

**Whit Stiles** graduated with a Bachelor of Music degree from Belmont University, Nashville, Tennessee in 2005. He is the author of numerous Grandin Hood books, a national award-winning advertising copywriter, and a recording studio musician. Stiles is the author of Grandin Hood's *NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION: A Century of Impact*.

**Robin Hood** was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for photography while a newspaper photojournalist in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He studied painting at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, which presented him the Distinguished Alumnus Award during its Centennial Celebration. Hood served as an Army lieutenant in Vietnam. He has photographed more than fifty books about American communities and institutions.

**Med Dement** began his 40-year photography career as a photojournalist at the *Chattanooga News Free Press*, at the same time creating art photographs for free-lance clients, and eventually opening his own studio photographing people and places for corporate clients, schools, magazines and books. Dement has won professional awards for photos in regional and national publications. He currently lives in Harrison, Tennessee.

**Jeff Carroll** is freelance art director based in Franklin, Tennessee with over 35 years of experience. He has been awarded numerous national and international awards for his work in book and magazine design, as well as corporate communications and brand development.

**Grandin Hood Publishers**, founded in 1996, is a Franklin, Tennessee publisher of commemorative books celebrating the stories of American organizations, historic sites, and foundations.



GRANDIN HOOD  
*Publishers*

www.grandinhood.com



GRANDIN  
HOOD

UNION UNIVERSITY  
TWO CENTURIES OF CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

# UNION UNIVERSITY

TWO CENTURIES OF CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP



Over two centuries, Union University has grown from a small, regional school to a top-tier national university. But the journey to today is fraught with hardship and catastrophe, eclipsed only by the divine providence of Jesus Christ and the faithfulness of Union's faculty, staff, and students.


While Union University is nearly as old as Jackson, Tennessee, itself, the institution is the amalgamation of three different colleges with two distinct educational missions: religious studies and liberal arts education. Religio et eruditio. Jackson Male Academy was established in 1823 to provide the town's boys with a traditional liberal arts education. In 1844, the school was granted a new charter as West Tennessee College to attract a broader student population from throughout the region. Meanwhile, in Murfreesboro, a group of Baptists undertook the mission to educate and prepare students for careers in ministry. Intended to be a home for all of the state's fractured Baptist populations, they named the new institution Union University.

As the Civil War, its resulting financial pressures, and a cholera outbreak eventually upended each institution, God faithfully led the Tennessee Baptist Convention to negotiate a merger that combined the physical resources of West Tennessee College with the uniquely Baptist mission of Union University in Murfreesboro. In 1874, Southwestern Baptist University was established in Jackson—known since 1907 as Union University.

The story of Union University is one of perpetual renewal and restoration. It is the story of how God has directed faithful servants to navigate a whirlwind of change, hardship, and tragedy to light a beacon of hope through Christ-centered education. Celebrate 200 years of religio et eruditio with *UNION UNIVERSITY: Two Centuries of Christian Leadership*.

(Front cover) Miller Tower's 49-bell carillon and the domed Logos building, ensconced on the Great Lawn, are beacons for spiritual and academic guidance.





This book is dedicated to the glory of God,  
who has guided and sustained Union University over the past 200 years  
and to all the Union alumni, students, parents, employees, trustees, supporters, and friends  
who have helped make the institution what it is today.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*UNION UNIVERSITY: Two Centuries of Christian Leadership* was produced with the collegial support and efforts of many individuals at Union University. In particular, the publisher expresses deep appreciation to Tim Ellsworth, Associate VP for University Communications, for his initial vision and continuing interest in producing this celebration of Union's Bicentennial. Thank you also to Union archivist Savannah Patterson, Public Services Librarian, for her tireless efforts in researching and providing images from the Union University Archives. We would also like to recognize the talents the many Union photographers whose images appear in this book.

Appreciation also to Jack Wood, Tennessee Room Librarian at the Jackson-Madison County Library; the Rutherford County, Tennessee Historical Society; and the Rutherford County Archives for providing rare and important documents, illustrations, and archival photographs.



## FOREWORD

*by Samuel W. “Dub” Oliver, Ph.D.*

PRESIDENT, UNION UNIVERSITY

For 200 years, Union University has been renewing minds, shaping hearts, and transforming lives. Many schools have come and gone over the last two centuries. Other schools, founded upon a commitment to the truth of God’s Word, have long since abandoned that commitment.

