Athens College, Athens, Alabama, began as an academy in 1822. In 1842 the school was chartered as a college. Operated at the outset by the Tennessee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Athens was one of the earliest colleges for women established on a basis of equality with higher education for men. The launching of this school was evidence of Methodism's interest in providing better educational opportunities for women. Prior to 1842, Athens Academy had been under the occasional control of the Methodists. The academy continued in connection with the college until the early 1930's, when it was abandoned because of the depression and because of the growing competition of the public school system in Alabama.

The college passed through many vicissitudes prior to 1850, and the confusion incident to the Civil War and the poverty of the post-war era curtailed its once high standards. Like most colleges, Athens found its patronage declining after 1865, and because educational needs were changing and pre-college training was poorer, the older classical curriculum was slowly abandoned. Neither the high academic standards before the pre-war period nor the finishing-school type courses which prevailed under Mrs. Jane Childs (president, 1858-1867) satisfied the demands of the new industrial and business age.

The college's middle years, 1873-1914, were characterized by change—a change that was often damaging to the institution's progress and support. In the forty years to be considered in this article the school had no fewer than thirteen presidents whose terms of office ranged from five months to ten years. In 1873 the trustees fortunately secured James K. Armstrong, a minister of wide educational experience and sound training, as president of the institution. Armstrong had earned the A.B. degree at the University of Alabama in 1846 and in 1849 was awarded the honorary M.A. degree by the same school. He was closely associated with the education of women under Methodist auspices, having served as professor at Centenary Institute, Summerfield, Alabama, and also at LaGrange Female College, LaGrange, Georgia. In addition to these and other teaching

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1 Methodist Episcopal Church, South after the division in 1844.
2 Wesleyan College in Georgia was chartered in 1836, and Greensboro College in North Carolina was chartered in 1838. See Albea Godbold, The Church College of the Old South (Duke University Press, 1944), pp. 44-45.
positions, he had for fifteen years presided over the Marion Female Institute, Marion, Alabama. The attraction of Athens College for such a well trained man was perhaps its distinguished reputation and its excellent facilities.

The trustees were applauded on enlisting as able a man as Armstrong to direct the then struggling school. Armstrong was described by a local editor as "a most thorough and accomplished scholar as well as one of the finest educated men in the country." As president he replaced another minister, James M. Wright, at the close of the academic year in July, 1873.

The final public examination of the various classes began that year following the baccalaureate sermon which was delivered by W. H. Armstrong, a Methodist preacher from Decatur, Alabama. The junior and senior classes read their examination essays at the Methodist Church before a large crowd of parents, relatives, friends, and visitors. Commencement week ended with the annual address delivered by the retiring president who also presented each graduate with a diploma and a Bible.

President Armstrong's regime began in July, and, as was typical of the period, he brought with him an entirely new faculty. Unfortunately the caliber of the faculty declined in the post-war period; academic subjects previously taught by men were increasingly handled by poorly trained young women. The procedures for operating a college in those days were quite different from our own. At that time the trustees rented the buildings to the president for a specified annual amount; then the president furnished the building with all the necessary equipment for classes, boarding, and rooming. By the agreement the president received all tuition and fees collected from the students. From the receipts the president took care of all the expenses of the school. If the president had any money left at the end of the year it was his to keep. In this period all too frequently only debts remained when the academic year ended. President Armstrong's first year, however, proved highly successful, due in part to the fact that in addition to bringing a new faculty he also attracted from Jacksonville, Alabama, whence he came, a number of students to swell the ranks of those he found at Athens. Unfortunately the prosperous beginning was soon blighted by the panic of 1873 which was the forerunner of a six-year depression.

