

# Newsletter

OF THE ATHENS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 7745 • Athens, Georgia 30604-7745

Fall 2008

*The Athens Historical Society presents*

## Dean William Tate: His Life and Times

*Mark your calendar to join us UGA Homecoming Weekend*

Sunday, October 19, 2008

2:00 p.m. at the Seney-Stovall Chapel



William Tate served as Dean of Men at the University of Georgia from 1946 until 1971. His title, however, does not nearly describe all that Dean Tate was to the university. He was described as a “strict disciplinarian, uncompromising enforcer, caring counselor, sympathetic listener, opinionated and outspoken faculty member, and dedicated churchman. He was more than an observer of change – he was a maker of history.”<sup>1</sup>

Tate was born September 21, 1903 in Calhoun, Georgia, and died in Athens on his 77th birthday. In 1920 he graduated from the Georgia Military Academy and entered UGA as a freshman, majoring in English and history. While at UGA, he was a member of Delta Tau Delta Fraternity and the Phi Kappa Literary Society. He received his Bachelor of Arts with Honors from UGA in 1924 and subsequently taught English at UGA for the next five years, in addition to serving as debate team coach. He received his Master’s Degree from UGA in 1927. Tate briefly served as track coach and head of the English Department at the McCallie School in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

During his fifty years at UGA, Dean Tate was especially concerned with the behavior of students. When confronted with a student participating in behavior not worthy of a Georgia boy, Tate would collect his ID card and hold it for ransom until the student made a trip to his office for a discussion of his actions. In the 1962-1963 school year alone, Dean Tate suspended 42 students, placed 257 on probation, and issued warnings to 1,430. But while Dean Tate was strict, he was also caring. When a student came to his office to inform Dean Tate that he must drop out of the university for financial reasons, Dean Tate sometimes would hand that student money that he had collected from students who had misbehaved or from his own pocket.

Dean Tate once said, “I’d rather be dean of men at Georgia than president of Harvard.” He loved the University of Georgia and its students, and they, in turn, loved him. This love established him as an institution on campus to the same degree that the Arch or the Chapel Bell is an institution. Charlayne Hunter-Gault, one of the first African American students to integrate the university, said, “Indeed, my faith in the future of a New South was shaped to a large extent by the actions and convictions of Dean Tate. I pray that his legacy lives on.” He was a man who would never say, “I’m sorry, I can’t help,” and for that, he is long remembered.

*Join us for a panel discussion of the life and times of Dean Tate, UGA and Athens. It is expected that the panel will include those who worked for Dean Tate, with Dean Tate, and maybe some who ran from Dean Tate. Many of those who were at UGA during the Tate era have a Dean Tate story. Please come to the meeting prepared to share your own special memories of Dean Tate with the audience. Memorabilia of this era will be welcomed for “show and tell.”*

**PLEASE NOTE:** This program will be videotaped for possible broadcast or podcast at a later date. Your voluntary attendance at this program indicates that you consent to be videotaped as a member of the audience, and to your incidental appearance in any broadcast or video program or podcast that may contain the resulting footage.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.uga.edu/tatedays/tate\\_bio.htm](http://www.uga.edu/tatedays/tate_bio.htm)

## More Tate Connections

Susan Frances Barrow Tate, granddaughter of Chancellor David Barrow, was born in Athens, Georgia on Nov. 23, 1908 and married William Tate on June 15, 1932. Educated at Lucy Cobb Institute and the University of Georgia, she received an A.B. in 1930 and a M.A. in 1938. Mrs. Tate was employed by the UGA Libraries from 1954 through 1969 first as a Library Assistant and then as the Assistant Special Collections Librarian with the Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library with John Bonner. She and Dean Tate had two sons, Benjamin Barrow Tate and William Jefferson Tate.

As a charter member of the Athens Historical Society, Mrs. Tate was instrumental in seeing that Special Collections at the UGA Library became the repository of AHS papers. In 1988 the Society launched the *Susan Frances Barrow Tate Fund* for the benefit of the Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library of the University of Georgia. The fund has accumulated more than \$30,000 to date as many interested people continue to make special annual contributions. In 1996, Mrs. Tate's memoirs and a collection of articles she had written through the years were published by the Society as *Remembering Athens* and quickly sold out.