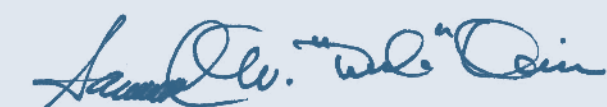
But not Union University. Union remains as resolute and committed to its biblical foundation as ever. At Union, we believe God has spoken to us through the Scriptures. We believe the Bible is trustworthy, reliable, and true. We believe Jesus Christ is our only hope for salvation. And we believe that pursuing Him and loving Him with our hearts, souls, minds, and strength is what God has called us to do.

This is why Union has remained committed to its mission of providing Christ-centered education that promotes excellence and character development in service to Church and society. We pursue this mission through our commitment to our core values of being excellence-driven, Christ-centered, people-focused, and future-directed.

For two centuries, God has proven Himself faithful to Union University, time and time again. God has guided Union through times of war and times of peace, through fires and storms, through prosperity and want, through blessing and trial.

It’s fitting for us to celebrate Union’s bicentennial during the 2022-2023 academic year and offer thanksgiving to God for His sustaining grace over the past two centuries. The impact of a Union education over its long history is incalculable. How many lives have been changed because of what Union has done? How many people have come to faith in Christ? How much better is our world today? Only God knows, but I’m sure we would be amazed at the answers.

We hope you’ll enjoy the beautiful story of Union’s history that you’ll find in this book. We hope it will spur memories of your own experience at Union and reflection upon the role that this institution has played in your life. And we hope, ultimately, that it will cause you to thank God for the blessing of Union University.







