

THOMAS MASON

We find the information for this biography in a publication of the Arkansas Conference College, Siloam Springs, Ark. The book was dedicated to Dr. Mason as a token of love and honor in his memory; as founder and for fifteen years president of the college, by his students and friends; a Year Book of 1915.

"The real monument of Dr. Mason is in the character and lives of the many young men and women who have throughout the years been under his instruction and influence.... "

Born Oct. 4, 1850, he was son of George Mason, of English-French extraction. George emigrated from Canada to Indiana in early life, was married to Miss Maria Gillam, daughter of John Gillam, Jasper county pioneer. There were ten children, Thomas and his twin sister were next to the youngest. When he was four years of age, his mother died. He was raised by a pious step-mother, a "shouting Methodist" and through her influence, was converted to Christ.

He attended public school in a building on a corner of his father's farm, and received as well an education as a pioneer.

When the Civil War broke out, two older brothers enlisted in the Union cause, leaving Thomas and brother Nate to assist their father on the farm. He knew hard work at an early age, herding cattle, reaping grain and etc.

Too young to join the army, he organized a military band which paraded the county, Thomas played the drum. He finished public school at the age of 15, then was taken by wagon to the Valparaiso Male and Female College, where he started his education, in preparation for the ministry. He returned home to teach school for a year. David A. Rogers was one of his pupils, and became an able M.E. minister, as well as a lifelong friend.

He entered Asbury (now DePauw) University in 1874, where he completed the four year course in three, receiving his Master's Degree there also. On Sept. 20, 1874, he entered the North West Conference, and spent seven years in the ministry, serving Monticello and Lafayette, among others. He had married, while in college, Miss Virginia Dell, They had five children, his wife died in August, 1892.

In 1881, he was asked by Dr. Rust of the Freedmans Aid Society to start a school for colored people. He organized what is now Philander Smith College, with fourteen students and one dilapidated building. After sixteen years, when he left, there were 600 students and several good buildings.

He was married secondly to Miss Rebecca M. Green. She had been a teacher and became his efficient helper. They had one daughter, Mary Mason. He served as President of the Union school in Little Rock for two years, then began his task of founding Arkansas Conference College. He was there for fifteen years, when his health began to fail, and he was ill for a long time. Death came Dec. 24, 1914. A very large number of people attended his funeral services. A corps of students served as pall bearers.

This book goes on, as a year book for the college, with many pictures, etc. and many expressions of appreciation to Dr. Mason.