*Dean and Mrs. Tate*

**Want to know more about Dean Tate or UGA?** Use Google to search for online resources such as these:  
<http://www.uga.edu/gm/300/Feat2.html> – cartoon history of the life of Dean Tate, from the *Georgia Magazine*  
<http://www.libs.uga.edu/hargrett/archives/uga97-085.html> – Hargrett finding aid for William Tate papers  
<http://www.libs.uga.edu/hargrett/speccoll.html> – Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library online  
 and a biography, *When Men Were Boys: An Informal Portrait of Dean William Tate*, by John W. English and Rob Williams.

## The Latest on the Oconee Hill Cemetery Book

Society members Gary Doster and Charlotte Marshall spent six weeks during February and March re-surveying the tombstones of Oconee Hill Cemetery preparatory to Charlotte's completing her long-in-progress work on who's where. The manuscript includes all inscribed tombstones, interment records [since 1897] for people who have no inscribed marker, and annotations from obituaries, newspaper articles, AHS publications, and Charlotte's large collection of Clarke County genealogies.

This volume is the culmination of almost 40 years of research and includes the genealogical contributions of many people, some of whom are now interred in Oconee Hill. Charlotte has read the majority of Athens newspapers on microfilm from the establishment of the cemetery in October 1856 until January 1897, from which point the Sexton's records are extant. She has also read many years past that point. Gary Doster has gathered hundreds of obituaries from microfilmed newspapers since March, and Eve Mayes has compiled several hundred more from online sources for Charlotte's use. Nelle Price Epps and Connie Epps Bond have also provided obituaries and other source materials.

Charlotte's aims are to name as many as possible of the people buried in Oconee Hill, to give dimension to their lives through the annotations, and in so doing present an unorthodox history of Athens. By studying the source material she used, readers can learn about the hundreds of people interred there whose stories had not been told. The publication of this book will be one of the events of the Society's 50th Anniversary Celebration in 2009.

### *The President's Corner*

Athens Historical Society is approaching its fiftieth anniversary. We still have a few of the charter members and we need to thank them profusely. We have had some exciting programs in recent in the past year and more are planned.

We do need to increase our membership – invite friends to come to our meetings. We want to undertake some worthwhile, lasting projects to mark our 50<sup>th</sup> year. Suggestions would be welcome. How can you help? Just ask!

We look forward to seeing you at the upcoming programs and our Christmas party.

*Mary Hoit Abbe*

## Charles Brockman and the Amazing Disappearing Desk of Georgia Governor Joseph E. Brown

The Spring meeting (March and May combined) of Athens Historical Society was held Sunday afternoon, May 4, 2008, at the Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscript Library on the third floor of the UGA Main Library. A panel of historians and archivists discussed the importance of the amateur collector in preserving memorabilia from the past as well as the roles in Georgia's history played by the Brown family from the 1850s until the early 1900s.

Among the treasures found in an old desk from the estate of the late Charles J. Brockman, Jr., a charter member of AHS, as well as a historian and collector, were a missing letter book kept by Joseph Emerson Brown, Georgia's governor 1857-1865. Also found were diaries of the governor's wife Elizabeth Grisham Brown (1826-1896), which shed important light on the his character and career, and the journals kept by their daughter, Sallie Eugenia Brown (1862-1942), telling of her grand tours with her mother through Europe and South America in the late 1800s. These items will become a part of the Hargrett Library.



*Georgia Governor  
Joseph Emerson Brown  
(1821-1894)*

Mary Ellen Brooks, director of the Hargrett Library, showed off some of these treasures at the meeting and discussed the significance of these additions to researchers and to the Hargrett Library. Noted historians Emory Thomas and Nash Boney also talked about the life and family of Charles Brockman and Governor Joseph E. Brown. Ken Thomas commented on the importance of making arrangements for the preservation of collections and documenting the provenance of each piece to assist future researchers in better understanding its historical significance.