President Armstrong worked hard to win support for Athens College from the local community. The editor of the Athens Post urged his readers to help restore the school to its former luster by

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4 T. W. Palmer, A Register of Officers and Students of the University of Alabama, 1831-1901, (Tuscaloosa, 1901), 79.
5 Athens (Ala.) Post, April 12, 1873.
6 Ibid., June 13, 1873, the graduates were: Ella Turner, Sallie Hine, Mattie Drake, and Sue Tanner. The valedictorian was Evie Sloss.
7 Ibid., August 12, 1873.
paying a small admission charge and attending a student cantata. Periodic entertainments of this kind were provided by the college during a time when there were few such of a commercial nature. The students presented "Lily Bell" which apparently was well received by the townfolk. Throughout the following winter the music department sponsored a number of student vocal and instrumental recitals which provided experience for the performers, entertainment for the local residents, and a little cash for the college. The editor of the Limestone News commented, "We regret that these entertainments are not more frequent." The academic year ended as usual with a full week devoted to commencement and public examinations. After reading their essays, the six young women in the graduating class were awarded diplomas.

After 1873 the depression seemingly grew worse and the local press urged parents near and far to send their daughters to Athens. The enrollment for the previous session had been fewer than 100 as compared to more than 180 in the first year, 1843-1844. The faculty was lauded for providing "solid instruction and enforced impartial discipline." The editor of the News, perhaps whistling in the dark, predicted that because of the outstanding faculty the enrollment in the fall of 1875 would be larger than ever.

As the enrollment dropped President Armstrong cut charges in the hope of attracting more students—board was reduced from $16 to $13 a month and tuition from $3 to $2. Fewer students and less money in turn forced a reduction in the faculty and faculty salaries—the faculty for the 1876-1877 session was reduced by half and many courses of study were eliminated. The inevitable result of educational decline was a drop in patronage; the session opened with only forty students in attendance. However, late registrations slightly increased the number. This session proved disastrous for President Armstrong, and it seemed that the college would have to close. Despite the low charges made by the college, one Athenian declared that educational costs were generally too high. He, therefore, urged citizens to join together to buy the college buildings and convert it into a tax supported coeducational public school. Such an institution, he claimed, could provide better education at lower cost.

The four-year struggle with local apathy, Methodist Annual Conference penury, and the national depression proved too much for President Armstrong; he tendered his resignation in the spring of 1877. C. Lozo Smith, president of Mary Sharpe College, Win-

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8 Ibid., June 12, 1874.
9 Ibid., June 19, 1874.
10 Limestone News (Athens, Ala.), February 5, 1875.
11 Ibid., June 18, 1875.
12 Ibid., August 13, 1876.
13 Ibid., August 22, 1876.
14 Ibid., September 7, 1876.
15 Pater "Why Not?" Athens Post, March 9, 1877.
chester, Tennessee, was quickly elected to succeed Armstrong.16 Seeing that the trustees and the Annual Conference were determined to maintain Athens College, the local citizens made arrangements to establish the town's first grammar school.17

Bidding for greater local support, President Smith chose Mrs. Eliza Thach, daughter of Daniel Coleman, who was a founder of the college, as the principal of the Athens Academy and thus as his chief associate. This moved the editor of the Post to comment:

President Smith displayed good judgment in his selection. Mrs. Thach is not only a woman of energy and business capacity, but a lady of high culture and refinement. If President Smith should be as fortunate in securing other members of his faculty we may expect to see the good old times of our Institute restored.18

Armstrong, who with his wife and daughter, had formed the core of the Athens College faculty toward the end of his regime, moved to Decatur, Alabama and opened a school in the renovated McGarney Hotel.19

Because of insufficient patronage, there was little or no money for the proper upkeep of the college buildings and grounds from 1873 to 1877. Thus when Smith took over as president in July, 1877, he was faced with the necessity of raising some money for repairs. Noting that the fence which surrounded the campus had fallen and that the “front lawn, once the beautiful playground for the girls, has of late years been converted into pasture for cattle,” the Post urged local people to take more interest in the college and revive its declining fortunes. The editor blamed the trustees for failing to keep the college in first class condition, and he hinted that more than mere neglect might have entered into the misuse and misappropriation of the school property. The editor suggested that the young people of the town arrange a series of concerts during the summer in an effort to raise five hundred dollars for the needed repairs.20

Smith appointed men to teach art and mathematics. It was the first time in a dozen years that there had been a man on the faculty aside from the president. In all, six faculty members, including the president, were ready to open the school in the fall of 1877. The local press congratulated President Smith on his excellent faculty and urged Athenians to send their daughters to the college for a first class education, thus keeping them and their money at home.21

