

The Rev. James Webb

Here was a sturdy man indeed. Progenitor of a famous North Carolina family, he filled a number of vocations with honor to himself and credit to his state.

— By —

CLARENCE W. GRIFFIN

ONE mile northeast of Ruth, on U. S. No. 221, stands the old Webb homestead, now the property of Mrs. O. Max Gardner, Judge Yates Webb and others of the family.

The exact age of the home is not known. However, from outward appearances and known facts, Rev. James M. Webb constructed the large, two-story house somewhere around 1825. Although occupied by tenants for the past several years, it is still in a good state of repair. The home is constructed of huge, wide timbers; two stories in height and box-shaped, with an ell at the rear, after the fashion of homes constructed in the 1820's period.

Rev. James Milton Webb was a man of many talents and a character of prominence and of outstanding ability. He was a minister of the gospel, clerk of the superior court, a representative in the North Carolina General Assembly, and a newspaper editor and publisher. He combined these widely divergent occupations in a harmonious manner, and there was one time in his career when he was an editor, minister and clerk of the court at the same time.

Born in 1802

Mr. Webb was born in Rutherford County October 2, 1802. He grew to young manhood on the farm, and the first years of his life were perhaps no more eventful than those of many other young men of his day. He, however, secured an education beyond that



The old Webb home, built about 1825. It is two miles northeast of Rutherfordton and about one mile from the village of Ruth.

available to others of his time. He was elected to the General Assembly when twenty-six years of age, and represented Rutherford in the House of Commons for three terms of one year each, in 1828, 1830 and 1831. He was ordained as a Baptist minister in 1834. He had been called to the ministry prior to that date, and in 1833 he was elected pastor of Concord Baptist Church. He continued as pastor of that church until December 9, 1848.

He was twice married, first to Miss Katherine White and to this union were born thirteen children; ten sons and three daughters. The first Mrs. Webb died September 30, 1848 at the age of thirty-nine years. She sleeps beside her husband in the family cemetery, located in the garden a few yards from the old home which he built. His second wife was Miss Nancy Hampton whom he married May 3, 1849. Two sons and one daughter were born to them.

One of the sons was Rev. George M. Webb, a noted Baptist minister, who was the father of the late Judge James L. Webb and Judge E. Y. Webb, of Shelby.

In 1833 James M. Webb was elected clerk of the superior court of Rutherford County to succeed James Morris. He was the county's second superior court clerk, and he held this position, giving universal satisfaction, until his resignation in November 1849, occasioned by ill health.

Became a Publisher

In May 1841 he acquired the newspaper plant of the old *Carolina Gazette*, at Rutherfordton, and

commenced the publication of *The Rutherfordton Intelligencer*. He was a militant editor and took a strong position in both religion and politics. He edited and published this paper until about May 1843, doing the multitude of duties connected with a country weekly newspaper in addition to his duties as clerk of the court and minister of the gospel. In the issue of April 26, 1843, Webb says:

"The editor having (for reasons which will hereafter be given) conveyed away his entire interest in the newspaper establishment known as *The Rutherfordton Intelligencer*, informs his kind patrons that his Editorial labors will terminate with the completion of the present volume early in May next."

Ill health and numerous other duties were attributed as his reasons for selling.

James M. Webb was known as one of the leading Baptist ministers of his day. He was described as being about six feet tall, slender in height, somewhat stooped, had large black eyes, and the mouth of an orator. His hair was long, black and straight. According to the Baptist historian, John R. Logan, Webb preached the memorial sermon in memory of Rev. Drewery Dobbins, at the Broad River Baptist Association's 1847 session held at Zoar Church in Cleveland County. Dobbins was known as the father of the Baptist denomination in Rutherford and Cleveland counties. His text was "My Father, my Father, the Chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof,

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plier before the installation of any oil burning equipment.

For the long pull, the industry has drawn up plans for expanded and streamlined facilities which will insure against a recurrence of present conditions. In fact, it has budgeted record sums of more than four billion dollars for investment in all divisions—production, refining, transportation and marketing—during the two-year period of 1947-1948.

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THE REV. JAMES WEBB

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and they saw him no more." 2nd Kings, 2:12. Logan thus describes his address:

"He commenced his sermon by presenting a singular combination of historical and textual parts of his discourse. He then proceeded to illustrate his subject and enforce its claims in view of the occasion on which he spoke. The congregation was soon melted by his pathos and the clearness of his thoughts, and were prepared to weep tears like dew drops when the preacher turned half around from the bookboard, raising his hands and eyes, and in one of those exclamations for which he was inimitable, said, 'O! Dobbins, dost thy sainted spirit this day witness our feeble efforts to honor thy sacred memory? Art thou with the man that returned and smote the waters of Jordan with the mantle?' Every spirit felt subdued before him, and for thirty minutes more he lifted them up or let them down at his will, no man assisting him."

He wrote the circular letters for Broad River Baptist Association in 1837 and 1839. He served as the first moderator of the Green River Baptist Association. He died April 24, 1854, and is buried in the garden near his old home beyond Ruth. Beside him sleep his first wife and a daughter and an infant.

Judge James L. Webb, of the North Carolina superior court, a grandson of James Milton Webb, was born about five miles south of Forest City on November 12, 1853, at the Rev. George Webb home, near the old Rutherfordton-Shelby road, at Webb's Ford across Second Broad River. When fifteen years of age Rev. George Webb moved

his family to Shelby, where Judge Webb completed his preliminary education. He later entered Wake Forest College and after graduating from that institution he returned to Shelby and with the late W. C. Durham began the publication of the *Shelby Banner*. A few years later he began the study of law in the law offices of Capt. Plato Durham, and two years later entered a private law school in Yadkin County. He was licensed to practice law in 1877.

Judge Webb filled many offices of trust during his long career of public service. He served as an alderman and mayor of the city of Shelby; state senator two terms, post office inspector, district solicitor for twelve years and a judge of the superior court for twenty-five years, until his death.

Baptists Set Many Firsts During '47

The past year was the greatest for North Carolina Baptists, in many respects, according to Statistical Secretary L. L. Morgan of the Baptist State Convention.

Quoting reports submitted during 1947 by state Baptist associations, Morgan said that the Baptist Church in North Carolina gained substantially in church membership, gifts, and new units, among other items, compared to 1946.

Baptist membership in North Carolina increased 25,435 during the past year pushing the total Tar Heel congregation to 622,426, and 41 new churches were added during the current calendar year.

Gifts to all causes of the church totaled \$14,122,727—an increase of nearly 20 per cent over last year's.



Refreshment

arrives

