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## Home Of Famous Shelbians



The "old McAfee house" shown above was built in the 1850's and has been the home of many prominent personalities. It was remodeled in 1906 and is now known as the Webb-Gardner home on South Washington street, Shelby. (See story below.)

—Photo by Will E. McArthur.

### In Cleveland's Early Days

## South Washington Street Gave Many Notable Figures To State

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When Shelby was laid off in 1840, the town limits were one-fourth mile each way from the Court Square. In 1849, these limits were extended to one-half mile each way. On all these Shelby streets there have lived citizens whose spheres of influence have been wide.

However, no area so small has produced so many outstanding personalities (or the progenitors of outstanding personalities) as has the small neighborhood on South Washington Street extending approximately two blocks north and two blocks south of the house pictured above. It is doubtful whether in all of North Carolina there is another area of such small dimensions from which there have come so many citizens who have rendered important services in such varied fields of activities.

The house pictured above which, in earlier days, was gen-

erally referred to as "the old McAfee house", is one of the most interesting in Shelby because of the persons who have dwelt within its walls.

AUGUSTUS W. BURTON, who built the house in the late 1850's, using a portion of the \$5,000 in golden eagles he had won in the Louisiana lottery to pay for it, would indeed be astonished if he could know the important Shelby people who have since lived there . . . including the (respective) mothers of certain important Shelby people.

The house was designed by a well known architect (Guoin I think), and the extensive grounds were landscaped by an experienced gardner. There was a beautiful mock orange hedge around the yard, within which was much rare shrubbery. At the time the above picture was made, house and grounds had deteriorated greatly.

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## Early Days

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Mr. Burton and his wife, the former Julia Olmstead of Lincoln, had lived in their new home but a short while when the War Between the States came, and Mr. Burton was elected Captain of the Cleveland Guards, the first military company that went out from Shelby to fight for State's Rights and the Confederacy. He sold the house to Reese Roark who, with his family lived there for a number of years.

CLYDE ROARK HOEY is the son of Reese Roark's daughter, Charlotte who married Capt. Sam'l A. Hoey. Mr. Hoey is now United States Senator, and was formerly governor of North Carolina. He is one of the State's leading attorneys and is frequently referred to as "the silver-tongued orator from North Carolina". He is also well known as a churchman (Methodist) and Sabbath School teacher.

When he was 15 years old he established the Cleveland Star, a weekly newspaper, in Shelby, and before he had reached his 21st birthday he had been elected to represent Cleveland County in the Legislature.

EARLE McFARLAND, who attained considerable prominence in governmental circles in Panama before his untimely death in 1932, was the son of Belle Roark who married W. W. McFarland.

### KKK Leader

LeROY McAFEE bought the house from the Roarks. Col. McAfee was leader of the Ku Klux Klan during those humiliating days of Reconstruction from 1868 to 1874 following the crushing (not conquering) of the Confederacy, when the legally constituted officers of the State and Federal governments were intent on creating chaos instead of order, and the Ku Klux Klan became a necessity. Col. McAfee married a widow, Mrs. Eddins.

MISS MINNIE EDDINS, LeROY McAfee's step-daughter, who lived with her mother, was recognized as one of the outstanding singers of the State. She was referred to by the State as "the mocking bird of North Carolina". She married W. Josh Roberts, and after her death he continued to

live in the house.

More than 40 years ago J. A. Anthony bought the house and he and his family lived there for several years. Mrs. Anthony remodelled the front thereby changing its appearance entirely.

GRAHAM ANTHONY, their son, was 14 years of age when they moved there. Later, he was graduated from State College with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. He now lives in Hartford, Conn., and by sheer pluck and perseverance has become president of the Colt Mfg. Co., the biggest firearms manufacturing company in the U. S. A. He is listed in Who's Who, and is generally rated as a millionaire.

### The Webb-Gardner Home

In 1911, Judge James L. Webb and his wife, Kansas Andrews Webb, with their daughter Madge, now Mrs. Riley, and their daughter Faye and her husband, O. Max Gardner, a rising young attorney, bought the house and moved in. They added some rooms in the back, but the front remains as Mrs. Anthony remodelled it in 1906. It is now known as the Webb-Gardner residence at 403 South Washington St., and the house and grounds are generally considered as among the prettiest in Shelby.

