

CHATTOOGA ACADEMY



CHICKAMAUGA CAMPAIGN HERITAGE TRAIL

Chattooga Academy served as Confederate Gen. Braxton Bragg's headquarters from September 10-17, 1863. Bragg reportedly prepared for the Battle of Chickamauga under a large oak



BRAGG'S OAK

tree in front of the building; the tree, later known as Bragg's Oak, was destroyed during a storm in the 1920's. During the Battle of LaFayette on June 24, 1864, Confederate Capt. William V. Harrell, under Gen. Gideon Pillow's command, attacked Union troops using the building to store supplies.

The Georgia General Assembly authorized constructing an academy in

Walker County in 1835. Chattooga Academy derived its name from the name of the area's original settlement, Chattooga or Chattoogaville, and was later called LaFayette Academy. Completed in 1836 on land donated by Spencer Stewart Marsh, Chattooga Academy is believed to be Georgia's oldest remaining brick schoolhouse. Built for about \$800, the building replaced a log cabin school and consists of one large room on each floor with a chimney at each end. The bricks were manufactured in Rock Spring.

Before LaFayette Presbyterian Church was built south of the school, area residents organizing the church met in the



JOHN B. GORDON

school and other area buildings until 1848. That church, which stands at the intersection of South Main Street and Withers Street, served as a hospital after the Battle of LaFayette.

Spelling, grammar, reading, geography, philosophy and ancient language comprised the curriculum. A Presbyterian minister served as the school's first teacher. Boys and girls attended the school. City leaders decided in 1849 to build a Female Academy nearby, and the Chattooga Academy building became the Male Academy. The Female Academy building was wood, painted white and had several windows; in June 1864, Union troops dismantled the Female Academy building and built a fortification with the wood. The brick building and a large two-story, frame building built northwest of the school in 1897 functioned as a school, called LaFayette Academy, for area children until 1921, when a new school was built.

In the 1920s, the building was renovated and became a meeting place for LaFayette women's clubs for many years. The windows and doors were replaced and the interior remodeled extensively during the renovation; however, the building's exterior appears much as it did before the alterations. By 1925, the building was named after John B. Gordon, who had attended the academy as a child and went



LAFAYETTE ACADEMY

on to serve as a Confederate general, U.S. senator and Georgia governor. The William Marsh Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution dedicated the building as John B. Gordon Hall on Nov. 15, 1936. While attending the school, Gordon and his brother roomed with the Marsh family in the neighboring house. The Marsh and Gordon families were friends, and "Uncle Zack," as Gordon's father was called, visited the Marsh House frequently.

The LaFayette Area Chamber of Commerce located in the building in 1971. In the 1990s, the City of LaFayette used the building as an office and community meeting facility. The building is listed as Chattooga Academy on the National Register of Historic Places.

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