

Downtown Athens hotel was popular place to stay for more than century

Note: This article is from Treasures of Athens and Limestone County by Betty L. Taylor. This fully-indexed, hardbound, 394-page book, published by the Friends of the Archives, includes hundreds of photos and information about businesses of Athens and Limestone County. You can purchase your copy at the Limestone County Archives for \$50, and all proceeds benefit the Friends of the Archives in their support of the work of the Limestone County Archives.

The Leslie Hotel was the successor of the Bass Hotel that had been built in the 1830s by Thomas and Sallie Bass who came from Virginia and settled in Athens. It was a popular place for travelers and for local gatherings and it was said that Thomas Bass "Fed more people without compensation than any man in the state, and seldom did he demand pay of his boarders, and far less seldom did some of them offer him pay."

During the war the hotel burned and Dr. William Leslie, son-in-law of Thomas Bass, rebuilt the hotel and opened it in 1868 under the name of Leslie Hotel. Dr. Leslie operated the hotel until 1877 when the Stinnett family took over and announced that boarders would be accepted.

In 1885 Col. McMeekin took over the management and changed the name to McMeekin House. The hotel drew the attention of G.W. Stalcup, an agent for Baldwin and Company, and in June 1888 he rented the hotel with plans to make it a fashionable music company.

The hotel passed through a few other owners, including Mrs. Mollie Reed, who opened a boarding house in the hotel in 1894, before Col. Richard Pepper bought it in February 1897 and renamed it the Pepper Hotel. After the death of Col. Pepper, the hotel was leased to a number of people.

In 1912 R.H. Rose, W.T. Clay and J.E. Horton bought three lots along Washington Street with one of the lots being the location of the hotel. This necessitated moving the hotel from its present site beside the McDaniel building on Washington Street to Marion Street. This placed it behind the McDaniel building on Marion Street instead of beside it on Washington Street.

The hotel went through many transitions while Athenians enjoyed social events held there, but in the end, the structure was torn down to make way for a city parking lot.

About this photo: This early scene of Washington and Marion Streets shows the Moorman Livery in the lower right corner. Across Marion Street to the east is the W.T. McDaniel Building erected in 1906 to be used for a bank on the ground floor and dental office on the second floor. Next is the Leslie Hotel which was moved around the corner and to the back of the McDaniel building in 1913. It then faced Marion Street and was eventually torn down. In the background the Sherrill cotton platform and warehouse and the L&N water tank can be seen.

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