President Smith and his wife cooperated with local citizens in organizing a large concert and festival just before the opening of school. The various committees were selected from the most prominent citizens of Athens, and special rates were negotiated with the

16 Ibid., March 16, 1877.  
17 Ibid., April 6, 1877.  
18 Ibid., May 11, 1877.  
19 Ibid., Juno 8, 1877.  
20 Ibid., July 6, 1877.  
21 Ibid.
railway so as to encourage the attendance of visitors from all over North Alabama and Middle Tennessee. Solo and group events were prepared, an orchestra was formed, variety acts were arranged, and all joined in a chorus for several numbers. The climax of the evening was the election of the most beautiful women, the local editor having prepared the people for it by saying, "The election will be purely democratic—everybody allowed to vote for twenty-five cents each vote, and to vote as often as they please." The people were "favorably impressed" with the new President and his family, and they enjoyed the festivities which lasted until 12:30. Governor George Houston of Alabama attended and the evening was pronounced a great success even though the total receipts were only about $200.

The curriculum of the college was divided into three faculties—liberal arts in which mathematics, English and penmanship, botany, and physiology were offered by Thomas B. Pitts, Frank Wilcox, and the president’s wife; the music faculty in which music theory and history, voice and applied techniques, piano and guitar were offered by President Smith, Mrs. Smith, and Miss Jessie Houghton; and the art faculty offered pencil drawing, oil and watercolor painting, wax work, sewing, and embroidery by Frank Wilcox and Mrs. C. E. Elliott. With this rather limited offering, somewhat heavily weighted toward what were once known as the ornamental branches of learning, the school opened with sixty students.

By the end of September the enrollment had increased to seventy, six states being represented. It was announced that the first public examinations of the classes would be held in October. President Smith’s initial term was somewhat marred by the death of one of the pupils, Mamie Horton, daughter of one of the county’s leading citizens. Her clothing caught fire at an open fireplace and she was severely burned before the flames could be extinguished.

Yearly concerts and programs were held during Smith’s regime. In January, 1878 there was a public subscription to raise money to buy a bell for the college. The editor of the Post suggested that if the subscription did not bring in enough money, a concert might get the balance. Apparently they resorted to this time-honored stratagem because such a program was shortly announced by college authorities. The concert came at the end of the first term and was judged "the most brilliant and satisfactory ever witnessed in our town." The Smiths were more interested in music than in any other phase of the college operations, and Smith himself was acknowledged by the local papers to be a "musical genius."
second term opened with 100 students, half of them being enrolled in music; only twenty of the 100 boarded at the college. With such a large music department the local residents were invited to an increasing number of concerts which were apparently pleasing to parents and the public.

The patrons seemed to believe the school was giving due emphasis to Christian teaching. The editor of the Post observed, "What a blessing to our community to have an Institute, not only training the minds of our children for usefulness here but instilling... the great importance of living for Christ and for heaven." The college was beginning to enjoy renewed prosperity by the time of the first commencement under Smith's leadership. The speaker for this joyous occasion was R. A. Young, a minister of Nashville, Tennessee, and as usual the ceremony was held at the Athens Methodist Church. The following session was disturbed somewhat by an outbreak of yellow fever which swept through the South. The annual commencement drew J. C. Granberry (later bishop), of Vanderbilt University, as the speaker. The changing times were reflected in the granting of degrees in what today would be called the secretarial course. The degree of Mistress of Accounts was awarded to Anna D. Richardson, Ella Gabard, Ada Walker, Minnie Coleman, Ida Jack, Belle Mitchell, Fannie McKinney, and Ada Garrison, while Mistress of Music was granted to Katie Proctor and J. Lindsay. The Literary degree was earned by Anna D. Richardson, Minnie Coleman, and Josephine Lindsay. The college itself was honored when the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Alabama (Auburn University) conferred the honorary Doctorate of Philosophy on President Smith.

When the 1879 session of the college began, Smith's faculty had changed considerably. The president excepted, all the faculty was composed of young women. With greater emphasis on practical courses and a well-earned reputation in music and art, the literary department of the school had declined in importance. The fall enrollment was large and there was a marked increase in the number of boarders. The girls were an impressive sight as they marched under faculty supervision to and from the business district to make their purchases, and when they went in similar fashion to the country for an outing. "They were marching in column and their movements would have been creditable to West Pointers."

