

1950-01-19

1950, January 19

Mamie Jones

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/fay-webb-gardner-cleveland-county-early-days-column>

Recommended Citation

Jones, M. (1950, January 19). Cleveland County Early Days, The Daily Star. Fay Webb Gardner Collection, Gardner-Webb University Archives, John R. Dover Memorial Library, Boiling Springs, NC.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Series 1 - Personal Papers, Diaries, Scrapbooks at Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Cleveland County Early Days Column by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@gardner-webb.edu.

In Cleveland County's Early Days

By MAMIE JONES

TWO GREAT BAPTIST LEADERS: REV. DRURY DOBBINS AND REV. JAMES M. WEBB

Some years ago, Livingston Johnson, an eminent clergyman, is quoted as saying: "There are more Baptists to the square inch in the western section of Cleveland county than anywhere else in the world."

This is somewhat remarkable in that the western section of Cleveland was formerly part of Rutherford county and, as is well known, Rutherford county was settled largely by Scotch-Irish Presbyterians.

Two of the men who helped to lay the foundation for this Baptist strength were Rev. Drury Dobbins and Rev. James M. Webb.

During the ministry of these two preachers in the early 1800's practically all the Baptists in this section were known as Hardshell or Predestinarian Baptists. I have been told that both Mr. Dobbins and Mr. Webb adhered to the Hardshell doctrines. However, Hon. Edwin Yates Webb, grandson of Jas. M. Webb, tells me his grandfather was NOT a Hardshell but was a Missionary Baptist.

Note: Anti-mission, Hardshell, Predestinarian are the names applied to that group of Baptists who take the broad ground that God is not dependent on human efforts to spread His church and add to its members. They oppose all foreign mission work. They think only the elect shall be saved. And that God will save such persons whether an effort is made in their behalf or not. (Quoted from Religious Denominations).

A GODLY COBBLER

Drury Dobbins was a cobbler by trade, and a preacher because he loved mankind. Next to people, he loved books. Even while he pegged shoes he had a book at his side. For 50 years he rode horseback through Cleveland and Rutherford counties preaching the gospel as he believed it; and received as compensation the munificent sum of \$24.00 (twenty-four) dollars a year.

In Number Seven Township there is a community called "Drury Dobbins." I assume he lived in that locality. He is buried near Sandy Run Baptist church, and a handsome stone marks his last resting place.

Judging by the stories told about him, he must have been a godly man. But withal he seemed to have a nice sense of humor. I

quote a story he told on himself:
FEARFUL OF PRAISE

Brother Dobbins heard that men were praising him, telling of his good deeds and powerful preaching; and saging how much they admired him for the great work he was doing for the kingdom of God. The old fellow became concerned. He recalled the Biblical admonition: "Beware when all men speak well of you." He began to wonder if, since he was pleasing men, he was really pleasing God.

The following Sunday morning, while passing through the church yard before preaching-time, he overheard one man say to another: "There goes that—old hypocrite Drury Dobbins." Elder Dobbins was relieved. Obviously he was not pleasing everybody. All men were not speaking well of him.

MARRIED A WIDOW

Many years ago William H. Miller told me this story:

Drury Dobbins married a widow, Mrs. Calahan, whose husband had deserted her many years previous. A few years after the marriage, Elder Dobbins was returning home one Sunday afternoon when he was met by the angry ex-husband who (unlike Tenneyson's Enoch Arden) demanded possession of his wife whom Dobbins had innocently married, having reason to believe that Calahan was dead.

After a talk together the men agreed to put it up to the woman; to let her say whose wife she would rather be. Calahan spoke first, making excuses for his failures; but insisting that she return to him as his wife. She listened and replied briefly.

"You deserted me in Tennessee. Left me with small, helpless children to support. You were gone for 10 years. I heard you had died in Georgia. I then married Mr. Dobbins. He has made me a faithful and true husband. You did not. I make my choice. I wish to remain with Mr. Dobbins."

Under the old North Carolina law—after a very simple court procedure—either party might remarry after seven years had elapsed during which time the missing party had not been heard from, and there was reason to believe he (or she) was dead.

Many prominent men and women of this section boast of being related to Drury Dobbins either by blood or marriage.

HELPED ORGANIZE BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. James M. Webb of Ruther-

ford county, helped organize Shelby's First Baptist church about 1847, and was its first pastor.

The following story is from History of Old Tryon and Rutherford Counties by Clarence Griffin:

Rev. James Milton Webb, a man of many talents, was known far and wide as one of the leading Baptist ministers of his day. He was 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 a memorial sermon to the memory of Rev. Drury Dobbins, the "father of the Baptist church in Rutherford and Cleveland counties."

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.

HELD AUDIENCE SPELLBOUND

Logan thus describes the 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, dost thy of Jordan with the mantle? Every spirit felt subdued before him, and for 30 minutes more he lifted them at his will, no man assisting him."

Shortly afterwards this incident was related of him: Two men not members of the Christian faith were talking rather lightly of a revival sermon, and a sermon of Webb's was mentioned. One said to the other "I think I saw you crying." "Yes," replied the other, "but that man Webb could make the devil cry."

James M. Webb was born in Rutherford county in 1802, was ordained as a Baptist minister in 1834, and died in 1854. He is buried in the family cemetery two miles northwest of Rutherfordton.

His son, Rev. George Milton Webb, was also an illustrious Baptist clergyman of this section.

(Copyright by Mamie Jones)