## 200 YEARS OF RELIGION AND EDUCATION

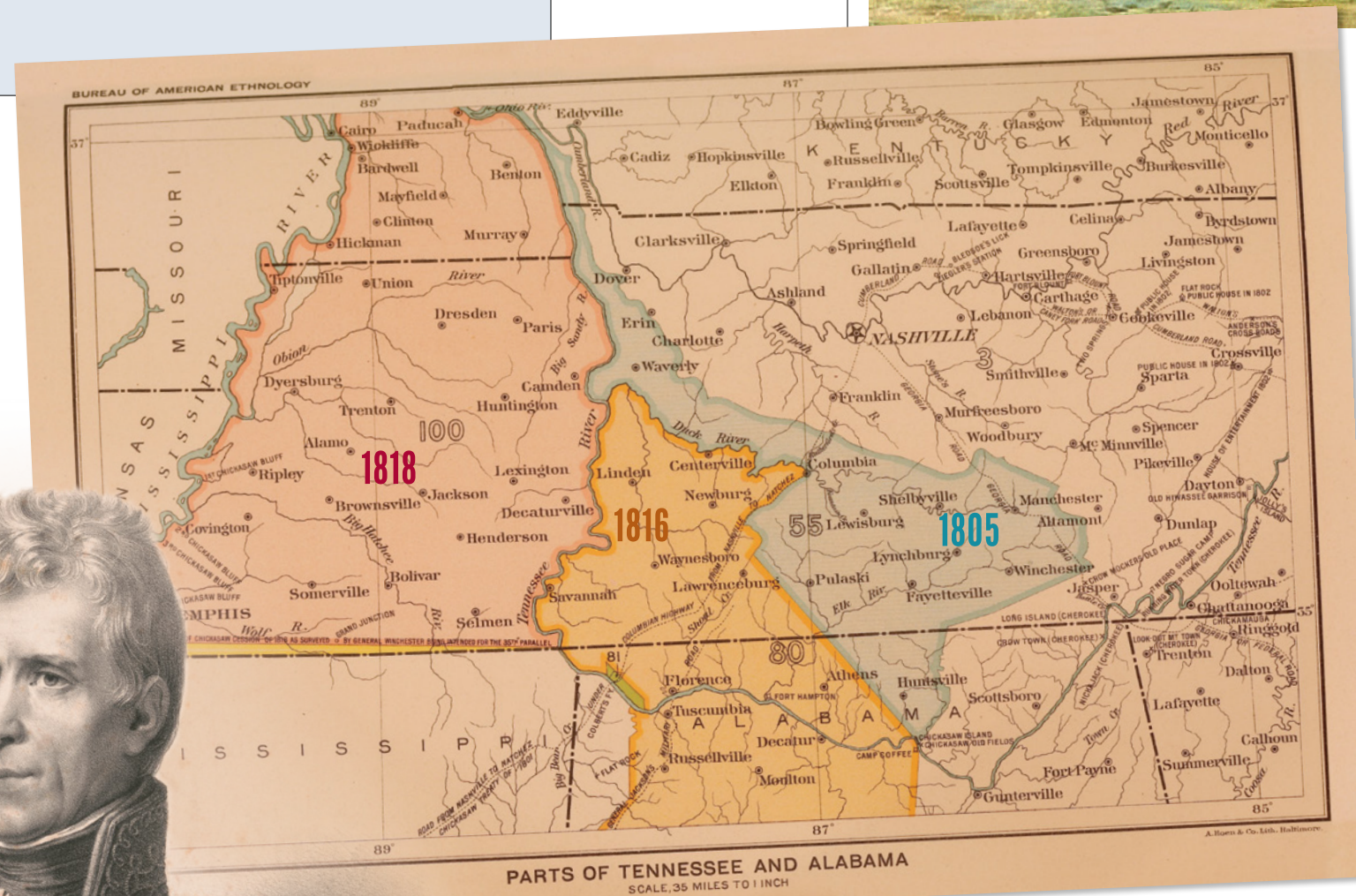
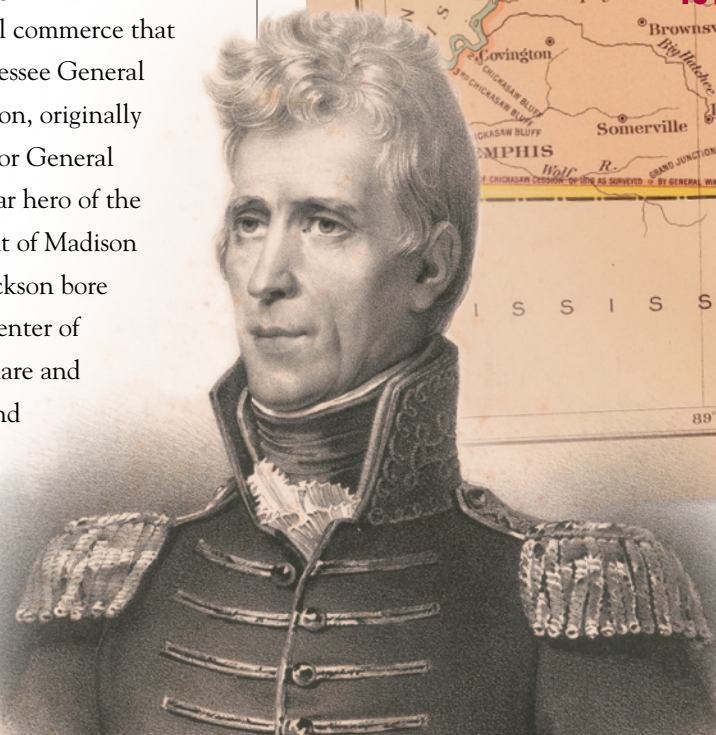
**R**eligio et eruditio. Religion and education. Many institutions operate without an active awareness of their history, but Union University has always seemed to hold two identities at once. On the one hand, the story of Union University represents a two-hundred-year lineage of institutions based in Jackson, Tennessee. On the other hand, it is rooted in the desire to unite Baptists in Tennessee and beyond as the Southeast’s preeminent Christian university.

For those who have shared in the history, no proof of God’s faithfulness is required beyond their own experiences. Yet the history of the institution now known as Union University bears ample testimony across centuries and a whirlwind of change. This account bears testimony to how, for two hundred years, the faculty and students of Union University have held their commitment to God and to academic integrity in both hands, confronting every victory, difficulty, opportunity, and mistake with the humility of people who endeavor to always move in the direction of Jesus Christ.

