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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

At the fall meeting of 1850 the Synod of Mississippi was petitioned to divide by the lines of the Trinity and the Colorado Rivers, the Presbytery into three bodies, and sent a special delegate to prosecute the object. This delegate, McCullough, the only one who ever went to that Synod, reported at the next meeting the Presbytery divided.

Thereupon a petition was made out to the General Assembly to erect a Synod, composed of the three Presbyteries—Brazos, Eastern Texas and Western Texas. The request was granted, and the Presbyteries met at Austin, October 30, 1851.

The following letters were found among my father's papers and are published here for the first time, as they show something of the lives of several of the founders of Presbyterianism in Texas, and illustrate phases of the early history of Austin College. It is known that Rev. Hugh Wilson organized the first Presbyterian Church near San Augustine in 1838 and the Prospect Church, over which Rev. J. W. Miller was pastor for thirty-eight years, was the second, organized by Wilson, in 1839.

Hugh Wilson to Miller

String Prairie March 4 1856

Dear Brother

In the holy providence of God I am called to the painful duty of informing you of the death of my *dear wife*. Sabbath morning she ate breakfast with us as usual. At nine o'clock she declined going to sabbath school saying that her throat was sore. During the afternoon and early part of the night she still made more complaint. At 10 o'clock we thought it best to send for a physician. Before 11 o'clock it seemed as if she would die immediately but we succeeded in affording her temporary relief. Dr. Christian got here at one o'clock but before he arrived the disease had resumed its raging verulence. About 4 o'clock Monday morning she was mercifully released from the most extreme suffering. She retained the exercise of reason till her last breath but from the nature of her disease she could have but little deliberate thought. Early in the night she said she could not live, I told her it was evident she could not without speedy relief but still we hoped a blister we had applied might afford relief. Under these circumstances she expressed unwavering confidence in her prospects of future happiness and even a wish if it was the will of God to die.

Yesterday our whole neighborhood and a number of persons from String Prairie were with us at the burial. We had three

ministerial brethren of the Methodist Church with us. Thus suddenly has terminated an intimacy of more than fifty years standing, for when a boy of twelve years old I loved her with my whole soul. To us none of all the changes of this eventful period, no nor all put together, have any importance compared with the consequences arising from this long and happy connection. I feel thankful that I am the remaining sufferer. I have often expressed to her and to others a desire that I might be allowed to bury her. Providence has granted me this request. Were it not for the promise as thy day is so shall thy strength be, which I have so often found verified in my experience I should feel that poor Mary and myself have a gloomy prospect. May we not expect a special interest in your prayers and in the prayers of the christian friends of your neighbourhood who knew and loved my dear departed wife.

Young King, who preached for us yesterday, requested permission to publish the death of Mrs. Wilson in the Methodist Paper. Of course I could not object to it. If our Brother at Houston still keeps up his paper he will think it unkind in me that I did not ask the favour of him. I will give you a few items which you may use or not as you think best and ask that you will make out a short notice of her death and forward it to him with a request that he will publish it, letting him know that I requested you to do so. I have a special reason for this last request. Mrs. Wilson was born in N. Carolina at the close of the year 1794. When about 14 years of age she was admitted to full communion in the Presbyterian Church. We were married and went to the Chickasaw mission in 1822, where we remained ten years. Went to Teire in 32 and left for this country with my family early in 38. With our movements in this country you are familiar. Of course she has been thrown into connection with a great many persons of every possible shade of character. You are well acquainted with the leading features in the character of my dear wife, and with the place she has occupied in the feelings of those who knew her best, in this country. I can truly say her position wherever we have lived has been no less favorable. I have never known one individual to dislike Mrs. Wilson, even for a short time, and although apparently defective in the art of winning favour, somehow, all who knew her loved her. But she has gone where she will be esteemed not for her natural amiableness but because by grace she has been made to bear the image of the Son of God.

Let me hear from you soon.

Yours

Hugh Wilson