

# REV. JAMES M. WEBB WAS MAN OF MANY TALENTS

Was Clerk of Rutherford Superior Court, Legislator, Newspaper Editor and Minister—  
Grandfather of Judge James L. Webb

2nd City Courier—March 20-1930

By CLARENCE GRIFFIN.

A character of prominence and outstanding ability in Rutherford county a century ago was Rev. James Milton Webb, a man of many talents. He was the grandfather of Judge James L. Webb, of Shelby, who is, incidentally, a Rutherford county man. The Rev. Mr. Webb was a minister of the gospel, clerk of the superior court, a representative in the General Assembly and a newspaper editor. Strangely enough, Mr. Webb combined these occupations in a splendid manner and there was one period in his career when he was a newspaper editor, minister and clerk of the superior court at the same time.

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 that of any other young man of his period. He was elected to the General Assembly when twenty-six years of age. He represented the county 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. However, he had been called to preach before that time, and was in 1833, elected pastor of the Concord Baptist church. He continued as pastor of this church from 1833 to December 9, 1848.

He was twice married, first to Miss Katherine White, and to this union were born 13 children, ten sons and three daughters. The first Mrs. Webb died September 30, 1848 at the age of 39 years. She sleeps beside her husband in the Webb cemetery, near Ruth. His second wife was Miss Nancy Hamilton, and to them were born two sons and one daughter. One of Mr. Webb's sons was Rev. George M. Webb, a noted Baptist pastor, who was the father

of Judge James L. Webb and Judge E. Y. Webb.

In 1833 Mr. Webb was elected clerk of the superior court of Rutherford county to succeed James Morris. He was the county's second superior court clerk. He held this position, giving universal satisfaction until his resignation in November, 1849, which was brought about by ill health. He was succeeded in this office by Col. M. O. Dickerson, father of the present clerk.

About May, 1841, Mr. Webb acquired the newspaper plant of the old Carolina Gazette, at Rutherfordton, and began the publication of the Rutherfordton Intelligencer. 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

a minister of the gospel. In the fall of the Rutherfordton Intelligencer for April 26, 1842, Mr. Webb announced his intention of resigning from the newspaper game the following month, because of ill health and numerous other duties.

Mr. Webb was known far and wide as one of the leading Baptist ministers of his day. He was 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. At the session of the Broad River Association held at Zoar church in Cleveland county in 1847 according to John R. Logan, he preached the memorial sermon to the memory of Rev. Drewery Dobbins, "The Father of the Baptist church in Rutherford and Cleveland." His text was "My father, the Chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof, and he said 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 "Oh! Dobbins, doest 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." Shortly afterwards this incident was related of him: two men not Christians were talking rather lightly of a revival sermon, and a sermon of Webb's was mentioned. One said to the other, "I thing I saw you crying." "Yes", replied the other, "but that man Webb can make the Devil cry."

He wrote the circular letters for Broad River Baptist Association in 1837 and 1839. He was the first moderator of the Green River Baptist Association.

He died April 24, 1854. His grave is in the family cemetery at the old home place, two miles north east of Rutherfordton, on the new state highway No. 181, from Rutherfordton to Morganton. Beside him sleeps his first wife, a daughter and an infant.

Judge James L. Webb.

The recent announcement to the effect that Judge James L. Webb will retire from the superior court

at the expiration of his present term has caused much comment over the state, Rutherford county is, and should be, greatly interested in this eminent jurist. He is a Rutherford county man, and Rutherford should cling tenaciously to her claim on him, as there have been only three of her other citizens to sit on the superior court bench in a period of 150 years.

Judge Webb was born about five miles south of Forest City on November 12, 1853, a son of Rev. G. M. Webb. The home was near the old Rutherfordton-Shelby road, near Webb's Ford, across Second Broad

Mr. 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 the late Capt. Plato Durham, and two years later entered a private law school in Yadkin county. He was given his license to practice in 1877.

Judge Webb has filled many offices of trust during his long career of usefulness. He has served as alderman and mayor of the city of Shelby state senator two times; post office inspector; solicitor for twelve years and judge of the superior court for twenty-five years.

He is a grandson of the Rev. James M. Webb.

The Baptist church in the town of Shelby, now known as the First Baptist Church, was organized in the year 1846. I find following in one of the records:

"Land for house give James Love, a member church at Zoar, donates a lot of ground in the town of S for the purpose of building a Baptist church. During the year a house was erected, mainly the efforts and liberality of William Roberts, Dr. Thos. Will and David Warlick. Toward the close of the year 1846 J. M. Webb, of Rutherford county, began to preach once a week in the new house. March 20 21st, 1847 a meeting was held at the new church to make arrangements for organizing a Baptist church. The names of the persons willing to become members of said church are enrolled as follows:

Interesting!

Same and return

to

Mrs. O. May Gardner

403 S. Washington St.

Shelby

W. C.

## EMINISCENCES OF 60 YEARS AGO

By LAWSON EAVES

(12. REV. J. M. WEBB)

Among the Ministers who served well their day and generation during the decade of the Forties was Rev. J. M. Webb of the Baptist church.

A neighbor and contemporary of Mr. Webb in his younger days—Micaja Durham—told me more than half a century ago, that his opportunities for education were meager, and his environment unfavorable, but that he was an inveterate reader of such books as he could command, and that it was by perseverance and native talent that he became the leading minister of his denomination throughout the section in which he lived.

His reputation was not confined to his own locality, but he was well known throughout the surrounding counties and upper S. C. where he was frequently called because of his known ability.

Mr. Webb's appearance deeply impressed me while yet a mere lad, and a mental photograph of his personality remains vividly upon the tablet of memory. It was when too young to understand the subject matter of his discourse, when first I heard him preach, but remember to have been impressed with the fluency of his language, and also of a habit he had of brushing his hair back from his forehead.

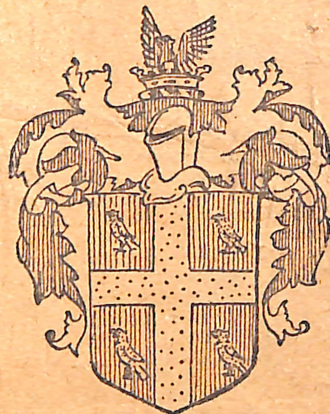
He was tall of stature and, when walking, would incline his head to one side, and at such times would always appear to be in deep and serious thought.

It is safe to say that he filled well his mission and that he left the world better than he found it. The mantle of Drury Dobbins, the foremost Baptist minister of this section during his day, seems to have fallen on Mr. Webb.

## Who Are You?

The Romance of Your Name

BY RUBY HASKINS ELLIS.



Webb

THERE are three names in which there is great similarity in origin, Weaver, Webster and Webb, all three representing the trade of a weaver of cloth. Evidently, when the mandate went forth commanding all heads of families to adopt a surname, or "surname," as it was then called, every one cast about for the most suitable cognomen. Naturally, a weaver was not unaware of the suitability of that name, not only as a surname but as a trade mark. Some of the weavers deviated slightly and used synonymous terms—Webster and Webb. So it was that the Weavers, the Websters and