For the commencement of 1880 O. P. Fitzgerald (later bishop), of Nashville, Tennessee, was the preacher, and W. C. Hern of the Huntsville Methodist Church gave the commencement address.

27 Ibid., February 3, 1878. 31 Ibid., July 3, 1879.
28 Ibid., March 8, May 3, 1878. 32 Ibid., September 11, 1879.
29 Ibid., October 4, 1878. 33 Ibid., November 13, 1879.
30 Ibid., June 19, 1879.
President Smith announced that the seniors, instead of following tradition and reading essays copied from magazines and newspapers, would present original papers. A Post editorial praised the college for this change, saying that writing original compositions would be of greater value to the students and would be reason for pride on the part of their parents. The fame of the music department moved the editor to say, "It is useless to allude to the music that will be given during the anniversary week. Everybody knows the sort of music that will be given."\(^{34}\)

W. M. Leftwich, a member of the Tennessee Conference, in his address to the alumnae of the college, lauded President Smith on restoring the institution's greatness. He said that if the trustees and the Athenians would spend $10,000 on their school they would have the finest female college in the South and would at the same time promote local prosperity by attracting boarding students with money to spend.\(^{35}\) By revision of the charter during the year the name of the school was changed to "Athens Female College," thus making official the appellation commonly used by the students and the people generally.

Though Athens Female College continued to grow under Smith's leadership, to the regret of all concerned he resigned in February, 1883, to accept the presidency of the newly established Athens Collegiate Institute for men.\(^{36}\) In May the trustees elected W. A. Rogers, D.D., M.D. as the new head of the woman's college.\(^{37}\) The graduates of 1883 were Sallie Mat Malone, Ada Westmoreland, Fawn Coman, Mattie Thach, Hattie Pryor, Octavia Wilson, and Rowe Sanders.\(^{38}\) With the exception of Mrs. Thach, who served as principal of the Academy, Rogers brought in a completely new faculty. The new president asked local citizens to do more for the college by improving the buildings and by endowing gold medals which he said would attract more students and encourage them to study. However, the loss of Smith as president was a blow that staggered the school; the enrollment in the fall of 1883 was very small. President Rogers did not complete the year; Mrs. Thach took over as acting president and presided at the commencement in 1884.\(^{39}\)

There were rumors that Mrs. Thach would be elected as the new president of the college. Instead the trustees chose L. Moore, former president of the Athens Collegiate Institute, and gave Mrs. Thach autonomous control of the academy. This arrangement did not work. President Moore left before the first session was over. In

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\(^{34}\) Ibid., May 6, June 3, 1880.  
\(^{35}\) Ibid., June 24, 1880.  
\(^{36}\) Alabama Courier (Athens), February 8, 1883.  
\(^{37}\) Ibid., May 10, 1883.  
\(^{38}\) Ibid., June 7, 1883.  
\(^{39}\) Ibid., June 19, 1884.
January, 1885, the trustees elected M. G. Williams, a minister, as president.40

President Williams began the slow and difficult process of rebuilding public support for the college. The big drop in the number of students following Smith’s resignation as president was a severe blow. The confusion that resulted from trying to operate the school for half a year with no president, compounded by six more months of serious disagreement between President Moore and Mrs. Thach, were even greater calamities for the institution and its reputation. President Williams opened the college with only twenty students in the fall of 1886, but by perseverance in the area of what we today would call public relations, he managed to enroll seventy students a year later.41 In January, 1888, the president employed S. F. Patterson to serve as dean and to direct campus operations while he himself traveled widely seeking students and greater financial support.42

President Williams was notably successful in improving the college, increasing its enrollment, and strengthening its finances. In the summer of 1889 the school was prosperous enough to paint the classrooms and lay carpets in the students’ sleeping quarters.43 In grateful recognition of Williams’ successful administration, the trustees conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity at commencement in 1890.44

