



STATE OF ALABAMA

ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
725 MONROE STREET
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36104
PHONE: 832-6621



ALABAMA REGISTER OF LANDMARKS AND HERITAGE NOMINATION FORM

COUNTY Colbert

PRESENT NAME LaGrange College Site HISTORIC NAME

LOCATION (Street and number)

TOWN (Give directions if rural) 4 miles southwest of Leighton

PRESENT USE Shrine HISTORIC USE Early Education

OWNERSHIP: Public (X) Private () Public acquisition being considered ()

OWNER'S NAME LaGrange Historical Society

MAILING ADDRESS

CONDITION: Excellent () Good () Fair () Ruins () Site (X)

INTEGRITY: Original site (X) Moved () When?

From where? Give details in significance

THREATS: No (X) Yes () By what?

RESTORATION WORK: Being considered () Underway () Completed () Not planned ()

SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT: Open land (X) Woodland () Scattered buildings ()

Highway building density () Commercial () Industrial ()

Residential () Rural (X)

If there are numerous buildings in the area, could this structure be part of a Historic District?

SIGNIFICANCE: Why is this important (X) associated with events, persons, or movements
Local (X) State (X) National ()
() a good example of a type or style of structure
() other

Explain: Site of Alabama's first college.

LA GRANGE COLLEGE SITE

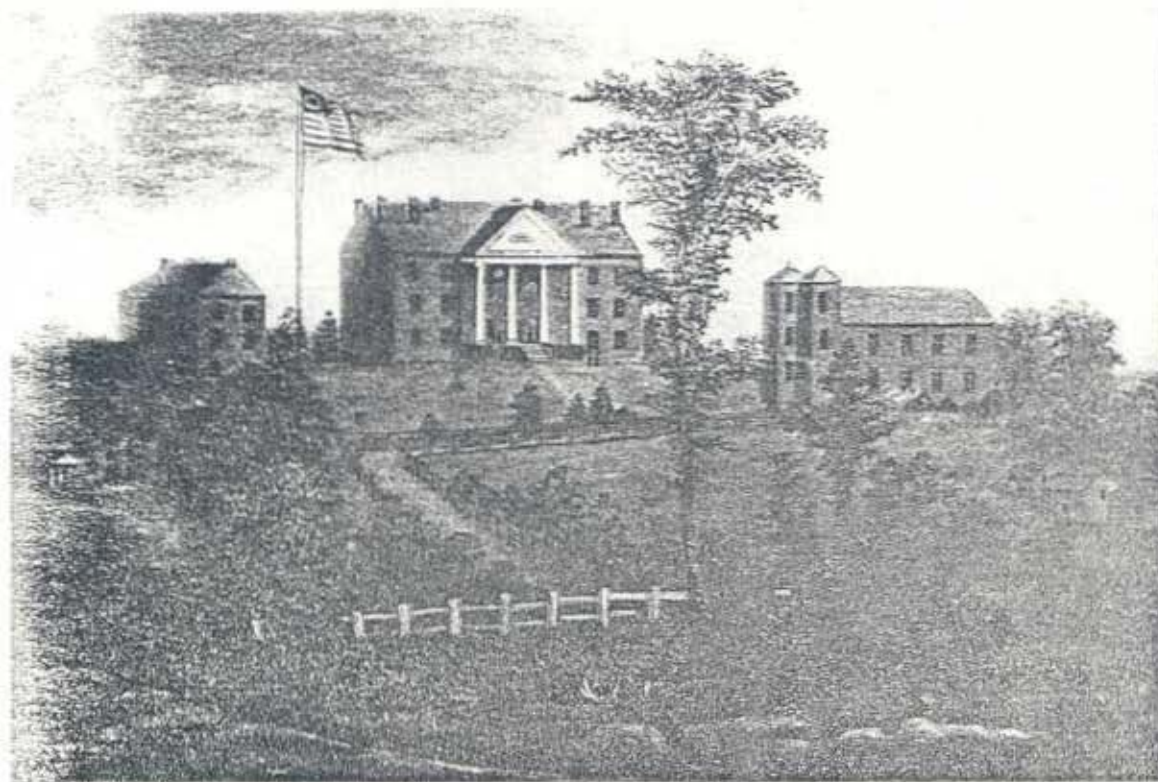
SIGNIFICANCE

LaGrange College Site is located four miles southwest of Leighton. La Grange College was Alabama's first college. It was established by action of the Tennessee and Mississippi Conferences of the Methodist Church and opened its doors on January 11, 1830. LaGrange became one of the South's finest centers of learning, contributing greatly to the development of the region and of the state. Some of Alabama's most distinguished leaders of the nineteenth century were educated here, including Confederate General Edward A. O'Neal (later Governor of Alabama), Jeremiah Clements, David P. Lewis and Dr. John A. Wyeth.

The Lafayette Female Academy, built in 1824-1825 on LaGrange Mountain, was well established by the time of the founding of LaGrange College. Dr. Daniel P. Bestor, a noted Baptist minister and a native of Connecticut who came to Alabama as a young man, opened this school to develop the cultural life of the Tennessee Valley. Dr. Bestor was described as a planter, statesman, philosopher, educator, and minister. He advocated a comprehensive public school system for Alabama, and as a member of the legislature worked to develop state support for education.

In the fall of 1854, the college was beset by financial difficulties, and 1855 President Richard W. Rivers accepted the offer of a building and better financial support in Florence, Alabama, and moved the college to that city. A legal question arose as to the use of the name LaGrange, so the relocated school was chartered as Florence Wesleyan University.