### A JACKSON ORIGINAL

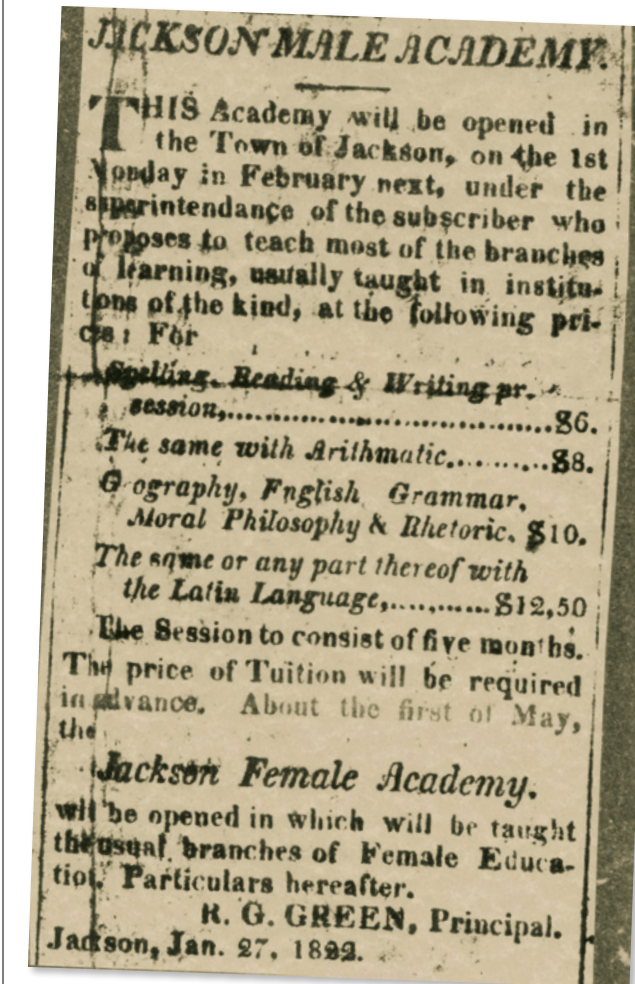
For nearly as long as there has been a Jackson, Tennessee, there has been Union University—though not always by that name. Despite two decades of statehood, West Tennessee was still a frontier territory until the end of the 1810s. The Chickasaw Treaty of 1818 opened the state’s Western District to settlement. As Tennesseans followed opportunities west, a community emerged along the Forked Deer River as a hub for the agricultural commerce that developed in the area. The Tennessee General Assembly officially decreed Jackson, originally called Alexandria and renamed for General Andrew Jackson, then the popular hero of the Battle of New Orleans, as the seat of Madison County. Despite its small size, Jackson bore all the trademarks of a bustling center of commerce. Around its public square and on its six streets, visitors could find

Future president and Tennessee native Andrew Jackson was a folk hero after the Battle of New Orleans and chosen as the namesake for the bustling town of Jackson in 1822.



law offices, a drugstore, a newspaper, inns, churches of various denominations, and even a chapter of the Masons. There was also a school.

Founded by R. G. Green in 1823, Jackson Male Academy offered students a traditional liberal arts education that included the “three Rs,” geography,



Union University may owe its name to the school founded in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, but its heart has always been in Jackson, Tennessee. Jackson Male Academy was founded 1823 and is the first of three institutions established that would later merge assets into modern-day Union University.

moral philosophy, and Latin. Jackson Female Academy soon followed. The school received its charter in 1825 and grew across multiple locations in downtown Jackson from Lafayette Street to College Street. The latter location was purchased for one dollar from board chair Dr. William E. Butler, and served as a hub of community life in Jackson. In addition to school classes, both the Presbyterian and Episcopal churches met in the academy’s facilities, as did social and intellectual clubs like the Jackson Female Tract and Bible Society and the Jackson Lyceum, which hosted conversations and debates on progressive topics such as the government’s treatment of Native Americans. There were no dorms; students either lived at home or boarded with families of other students. The faculty were transient, often staying only a short while due to the rapid western expansion of opportunities in Memphis and beyond the Mississippi River. In short, Jackson Male Academy was a vital part of Jackson’s community, but lacked the stability and appeal found in institutions in Nashville and Knoxville.

