

JAMES M. WEBB

note 3

ms O Mary Saunders
great grand father

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 and minister of the gospel. In the issue 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 my father, the Chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof, and he saw him no more." 2nd Kings, 2:12. Mr. 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.

Hampton
md. 3 May 1849