J. B. Gregory was appointed financial agent for Athens College. He began by urging the preachers to formulate some plan whereby the Annual Conference could raise $10,000 for general improvements at the school. It was suggested that the trustees issue bonds which would be retired by the annual rent paid to the trustees by the president of the college. The Annual Conference concurred in this plan and approved the issuance of bonds at four percent.45 Gregory was then appointed as the Annual Conference agent to solicit gifts for the institution, but his health broke and he was unable to carry on. In the end the collections were much less than had been anticipated. After seven years as president, Williams retired at commencement in 1892. His health had been damaged by travel and overwork.46

Williams’ successor was to reap the harvest of his hard work and devotion. The trustees secured the services of Howard W. Key, son of Bishop James S. Key. Howard Key came to Athens with a broad educational background in various institutions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. He was graduated from Emory College,

40 Ibid., August 28, September 4, 1884; January 8, 1885.
41 Ibid., September 8, 1887.
42 Ibid., January 12, 19, 1888.
43 Ibid., August 15, 1889.
44 Ibid., June 19, 1890.
46 Ibid., September 2, 1891, June 2, 1892.
studied the sciences at the University of Virginia, and subsequently received honorary M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from Emory. At one time he held the chair of natural science at Wesleyan College, Macon, Georgia. He served ten years as president of Andrew Female College at Dawson, Georgia before accepting the post at Athens College.47

Upon his arrival at Athens, Key found several thousand dollars available for renovating Founders’ Hall, the beautiful old Greek main building, which, according to the taste of the time, was turned into a semi-Gothic Victorian monstrosity with a mansard roof. The students no doubt appreciated the completely refurnished rooms and recitation halls.48 The local editor was particularly impressed by the fact that each bed was supplied with a cotton mattress.49

In the fall of 1892 the fiftieth session of the college began with the installation of the “boy wonder” president. However, Athens College was not sufficiently important to hold a man of Key’s caliber. The following spring he accepted a call to the presidency of the Memphis Conference College (now Lambuth) Jackson, Tennessee.50 The trustees chose as Key’s successor Virgil O. Hawkins, presiding elder of the Decatur District.51 Continuing for a time as a presiding elder, Hawkins found it necessary to delegate many of his duties as president of the college to Professor L. P. Giddens, who served as vice-president and dean.52 The combination of the panic of 1893 and a part-time president threw the institution into difficulties, notwithstanding the usual editorial whistling in the dark concerning a new era of greatness about to begin. The college limped along for the next two years. Hawkins was the first of five different presidents the institution was to have in the next ten years. However, Hawkins was able to persuade the trustees to put up the money for the erection of a new chapel as a wing of the main building. Also, in the spring of 1894 the board approved plans to build two three-story wings for dormitories. The chapel went up in three months and was ready for use at commencement in 1894.53 The felt need for more dormitory space was evidence that boarding students were enrolling in larger numbers.

In April, 1895, Z. A. Parker, who for several years was associated with the college in an unofficial capacity, succeeded Hawkins as president. During the previous year Parker had worked to secure financial support for the institution from local citizens, arguing that others were not likely to make donations unless they were sure
the people of Athens were also contributing. Parker was a promoter of Methodist education, and he sought financial assistance on all sides. When the college opened in 1896 it expected 100 boarding students along with a large contingent from Limestone County and Athens. The faculty was commended as outstanding, superior to any previously assembled.

In their annual report to the Conference, the trustees said that 150 students were enrolled, many of them living in the college dormitories. One great need of the institution, they said, was a gymnasium to provide proper physical training for the young women. They commended Parker on his refusal to assume partial ownership of the college property, declaring that this heavy responsibility borne by other presidents over the previous seventy-five years had hampered the growth of the school. The trustees were faced with the necessity of raising money to buy furniture, classroom materials, and scientific apparatuses. At their fall meeting they authorized the establishment of a normal department for training teachers for the expanded public school system in the state. As the trustees took a greater interest in and responsibility for the school, it grew more stable and won a more permanent patronage.

