

# Corona Female College

## Corona College Established

Corona Female College was established on July 15, 1857, in Corinth, Mississippi, when Corinth was still in Tishomingo County. The college was established by Rev. L. B. Gaston, a native of Gastonia, North Carolina. He was educated for the legal profession and later for the ministry. While attending a legal business in Clarksburg, Virginia, he met Susan P. Moore who later became his wife. They came by boat to Memphis and then to Oxford, Mississippi, where for 10 years Rev. Gaston served as pastor of the College Hill Church. The Gaston family then decided to move to Corinth and establish a church.

When Rev. Gaston decided to build a college in Corinth, ten acres of land was donated. The spot selected for the erection of the building was a knoll southwest of the railway junction. This knoll soon became known as College Hill. The college has been described as a “magnificent building surmounted by a lofty dome.” It was constructed of brick, three stories in height, and the cost is said to have been \$40,000.

## The College in Peace

There are a number of people in Corinth today whose relatives attended Corona College.

The scholastic year embraced two sessions of five months each. The first session commenced the third Wednesday in July, and the second ended on the last Friday in June. The school had two departments—the preparatory and collegiate. To enter the regular college course, the applicant must have passed examinations on American History, elementary arithmetic, geography, and English grammar.

## The College in War

Very early in the Civil War, Corinth was considered of great strategic value because of its railroads and its proximity to the Tennessee River.

The able-bodied men of Corinth enlisted early in the Confederate Army. Nearly all of the women and children together with the very old men took refuge outside the town. From the first, it seemed that a struggle for the possession of the place would be inevitable. The Gaston family was one of the few families that elected to remain in town and try to protect their property in the face of whatever might come.

The state troops of Mississippi chose Corinth as their first rendezvous. The hospitals were soon filled to overflowing. Every kindness in the power of the citizens was lavished upon the sick. Corona College served as a hospital, and Susan P. Gaston was one of the many southern women to earn the title of ministering angel because of her kindness to the sick and wounded boys in Gray.

After the war, Mrs. Gaston wrote, “In April 1862, the marshaled host went forth from our town to meet the advancing foe who came by way of the Tennessee River. The Battle of Shiloh took

place some 18 miles north of Corinth. The sound of guns first reached us on Sunday morning; we hurried from the breakfast table to the yard and listened to the continued roar. 'Twas like the far away sea waves when they break upon the shore. The sick from the hospitals were being sent away to make room for the wounded who would certainly be brought from Shiloh. Within a few days, the battle was over, with neither side able to continue the contest. During the four weeks following the battle, the town was filled with sick and badly wounded men.”

After Shiloh, Corinth was fortified against an impending attack by a line of breastworks encircling the town. It was, therefore, a great blow to the handful of citizens who remained to learn that General Beauregard deemed it best to quietly evacuate the place before it was attacked. The Federal armies after Shiloh had been reinforced greatly and every preparation made to wrest Corinth from the Confederates when the time seemed right.

Both towns of Corinth, Mississippi, and Iuka, Mississippi, have much in common. The towns mushroomed in the 1850s when news spread that rail transportation would reach their campsites. The towns were incorporated within a year of each other, and each town had an antebellum female college. Both towns also had a Civil War battle which was fought in 1862. These battles occurred less than a month apart. The Battle of Iuka was on September 19, 1862; and the Battle of Corinth was fought on October 3-4, 1862.

Another link in the history of the two towns occurred during the Battle of Iuka. Brig. Gen. Henry Little was killed. He had been sworn into the service of the Confederacy at Corona College in Corinth.

In 1870, Tishomingo County was divided into three counties—Tishomingo, Alcorn, and Prentiss.

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