



Peabody College: From a Frontier Academy to the Frontiers of Teaching and Learning

Paul K. Conkin

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Today George Peabody College is a part of Vanderbilt University, as it has been since its merger in 1979. Its prior history was rich and complex. In this book, Paul Conkin, author of the award-winning history of Vanderbilt, *Gone with the Ivy*, tells the story of Peabody's many lives, of its successes and failures, and of its many colorful leaders and professors.

It all began as a small frontier academy in 1785. The institution that would become Peabody experienced its first reinvention two decades later as it became Cumberland College, and then, in 1826, the University of Nashville. The University maintained an elite undergraduate college until 1850, and, despite the success of its medical school and a military institute, it failed in three subsequent efforts to restart its undergraduate program.

In 1875 the University offered its campus and degree-granting authority to the first normal school in the state of Tennessee, a school funded by the Peabody Education Fund. The Peabody Normal College was the best in the South, and, as such, exerted an enormous influence on education in the region.

A new era began in 1909. The trustees of the Peabody Fund, at its liquidation, provided an eventual \$1.5 million to establish a graduate-level George Peabody College for Teachers. It opened for classes in 1914, on its present campus, where it quickly became the premier teachers' college in the South. As was the case with many private, independent institutions, Peabody faced intermittent financial struggles, which finally ended with its union with Vanderbilt. Today Peabody is, by almost any criteria, one of the five or six strongest colleges of education in the United States.

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