The original LaGrange College property was taken over by the State of Alabama in 1857 and became the LaGrange College and Military Academy. In 1860 it was renamed LaGrange Military Academy. The buildings of the institution as well as many other buildings and homes on the mountain and in the surrounding valley, including also Lafayette Female Academy, were burned by the 7th Kansas Cavalry Regiment, U.S. Army, commanded by Colonel Florence N. Cornyn under George G. Dodge, on April 28, 1863. The College site is marked by a large granite memorial erected by authorization of the Alabama Legislature in 1945, and administered by the LaGrange Historical Commission as a state shrine.



42 LA GRANGE COLLEGE SITE

Abraham Ricks had 300 slaves and a plantation of 10,000 acres. He died in 1832 and was buried in the cemetery atop LaGrange Mountain. A fine monument of Italian marble was erected over his remains. Heirs of Miss Bertie Ricks, granddaughter of the builder, are the present owners.

Source: Nina Leftwich, *Two Hundred Years at Muscle Shoals*

Governor of Alabama), Jeremiah Clemens, David P. Lewis, and Dr. John A. Wyeth. X

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LA GRANGE COLLEGE SITE

is located Four miles southwest of Leighton

East Colbert County

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a native of Connecticut who came to Alabama as a young man, opened this school to develop the cultural life of the Tennessee Valley. Dr. Estor was described as a planter, statesman, philosopher, educator, and minister of the gospel. He advocated a comprehensive public school system for Alabama, and as a member of the legislature worked to develop state support for education. The academy building was burned in 1863 at the time of the destruction of LaGrange College by Federal troops.

The LaGrange cemetery, located near the college site, contains the tomb of Abraham Ricks, builder of the plantation home called The Oaks. Ricks died in 1833 and over his remains was erected a fine monument of Italian marble. The rough blocks of marble were brought from Italy and hauled by sixteen yoke of oxen from Tuscumbia Landing to the mountain top. A sculptor from Italy carved the monument. President James W. Hardy of LaGrange College was buried in the cemetery in 1853.

The village of LaGrange, no longer in existence, contained about 400 people in its heyday. Other structures in the village and vicinity included a Baptist Church, later bought by the Methodists (the building stood until 1950), a hotel which possibly was a boarding house near the Female Academy, a harness factory, and many homes.

Sources: Harry V. Barnard, "LaGrange College: A Historical Sketch" in *Bulletin of the North Alabama Historical Association*, II, (1957); Nina Leftwich, *Two Hundred Years at Muscle Shoals*; Dr. B. F. Riley, *Makers and Romance of Alabama History* (n.p., 1915?); Dr. A. A. McGregor, *History of LaGrange College* (n.p., n.d.).

43 THE PREUIT OAKS (1847)

On the Old Moulton Road southeast of Leighton
East Colbert County

This old plantation home was built by a Dr. Napier. A one-half mile lane of cedars leads up to the home. In the spacious entrance hall is a beautiful stairway, hand-hewn and planed by slaves.

In the 1850's the plantation and home were sold to Colonel Richard Preuit who added much acreage to the estate. Preuit owned many slaves.

During the Civil War Federal soldiers plundered the home and damaged some of the furniture. The home has been in the Preuit family for over six generations, and is now owned by Mrs. Pope Pryor Preuit.

Source: Statements of Mrs. Hardy Evans, Leighton.

44 BATTLE OF TOWN CREEK

Historical marker on Alternate U. S. Highway 72,
one-half mile west of the creek

Town Creek

Early in 1863 Federal forces undertook to cut the Chattanooga-Atlanta Railroad to force Confederate General Braxton Bragg out of Tennessee. Colonel A. D. Streight of the Union Army moved his forces from Eastport, Mississippi, across northern Alabama, with the intention of striking the railroad at Rome, Georgia. General G. M. Dodge advanced his force from Mississippi to Tuscumbia to support Streight's movement. Dodge was met at Barton by General P. D. Roddey's brigade and was temporarily forced back to Corinth. Streight was harassed and delayed by Roddey's forces long enough to allow General N. B. Forrest time to get south of the Tennessee River and to overtake Streight's force and to capture it. This prevented the cutting of the railroad and the loss of the gun works at Dalton, Georgia.

The Battle of Town Creek was an incident of this campaign. When Streight left Tuscumbia to march toward Georgia, General Roddey moved to the neighborhood of Town Creek to unite with General Forrest, who was coming from Springfield, Tennessee. On April 23, 1863, Roddey so resisted and annoyed General Dodge in the Battle of Town Creek that a portion of his force, the 7th Kansas Cavalry under Colonel Florence Cornyn, moved up LaGrange Mountain and burned the buildings of LaGrange College and Lafayette Female Academy. They also put the torch to about one hundred homes, barns, fences and granaries in the area.

Sources: Dr. A. A. McGregor, *History of LaGrange College*; Nina Leftwich, *Two Hundred Years at Muscle Shoals*.



THIS IS THE SITE OF
LACHAISE COLLEGE
CHARTERED IN 1830 BY ACT OF
THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA
AN INSTITUTION OF HIGH ORDER FOR MEN
ATTENDED CHIEFLY BY STUDENTS
FROM THE SOUTHERN STATES
THE COLLEGE WAS BURNED APRIL 28, 1863
BY FEDERAL CAVALRY COMMANDED BY
COLONEL FLORENCE M. CORNYN
UNDER GENERAL GRANVILLE DODGE

PRESIDENTS

EDWIN ROBERT WALKER 1833 - 1840
DR. EDWARD WALKER 1841 - 1850
JAMES M. WALKER 1851 - 1855
REV. JAMES M. WALKER 1856 - 1860
DR. W. W. WALKER 1861 - 1863
REV. JAMES M. WALKER 1864 - 1865
DR. J. B. WALKER 1866 - 1867

ERECTED APRIL 1950
BY ACT OF LEGISLATURE IN
ALABAMA 1949