JAMES L. WEBB was born in Rutherford County. His father, Rev. G. M. Webb, moved to Shelby in the early 1870's, and was pastor of the first Baptist church here. James practiced law, was elected for two terms as State Senator, and later served 12 years as solicitor of the 11th Judicial District. In 1904, he was appointed Superior Court Judge and held this office until his death in 1930.

OLIVER MAX GARDNER practised law with his father-in-law and later with O. M. Mull, was elected State Senator, and later Lieutenant-Governor under Governor T. W. Bickett. About 1925 he headed a company organizing the Cleveland Cloth Mills of Shelby, a most profitable business venture. Later he was elected Governor of North Carolina, and soon after completing the four-year term he removed to Washington where he engaged in the practice of law.

In February, 1946, he was appointed Under Secretary of the Treasury by President Truman, and in January 1947 he was named as Ambassador to the Court of St. James. Four hours before he was to sail for London to take over this work he died of a heart attack.

EDWIN YATES WEBB, brother of Judge J. L. Webb, lives next door to the Webb-Gardner home. After he had practised law for several years he was, in 1908, elected to represent the 9th District in Congress. Here he served on the Judiciary Committee, and took an active part in fighting liquor and narcotics. He was co-author with Senator Sheppard of the National Prohibition Amendment. After 16 years in Congress he was appointed by President Wilson as Judge of the N. C. Western Federal District Court, which position he recently resigned.

EDWIN YATES WEBB, jr., an electrical engineer of remarkable ability, is listed in Who's Who. He has just returned from Germany, where he went to examine certain patents and bring some of them back for future use in U. S. A.

#### **The Webber House**

A few doors below, at 505 S. Washington where the Shem Blackleys now live, is what used to be known as the "old Webber house". According to my information, this is where Amanda McAfee was living with her mother at the time of her (Amanda's) marriage. Later the mother, a widow, married Mr. Webber.

AMANDA McAFEE, in 1848, when she was 13 years old, was married at the home of her mother to Rev. Thomas Dickson (Dixon), who was nearly 30. She became the mother of Tom Dixon, the noted author and playwright, whose moving picture Birth of A Nation, appeared in 1915. Another son, Amzi Clarence Dixon was famed as a preacher on two continents ; and preached for years in Spurgeon's tabernacle in London. The youngest son, Frank Dixon was a Chataqua lecturer and father of Frank Dixon, former governor of Alabama. All three were licensed preachers.

ROBERT L. RYBURN lived a block further down the street. Mr. Ryburn, an attorney, was for

many years senior member of the firm of Ryburn & Hoey. He is described as "The perfect gentlemen, the wise councillor, admirably equipped to occupy a seat on the judicial bench, a fine mind carefully trained and stored with useful knowledge, a character pure and without blemish, a heart full of love and tenderness". He died in 1935.

### **The Durham House**

On a vacant lot just below the Dixie Home store, about two blocks north of the house above pictured, there stood until recently the former home of another Cleveland County and North Carolina leader and statesman.

PLATO DURHAM stood as a rock in the weary land to the distressed citizenship of Shelby during those awful days (awful is the correct word) of so-called Reconstruction from 1866 to 1874. Without his work in the Legislature North Carolina would have been even worse off than she was. Here were born his sons: Plato Durham, dean of the School of Religion of Emory University, Robert Lee Durham, educator and author, of Buena Vista, Va., and Stonewall Durham, attorney of Gaston county.

Those named above are not all the persons who lived within the area mentioned who merit inclusion in this story. Lack of space prevents comment, but I must include the names of Andrew C. Miller and his brother Robt. B. Miller, both pioneer cotton mill men and both prominent churchmen. Their father, Dr. W. J. T. Miller, was one of Cleveland County's leaders from the time of its beginning.

Ansel Irvine Hardin was an inventor who got hard money for his inventions, and John R. Logan was one of the leaders in education, and a churchman.

There are four women whose names must be mentioned: Mrs. R. B. Miller who, though invalid, exerted a tremendous influence; Mrs. R. L. Ryburn, Sabbath School teacher, leader in U. D. C. activities, leader in the civic department of the Woman's club, and at whose home in 1894 was organized Shelby's first Woman's Club, the Chicora; Mrs. McDonald, teacher in the Shelby Female College, and Mrs. O. Max Gardner who was the State's first lady when her husband was governor.