By the fall of 1897 Parker was able to persuade the Conference to make an annual appropriation of $1,500 for the support of the school. He planned the installation of running water in the dormitories and sought funds to build a music hall for the growing music department. Thus, within a short period the capital assets of the college were enlarged and two new academic buildings were planned. Parker's dynamic energy and success attracted attention, and in 1898 he was offered the presidency of the newly established Birmingham College, a joint venture of the two Alabama conferences. The project called for the conferences to pool their financial resources; also, Southern University was to be joined with the new college as soon as it was established. Thus Parker became the president and founder of what was to become one of the best Methodist schools in the South—Birmingham-Southern College.

Parker left an excellent plant at Athens and a greatly enlarged curriculum which was a credit to the college and its growing reputation. The college of fine arts included instrumental and vocal music, music theory and history in the school of music; drawing and painting in the school of art; and the school of elocution and Delsarte. In addition, there were schools of physical education,

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54 *Limestone Democrat*, April 14, 1894.
59 A system of calisthenics patterned on the theories of F. Delsarte (1811-1871), a French teacher of dramatic and musical expression.
mathematics, Latin and Greek, and French and German; not to mention a teachers college, a business college, and a school of Bible.\textsuperscript{60} Parker's successor capped this expanded program with a graduate department offering an earned M.A. degree.

President H. W. Browder came to Athens from the presidency of Clarksville Female College in Tennessee. He continued the improvements begun by Parker, wiring some of the rooms for electricity and installing hot and cold water on each floor of the dormitory.\textsuperscript{61} The curriculum offered during Browder's tenure led to three degrees—Mistress of English Literature, Bachelor of Arts, and Master of Arts. The courses for the first two degrees were parallel, except that the English course, four years of Latin, and three of Greek were required for the B.A. The general program called for seven semesters of history, including German, Greek, and Roman, one year of contemporary history, one year of history outline, and a semester of mythology. The curriculum in science and mathematics demanded physics, chemistry, botany, geology, astronomy, physical geography, a year of geometry, two years of algebra, trigonometry, and arithmetic. The remainder of the course work was divided among English grammar, English and American literature, rhetoric, economics, political science, logic, psychology, Shakespeare, and Christian evidence. In all there were 35 semester courses. The M.A. program included English literature, ancient literature, criticism, reviews, church history, Ten Great Religions, Anglo-Saxon, Outline Study of Man, Latin, Greek, French and German.

The department of music offered an adequate program of study as well as a full graduate course. Included in the fine arts division were speech, drama, and art. The art department offerings were varied; as a post-graduate curriculum, portrait painting was available for talented students.\textsuperscript{62}

College life in the time of President Browder was more strict in some ways than thirty years earlier. The regulations at Athens were carefully outlined in the catalog for both students and faculty. The rules in 1899 were:

1. Prompt obedience to the retiring, rising and school bells. 2. Orderly arrangement of room before leaving it in the morning. 3. Prompt and punctual at meals. 4. To pass through the hall and house in a quiet and orderly manner. 5. To be polite and ladylike at all times to officers, teachers and to each other. 6. To keep their trunks locked. 7. Instant compliance with the directions of the officers of the college. 8. Quiet and orderly observance of the Sabbath. 9. Attending church at least once each Sabbath. 10. Strict observance of the study and rest hours. 11. Obedience to the command of the lady superintendent in reference to dress and recreation. 12. Prompt

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Christian Educator}, October 15, 1897, citing the Athens Female College catalogue, 1897.  
\textsuperscript{61} \textit{Alabama Courier}, September 15, 1898.  
\textsuperscript{62} \textit{Ibid.}, 13-19.
report of sickness to the proper officers. 13. Outdoor exercise, under the direction of a teacher, when the weather allows.

In addition to the above rules there were a number of prohibitions:

Leaving the college grounds without permission and an escort. Leaving any class or study hall without the consent of the teacher and permission of the president. . . Using cant words or improper language. . . Sending or receiving communications of any kind from young gentlemen . . . Reading or circulating novels, newspapers, or literature of any kind without the approval of the president. . . Dancing, novel reading, card playing, theaters, or attending parties or places of public amusement. . . On shopping days going to half a dozen or more stores to get two or three small articles.

The girls at Athens College wore a prescribed uniform, not only to distinguish them as students, but also to reduce the cost of clothing, and to prevent distinctions of social position.

