

Silver Jackets Meeting Minutes

November 8, 2016

Georgia Tech Student Center, Room 343

Members Attending (26) Ron Bohlander (GTRI), Kathy Tomajko (Library), Nannette Dooley (Library), Sandra Thornton (Pub. Pol.), Annette Satterfield (Registrar), Andy Smith (Psych./Provost), Eugene Patronis (Physics), Sally Hammock (Student Center/COE), Ed Rondeau (Real Estate Development), Walter Allen (Purchasing, Int. Auditing), Janis Goddard (OSP), Ian Gatland (Physics), Earl Cagle (Purchasing), Martha Farley (GTRI), Steve Bomar (GTRI), Jo A. Freeman (Laser Dynamics Lab), Jerry Thuesen (ISyE), Rekha Patel (ME), Ian Gatland (Physics), Pat Davis (COS), Len Parsons (MGT), Phyllis Beckford (Facility), Steve Dickerson (ME), Wayne Book (ME), Mage Boehme (EOE), Ward Winer (ME)

Visitors (1) Harriet Thuesen

Business Meeting

President Len Parsons opened the meeting by welcoming the members and having each member introduce himself/herself.

President Parsons reminded members of open enrollment deadlines. Even though unspent monies can be rolled over to the next year, he urged Members not to use their Health Reimbursement Accounts (HRAs) as savings accounts, but to get reimbursed for all eligible expenses and save the money in their own bank accounts. At the death of an unmarried person or a surviving spouse, any unspent money in the HRA goes back to the University System of Georgia.

Representative Andy Smith and **Vice President Elect Kathy Tomajko** attended the November 4th University System of Georgia Retiree Council meeting. Kathy Tomajko reported on USGRC Meeting. A new insurance payment system (Oracle PeopleSoft) for USG coming April 2017.

Sally Hammock reminded Members that she must receive payment for the **Holiday Luncheon** by Tuesday, November 22. She noted that she does not cash checks until she must make payment to the restaurant for the final count of attendees.

Program

Vice President Ron Bohlander introduced the speaker **Lee Gunn**, who is the author of a book entitled *Cracking the Solid South* about the “father” of Georgia Tech, **John Fletcher Hanson**, for whom Hanson Residence Hall is named.

Some topics covered in the presentation included:

Based on a casual mention, Gunn was intrigued to learn her father-in-law's great-grandfather, George Hanson, was considered the “father” of Georgia Tech. The book was 18 years in the making. Along the way, she learned that a graduate student of former Tech professor Robert

McMath, Matthew Hild, had researched Hanson. (Hild is a Lecturer at the University of West Georgia.)

John Hanson lived from 1840-1914. He fought in the Civil War, including the bloodiest one-day battle in American history, the Battle of Antietam. Enlisting as a private, he attained the rank of Adjutant (Major). Many people thereafter called him Major. His home town was Barnesville, GA. The South was depressed after war. He engaged in multiple businesses, including life insurance, furniture, and warehousing.

In 1871, Hanson moved to Macon and became a cotton merchant. In 1876, he founded a textile mill called Bibb Manufacturing. He needed capital. He put up 50% and the wealthy Savannah businessman Hugh Moss Comer invested in other 50%.

In 1881 Hanson purchased controlling interest in the *Macon Telegraph*. He would use it as a vehicle to advance his positions on economic and political issues.

Competition from New England, whose workers were better trained, was strong. Finding it hard to identify good foremen, Hanson wanted to do something about skilled labor as he couldn't induce New England people to come south. While in the South, manufacturing seen as evil or grungy or another form of slavery. He had idea of a technological school. He orchestrated a campaign in his newspaper supporting this notion.

Hanson knew he needed to interest the Georgia Legislature. He appealed to Nathaniel Harris, who was running for a seat. Harris got elected (and later became Governor). Bill didn't pass in first attempt. Agrarians didn't understand or want it. The University of Georgia chancellor wanted all federal Morrill university money to go to UGA. Nonetheless, in 1886 Governor McDaniel signed it into law. Atlanta won the site competition.

By 1890, Hanson owned 8 mills, growing by acquisition. He served on boards of railroads key to textile business, especially the Central of Georgia Railway. The 1893 crash caused many railroads to fail. J.P. Morgan bought bonds in a reorganized Central of Georgia in 1895. In 1900 Hanson became Chairman of Board of the Central of Georgia. But its infrastructure was below standard, and so Hanson upgraded its roadbeds, tracks, and engines. The Central of Georgia was headquartered in Macon. (The railroad magnate Edward H. Harriman bought the Central of Georgia in 1908.)

The Ocean Steamship Company was a subsidiary of the Central of Georgia. It provided connections between Savannah and the east coast, including New York and Boston. Hanson had seven new ships created to modernize its fleet. The Central of Georgia was the only railroad to connect with Port of Savannah.

In 1895 Hanson gave the commencement speech at Georgia Tech. He announced the need for an electrical engineering school. In 1897 he formed Columbus Power Company in Columbus, GA, which would have a dam and a Bibb mill.

Fuel was the greatest operating cost for the transportation businesses. To keep costs down, Hanson used Alabama coal, first for his railroad engines, then for his steamships a well. A bonus was that Central of Georgia carried this coal. In 1906, he bought a coal company in Alabama.

Hanson was an early southern Republican. He helped write McKinley Tariff Act. Hanson would campaign for Congressman McKinley for governor of Ohio, which he won. There would be a strong friendship between the two men until McKinley's assassination.

Georgia Tech's east campus dorm, Major John Hanson Residence Hall, built in 1961, was named in his honor.

Respectfully submitted,

Ron Bohlander