

**BAXTER SEMINARY AS SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF A STUDENT
AND RELATED TO HER DAUGHTERS (#99)**

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Pg. 29 – Baxter Seminary was a boarding high school run by the Methodist Church and supported by gifts from more fortunate people, mainly from the North. My education was sponsored by the Old Hickory Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. I have always been grateful for their sponsorship.



Sarah Elizabeth Ford Garrison

There were about one hundred students who stayed in the dormitories each school year. The girl's dormitory was Ivy Hall; the boy's dormitory was Ward hall, each named for the person who donated the money to build it. We lived under very strict rules and became like one big family. It was a very satisfying experience for which I am always grateful.

In addition to the dormitory students busses brought other students every day from around Putnam County. The dormitory students were allowed to go home once every six weeks for the weekend. We were allowed to go to town twice a week for supplies, but with a chaperone. If you left campus for a date, a family member had to accompany you. We were allowed dates on Saturday nights and

Sunday afternoons in the Social Hall and both had to be chaperoned. We were required to attend the eleven o'clock service at the church in town on Sunday morning; Wednesday and Sunday nights were your choice. Blessing or grace was presented before each faculty member was required to take turns leading this devotional. On Sunday night after dinner there was a short Vesper service.

Phiffer Hall was the main school building, named in honor of the person who donated the money to build it. While I was at Baxter Seminary (1938-1942) a health clinic was built, so if we became ill. We received medical attention right on campus. In residence was a nurse. Also nearing completion in 1942 was a central heating plant and a science building in conjunction with the trades building which had been there many years.

During the summers, several students stayed on campus to work. The school received large groups of church member's children for activities similar to summer camp. They had classes and activities during the day and the summer residents prepared meals, etc. for them. My first experience with preparing chickens for a large group happened during one of those summers. The school had a farm and twenty-seven live chickens were brought in for the Sunday dinner. I did not have to kill any of them, but I plucked feathers off a few and before the night was over I had learned how to cut up a chicken for frying.



Standing Ms. Kanable. Seated Ms. Ethylene Hill. Seated legs stretched out Vera Swallows. Seated top center Tim Denny. Taken on steps of a building at Baxter Seminary.

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A Dr. Odell for New York came once a year to our school and stayed about two weeks. He was a very kind hearted man and we all loved him like a father. Usually before he was to leave, he went to Cookeville and purchased bushels and bushels of fresh vegetables and fruit. He also purchased some kind of meat that we usually did not have at the school. The girls assigned to the kitchen prepared this feast for Sunday dinner.

We had Chapel every school day in which we usually had a guest speaker. One day I decided not to attend chapel instead I returned to the dormitory to work those thirty minutes on something. I had only just arrived when the dietician who was in the dormitory as well received a call to send me back to chapel. You see, we were seated alphabetically and roll call was taken

every day. When I arrived back at the chapel someone was speaking so I sneaked in and took my seat and proceeded to day-dream through his talk until he said, "If Abe Martin and Elizabeth Ford will come forward, I'll present the awards." I was so shocked and dumb-founded that I could not move. A boy from West Virginia sitting next to me literally picked me up and sat me out in the aisle. I made it to the podium to accept my award, a locket, the speaker, Mr. Keith Crawford, an attorney, said, I didn't have time to get my picture made to go in this." To which I replied "You can bring me one later." From then on he called me his daughter and every time he passed through Baxter, he made time to stop and visit me. The award was for all around improvement through the year, such as meeting people, conversing with strangers, etc.

My last semester at Baxter Seminary, I was the breakfast cook. Each evening I had to go to the kitchen to get the alarm clock and the keys to the kitchen. Afterward I went to my room and shortly to bed. Around eleven one night three girls decided to go down the fire escape, meet some boys and go out. They chose the fire escape just outside my room. Someone heard them and thinking it was someone trying to break in went after Miss Ethelyn P. Hill, Dean of Baxter Seminary. Miss Hill came to me and got the keys. She opened every room to determine which girls were missing. When she did, she got a chair, sat down by the widow the girls had used and waited. About three a.m. the girls returned and started climbing the fire escape. Miss Hill stuck her head out the window and told them to come to the front door. The girls turned loose of the fire escape, dropped to the ground and left campus again. It was six p.m. that evening before they were found in Cookeville. All were expelled. However, one girl was allowed to return to school later because she confessed all.

My experiences at Baxter Seminary served me well for my entire life. We received a very good education and learned many life skills and lessons. Had it not been for Baxter Seminary many of us would not have had the education or the opportunities afforded us there.

Story compiled and edited by Doris Garrison Gilbert and Linda Garrison Willoughby. By Sarah Elizabeth Ford Garrison.

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