The rules for the faculty, if possible, were even more rigid than those for the students. The faculty was enjoined:

Not to receive calls during school hours. For gentlemen, Friday night is reception night . . . Not to attend theaters, dances, or play cards, not to attend shows of any kind unless approved by the president. Teachers were not allowed to accompany young men driving . . . Not to leave the city without first informing the president . . . The violation of any of the above rules shall be equivalent to resignation upon the part of the teacher.63

The general regulation for dress at the school read, "No member of the college family is expected to appear in public in a low neck or short sleeved dress." But though the rules in the catalog were strict, contemporary letters show that enforcement was lax.

The college was well established in public favor by the end of Browder's presidency in 1900. Improvement continued under his successor, H. G. Davis. The old plan of each new president bringing with him his own faculty was abandoned. This gave some measure of stability if not tenure to the faculty. Also, Davis strengthened the institution by employing better trained persons for the faculty. The student body rose to nearly 125. Pleased with the progress of the school under Davis's leadership, the trustees offered him a four-year contract. But he resigned the next spring to accept a position in a more prosperous college.64

E. M. Glenn succeeded Davis as president. His two-year administration was an interregnum between the marked progress of the college under his immediate predecessors and the election of its first academically oriented woman president—Miss Mary Norman Moore. Miss Moore was educated at Huntsville Female College, another Alabama Methodist institution, which had been destroyed several years earlier and not rebuilt. She was known for her work in the church, and she quietly favored greater opportunities for women. Determined to make the college one of the finest institutions

63 Fifty-Seventh Annual Announcement
64 Ibid., May 30, 1901; Limestone Democrat, March 19, 1901. of Athens Female College (Nashville, 1899), 35-39.
of its kind, Miss Moore conscientiously dedicated her time and her income to that end. Aiming to attract the most suitable young ladies as students, she began a program of refurbishing the plant. When the college opened for her first year in 1904, it was fully equipped with indoor plumbing, bathrooms, electricity, and every modern convenience.\(^65\)

During Miss Moore’s first ten years as president, Athens College became a cultural and intellectual center for a wide area of North Alabama and Middle Tennessee. To improve the image of the institution she had the charter amended and changed its name to Athens College for Women. She persuaded the North Alabama Conference to appropriate or raise money which made possible the installation of central heating and the building of McCandless and Brown Halls, the one for music and fine arts and the other to serve as a faculty-student dormitory.\(^66\)

Miss Moore quickly won the wholehearted support of the local community, the trustees, and the conference. Primarily because of its confidence in Miss Moore and the stature which Athens College had achieved under her leadership, the North Alabama Conference declined in 1907 to dispose of its interest in Athens College and join the Alabama Conference in launching in Montgomery a new college for women as they had done for men in Birmingham. Former president Glenn was among Miss Moore’s staunchest allies in the struggle to maintain conference loyalty to and support for Athens College.\(^67\)

The college plant was further improved by plastering the exterior of all the buildings and painting them white; the resultant unity of the gleaming buildings in their green setting made the college the most beautiful sight in the town.\(^68\) Continuing to grow and to improve its curriculum under Miss Moore, Athens College was granted in 1913 a Grade A rating by the General Board of Education of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.\(^69\)

Miss Moore was the first president to employ a permanent academic dean at Athens. This allowed the president greater freedom to promote and secure greater financial support for the school. When Miss Moore resigned the presidency in 1914, over $60,000 had been expended on the plant. She moved from the college into other church work and soon married Bishop James H. McCoy.

Thus, as shown in this article, Athens College weathered many difficulties in the forty-one year period designated as its middle years. Even so, it grew, particularly under Miss Moore’s administration, from something like a poor boarding school with a few students to one of the finest colleges for women in the South.

\(^{65}\) Limestone Democrat, Sept. 17, 1904.  
\(^{66}\) Ibid., January 19, March 30, 1906; Alabama Courier, Feb. 22, Aug. 16, 1905.  
\(^{67}\) Alabama Courier, February 10, 1907.  
\(^{68}\) Ibid., August 19, 1908.  
\(^{69}\) Ibid., May 21, 1913.