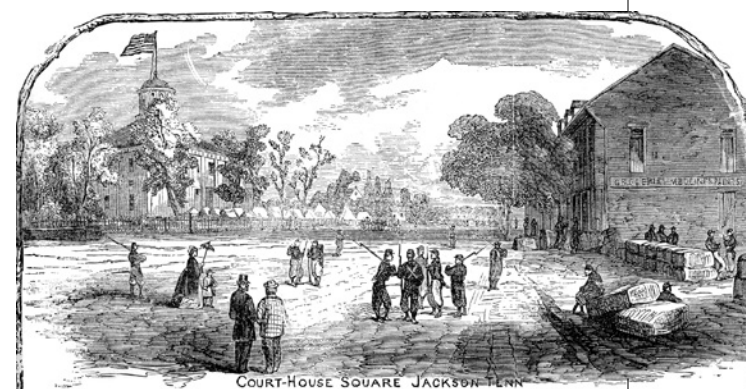
The Chickasaw Treaty of 1818, or Treaty of Old Town, ceded Chickasaw territory in Western Tennessee and Kentucky to the United States government for a fee of \$20,000 per year for fifteen years, relocating the tribe to western lands in modern-day Oklahoma.



Jackson's citizens demanded a more prestigious school that kept their students closer to home. Trustees at Jackson Male Academy agreed and declared their interest in establishing "a seat of liberal education in their vicinity, where their sons could be educated more immediately under their own care and supervision." It all came together in 1844. First, the state granted a charter under the name West Tennessee College. Second, a larger property was made available to the college by trustee Andrew L. Martin. The forty-six-acre hill site was beautiful, full of oak groves and potential. Martin's home became the first academic building, College Hall, and it was here that the college would remain until 1975.

West Tennessee College certainly had a foot in the church, but its emphasis was the liberal arts. The board and faculty represented an array of professional disciplines and denominational backgrounds, much like Jackson itself. In kind, the student body was largely local, with nearly two-thirds of its forty-five students hailing from West Tennessee. WTC had just two faculty members: Reverend Samuel M. McKinney, who served as president and professor of moral philosophy, and Joseph Dixon, who taught math, natural philosophy, chemistry, and languages. The college carried on through several changes in leadership, continuing to draw on faculty with strong academic backgrounds and experiences in church leadership.

Though local in its emphasis, West Tennessee College had its share of national engagement. In 1846, the Mexican-American War drew from the humble college to support the ranks of Madison County's regiment. The 2nd Tennessee Regiment, or "Avengers" as they were known, were hailed as the state's best fighters. When the Civil War broke out, many WTC students were called upon to fight for the Confederacy. When Union troops took Jackson in 1862, it occupied the campus for a year and used College Hall as a hospital—a service for which Congress reimbursed the



college in 1905. In its humble history, WTC's emphasis on strong education and moral character had produced war heroes, newspaper publishers, business leaders, state congressmen, and even a United States senator and Supreme Court justice, Howell E. Jackson.

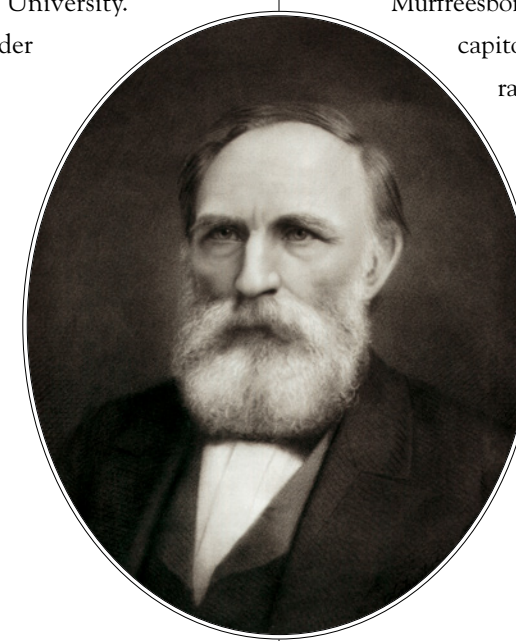
Then the Panic of 1873 nearly undid it all. The crippling recession devastated Jackson's railroad industry, enrollment dropped, and the college could barely afford to keep its doors open. The trustees looked to the growing presence of Tennessee Baptists as a potential source of students and faculty. The future of West Tennessee College required a realignment and unification of entities. The trustees looked east.

### A PROPER SCHOOL FOR TENNESSEE BAPTISTS

As West Tennessee College sowed roots in Jackson, Baptists in the center of the state confronted a gaping hole in their mission: no institution existed to properly educate Baptist children and future Baptist ministers. Proper training was at the forefront of a denomination devoted to doctrine; however, Baptists were also devoted to their autonomy. An attempt to establish a Tennessee Baptist Convention (TBC) in 1833 lasted less than a decade. Instead, the state's Baptists elected to create three conventions along the regional lines of West, Middle, and East.

