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President Josiah Meigs had high hopes for the new institution, as he wrote an Augusta friend:

Athens, August 29, 1801

In descending the eastern banks of the Oconee river, we discover through the trees Capt. Easley's house, in which I now reside, which appears to be on the top of a mountain -

After passing the ford, which is about 120 or 130 feet wide, through a rapid stream which has just tumbled over the rocks below Easley's dam, about 150 yards above the ford, we ascend the promontory about 750 yards along the winding path, and arrive at the brow.

A little northward of this is the place marked out for a future collegiate building -

By a water level I have found the surface of that place to be 161 feet perpendicular above the level of the waters of the Oconee at the ford. This promontory runs nearly level a north-westerly course, through the tract, as far as I have examined. From the site of the building the land falls off gently and beautifully to the east and south-west. On the east the land is cleared, and has now on it a flourishing crop of corn, cotton and potatoes - a young orchard of apple trees - and one of peach trees - westerly is woodland.

The banks of the Oconee are bold, steep and abrupt - the rocks appearing in many parts. It is obvious that no fears can be entertained of unwholesome vapours from a river of this description, even though there is a small mill pond in it, for the water is confined by steep banks, and there is a constant discharge over the dam in such quantity, that the whole mass of the water in the pond is in motion at all times - it cannot therefore be supposed capable of generating poisonous miasmata. It is a fact that if the pond were empty, on shutting the gates it would fill and fall over the top in an hour and a half in the dryest season.

At 130 yards from this house is a spring emerging from a rock, which yields 3600 gallons of good water in 24 hours, as I found by experiment a few days ago - there are about 10 other springs within a quarter of a mile of the Collegiate building - the water of these springs is perfectly pure, clear, and as cool as it ought to be for health.

I have frequently amused myself in some of the fine mornings in observing the vapours rising swiftly in various forms from the river and tending away towards the rising sun, sweeping over the thick woods which cover the steep eastern banks of the Oconee.