senator from Georgia. An amusing anecdote attributed to Herman is that he was asked teasingly once, 'if Georgia was so great, why were so many Georgians moving to Florida.' Herman is said to have replied, "I don't know, but I understand that the average intelligence in both states has improved."

Brooks, R. P. (1956). *The University of Georgia under sixteen administrations, 1785-1955*. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press. Brooks's and Dyer's (see next reference) general histories of The University of Georgia are the most definitive and relatively recent histories of the nation's oldest chartered state university, and each includes many references to Sanford and Payne.

Dyer, T. G. (1985). *The University of Georgia: A bicentennial history, 1785-1985*. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press. See Brooks annotation above..

Historical information about Christ Church Episcopal may be seen at:

http://www.christchurchtourofhomes.org/Other_Tour_Stops.htm

See Prothero annotation below.

Prothero, S. (2007). *Religious literacy: What every American needs to know – and doesn't*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers. Disagrees with the preceding reference regarding Charles Wesley's role in founding Methodism. Prothero reports that Charles and his brother, John, were both founders of Methodism.

The Red and Black, October 15, 1953. An article on page 5 of this issue of the UGA student newspaper reported on the naming of Payne Hall. *The Red and Black* is digitally archived in the UGA Library.