The short-lived state-wide convention did have time, however, to set a lasting legacy in motion. In 1836, the TBC established the Education Society for Ministerial Improvement to address the need for a well-trained pastoral ministry. The committee's chairman was Robert B. C. Howell, pastor of Nashville's First Baptist Church and editor of the publication *Tennessee Baptist*. Howell and company wanted a university in the middle of the state, but realized that regional loyalties required branches in both the east and west. The committee settled on Murfreesboro, due to it being the geographic center of the state. In a nod to all Tennessee Baptists, they named the new college Union University.

It was to be a school for all under the leadership of the Baptists, from academy-aged children to pastoral candidates, who received free tuition as part of the denomination's desire to attract and train ministers. But first, the school had to be built.



Howell looked for help outside of Tennessee, calling on Benjamin F. Farnsworth of Kentucky. A former president of Georgetown College in Kentucky and a Dartmouth graduate, Farnsworth understood the makings of a university. In 1841, Farnsworth hired an architect to draft plans. He also hired a former student, who just so happened to attend Howell's church in Nashville, as the university's first professor and eventual president, Joseph H. Eaton.



Tennessee Baptists consulted with Benjamin F. Farnsworth, a former president of Georgetown College in Kentucky, to develop plans for the new college.



Union University of Murfreesboro (UUM) opened May 8, 1841, in a two-story log cabin just southeast of town. Though a more permanent campus was years away, the site had potential and history—President James K. Polk had attended school in the building.

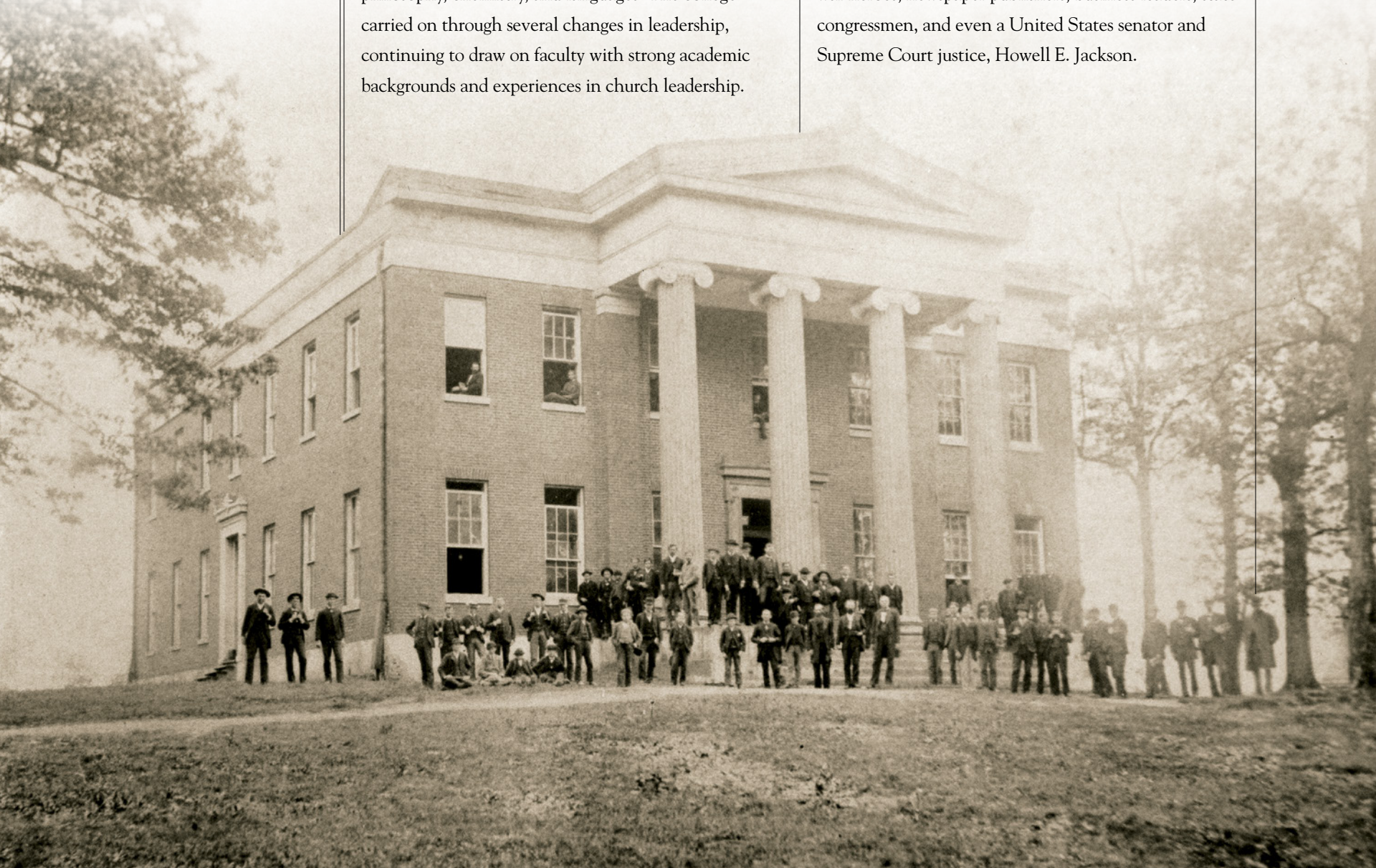
Murfreesboro, thanks to its stint as state capitol, was well-situated along the railway line between Nashville and Chattanooga, making it an easy place to settle. A state charter was granted in 1842, and the trustees set about the daunting task of raising funds for the new campus. This took years, and in 1845, the pages of *Tennessee Baptist* appealed to

