

20 September 2010

A Common Error About One of Macon's Most Philanthropic Men



Elam Alexander (1796-1863) was born in Iredell County, North Carolina. He moved to Georgia in 1820 and settled in Macon in 1826. Mr. Alexander was a building contractor, architect, business man, and philanthropist for the city of Macon. His chief legacy are some of the homes he built that still stand today as well as his contribution to education. This contribution was written about in an article found in the 17 June 1912 edition of the *Macon Telegraph*.

ONE OF MACON'S MOST PHILANTHROPIC MEN

Elam Alexander, Founder of Educational Fund That Has Made Possible the Erection of Three Beautiful School Buildings Spoken of as Macon's Public Spirited Man.

The other day mention was made of the splendid educational fund left by Elam Alexander, and from which grew three beautiful school houses, with enough left for others some of these days. Mr. Alexander was alluded to as an unmarried man. This is a common error. If the question should be asked of the few old citizens of Macon it would be generally answered in the affirmative.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Alexander was a married man, having married the widow Stone. The wife is mentioned in his will.

In speaking of him yesterday an old citizen who knows of history said:

"The remark was made the other day, and you and I have heard it often, that Macon's best, most public-spirited, most philanthropic, most charitable and most enterprising man lived when the city was a village compared to its present population and area. Of course there are lots of good citizens living here now, but show me the Alexanders, the Traceys, the Baxters, the Hazelhursts, the Greshams, the Rosses, the Blooms, the Lamars, the Washingtons, the Whittles, the Simri Roses, the Dempseys and others who lived as much for their fellowmen and their town as for themselves.

As long as he has been recently mentioned, take Elam Alexander. He made his money as a contractor, and one of his largest jobs was Wesleyan college. The money he made was spent in the effort to make a larger city of Macon. There is no telling how much money he spent in boring an artesian well in front of the city hall. This was to be his contribution of good, pure water to the public. It was through no effort or fault of his that the drills struck an underground mountain of flint-like rock and the experiment failed. When Morse came along with his newly-invented telegraph, begging capitalists to take stock in the company, it was Elam Alexander who went to

Savannah after him and bought enough of the stock to bring the line through Macon, that his city should be in communication with the outside world. It was Elam Alexander who worked to bring the Central railroad from Savannah to Macon, and it was he who gave a shove to every public movement.

Through his earnings as a contractor and profits from investments he was able to save up some money. This money was left in trust for the education of the children of his city. In all Macon of today is there another Elam Alexander?"

To clarify the article, Elam Alexander married Ann G. Stone 28 October 1838 in Bibb County.¹ And the name is still connected to education in Macon today. An example is the Elam Alexander Academy on Ridge Avenue.

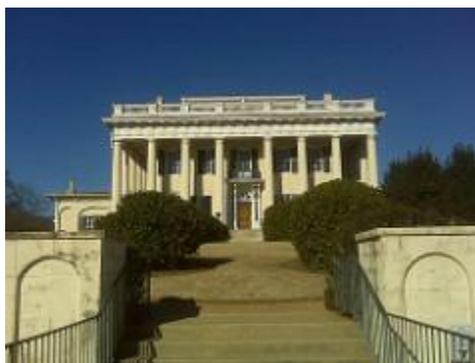
Though he had no formal education, Alexander proved to be a talented builder and shrewd business man. Strongly influenced by the Greek Revival architectural style, Alexander was primarily responsible for many of Macon's most impressive structures. He built several famous homes, the Bibb County Courthouse, and the first building housing the Georgia Female College. Alexander was also a successful businessman, either owning stock in or serving on boards of railroads, banks, a telegraph company, an iron and coal company, and a gas light company.²



Cadwalader Raines House located on Georgia Ave.
Built 1848 by Elam Alexander.⁴

Some of the works of Mr. Alexander were chronicled in [The Courthouse and the Depot: The Architecture of Hope in an Age of Despair](#) by William Caldwell. The Bibb County Courthouse (1829) and the building for the Georgia Female College at Wesleyan (1839) already mentioned, other works include the Holt-Peeler House (1840) and the Raines-Miller-Carmichael House (1848). The title goes on to describe Alexander: "He was a powerful stockholder in the Central of Georgia Railroad, the Monroe Railroad and also in the Southwestern Railroad, whose initial Board of Commissions he chaired. He became the first president of the latter road in 1847. Five years earlier, he had been the general contractor in charge of the grading of the difficult last fifty miles of the Central of Georgia Railroad from the Oconee River to the east bank of the Ocmulgee at Macon."³

Another home built by Mr. Alexander is the Woodruff House on Bond Street. Built in 1836, the Greek Revival mansion is now owned by Mercer University. It once hosted a ball for Winnie Davis, daughter of Jefferson Davis.⁵ This house was also once owned by [Col. Joseph Bond](#), one of the South's wealthiest cotton planters.



Upon his death in 1863, Elam Alexander was laid to rest in the Holly Ridge section of Rose Hill Cemetery.