Charles Brockman was the fifth generation to live in the family residence at 336 Hill Street in Athens.<sup>2</sup> He was the son of Dr. Charles J. Brockman, a chemistry professor at UGA, and his wife Marie Pitner Brockman, a nurse. Charles attended public schools in Athens and graduated from Emory University with a Masters Degree in History. He also attended the University of Georgia where he received several different degrees. His professors Emory Thomas and Nash Boney remembered that sometimes Charles knew more about a historical subject than they did. Brockman died May 11, 2007, and is buried in Oconee Hill Cemetery on West Hill with his parents and other kinfolks.

Ken Thomas, historian and genealogy columnist for the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, has researched the genealogy of the governors of Georgia for over 30 years. He shared the names of some of the better known descendants of Gov. Brown and pointed out that the funeral column on the Brown Cemetery lot at Oakland Cemetery in Atlanta, was toppled and broken into pieces during the March 14, 2008, tornado that hit Atlanta. Thomas commented on the prolific nature of the Brown family in recording their lives in letters, diaries, and scrapbooks. While the Hargrett Library has a great deal of Brown material, other large collections can be found at the Georgia Archives, and at the Atlanta History Center's Kenan Research Library. He also knows of at least one other scrapbook in private hands.

Thomas also gave several motivating factors in donating family papers, especially those of prominent people, or at least making sure whomever you have designated to handle your estate knows what your wishes are, rather than leaving it to chance or the most available relative, who may know little about the historic value or could care less. Thomas stated that 'everyone who has family heirlooms and family papers should have a plan in place for their disposition when they can no longer take care of them, have a specific person designated in their will to handle such, or make plans ahead of time for their donation to a proper repository. They should not end up on eBay.'

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<sup>2</sup> More information on Brockman's ancestors in Athens may be found in an article written for the *Athens Banner-Herald* by Tracy Coley Ingram in August 2000, online at [http://onlineathens.com/stories/083000/ath\\_0830000011.shtml](http://onlineathens.com/stories/083000/ath_0830000011.shtml).

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## **AHS Officers – 2008**

Mary Anne Hoit Abbe – President  
A. Blair Dorminey – Vice President  
Betty Alice Fowler – Secretary  
George W. Smith, Jr. – Treasurer  
Eve B. Mayes – Historian

## **AHS Board of Directors**

Jenny W. Best	Fritz Felchlin
Charles Carter	Elaine Collier Neal
Wilson Elder	James Reap

## **Upcoming AHS Meeting Dates**

**October 19, 2008 –**

**Dean William Tate: His Life & Times**  
**Seney-Stovall Chapel, 2:00 pm**  
*Note new date, time & place*

**December 7, 2008 – AHS Christmas Party**  
T.R.R. Cobb House

**January 18, 2008 – TBA**

## **AHS Website & Information**

*www.rootsweb/~gaahs*  
email: *ebmayes@windstream.net*

**Athens on Film** – Ruta Abolins, Director of the Walter J. Brown Media Archives & Peabody Awards Collection at the UGA Library, is interested in obtaining films and videotapes of the Athens area to add to the archives. They will convert 8mm, 9.5mm, 16mm, or VHS to DVD (within annual budget limits), in exchange for donating the original films to the Media Archives. They can also evaluate your collection and make other media transfer recommendations. Contact Ruta at 706-542-4757 or [abolins@uga.edu](mailto:abolins@uga.edu) for an appointment. You may also view any of their holdings free of charge. See website for information and hours: <http://www.libs.uga.edu/media/index.html>.

**Home Movie Day** is an annual event celebrating the art and style of home movies. Events vary by location; see [www.homemovieday.com](http://www.homemovieday.com). This year the UGA Media Archives will provide home movie preservation assistance and show the Peabody Award Winning film *My Father's Camera* by Canadian filmmaker Karen Shopsowitz on Thursday evening, October 16th at 7:00 p.m. at the Athens-Clarke County Public Library.

**Nominating Committee** – We hope you will get involved when the 2009 nominating committee contacts you! Next year is our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and we need your ideas and participation to make it a memorable year!