Joseph H. Eaton, Union University's first professor and eventual first president, was recruited by Farnsworth.

Robert B. C. Howell served as pastor of First Baptist Church in Nashville as well as editor of *Tennessee Baptist*. In 1836, Howell led the Tennessee Baptist Convention committee that established Union University in Murfreesboro for the purpose of educating future Baptist ministers.

Right: The Union Army took Jackson on its southern march to Mississippi and remained for a year after the Confederacy destroyed the railroad tracks that led to Vicksburg. College Hall served as a hospital during the occupation.

Bottom: College Hall, the first academic building at West Tennessee College, was originally the home of trustee Andrew L. Martin, who offered his property for the new institution. The college remained at this site until 1975, when Union University relocated to its current campus.





## DISTINGUISHED GUEST SPEAKERS

*Engaging Our Students By Engaging the World*

The Union University core values of being excellence-driven, Christ-centered, people-focused, and future-directed are the lens through which our students are prepared to embrace the future challenges and opportunities that await beyond the gates of their campus experience. The guidance of faculty and staff in developing character, leadership skills, and world cultural engagement is enhanced by the student's exposure to thoughts and experiences imparted by distinguished, world renowned speakers. Pictured are a brief few of the legion of world leaders and personalities that have visited the Union campus in recent years, inspiring students and faculty with their personal stories and unique vision of world events.

- 1 George H.W. Bush  
41st President of the United States, 2004
- 2 Nick Saban  
Head Coach, University of Alabama Football Team, 2013
- 3 Mike Huckabee  
Former Governor of Arkansas, 2014
- 4 Bob Dole  
Former U.S. Senator for Kansas, Senate Majority Leader and former Republican Presidential nominee, 2005
- 5 Winston Spencer-Churchill  
Grandson of Sir Winston Churchill, British Prime Minister, 2006
- 6 Condoleezza Rice  
Former Secretary of State under President George W. Bush, 2009
- 7 Leon Panetta  
CIA Director, Chief of Staff to Former President Bill Clinton, 2007
- 8 Terry Bradshaw  
Former quarterback for the multi Super Bowl-winning Pittsburgh Steelers and current sports analyst and co-host of Fox NFL Sunday, 2012
- 9 Peyton Manning  
Former Quarterback for University of Tennessee, Super Bowl Champion Indianapolis Colts, and later the Denver Broncos, 2009
- 10 Dr. Ben Carson  
Former neurosurgeon and United States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development under President Donald Trump, 2013
- 11 Laura Bush  
Former First Lady of the United States, 2010
- 12 George W. Bush  
43rd President of the United States, 2017
- 13 Alan Page  
Minnesota Vikings NFL Hall of Famer and Minnesota Supreme Court Justice, 2003
- 14 Tony Blair  
Former Labour Party Leader and Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, 2011
- 15 Margaret Thatcher  
Former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, 1998
- 16 Mikhail Gorbachev  
Former Soviet Union leader, 2000

