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In Cleveland County's Early Days

By MAMIE JONES

INTERESTING WOMEN OF CLEVELAND COUNTY

This is the last of a series of articles about outstanding women of this county.

We have something unique in Shelby. In Sunset cemetery there is the grave of a woman Master Mason. I am told there is not another one in the whole wide world.

CATHARINE SWEET BABINGTON

Probably no woman who has lived in this county ever had a more unusual experience than Catharine Sweet, who grew up in the home of her grandfather in Kentucky.

Catharine's grandfather and all five of her uncles were members of the Masonic Lodge, and her curiosity was naturally whetted when she heard the men talk so much about the Lodge, but was told its proceedings were secret, and that no woman could ever be a member.

The school room and Lodge hall were in the same building: the school room being directly under the Lodge room. About the time Catharine was 16 she made up her mind that although women were not supposed to know the secrets of Masonry, she was going to find out what it was all about. She was small for her age, and investigation showed there was sufficient space between the ceil-

ing of the school room and the floor of the Lodge room for her to squeeze in. Directly under the altar she found a place where she could hear what was going on, and a small aperture through which she could see what was taking place.

A MASTER MASON

Catharine continued this spying for a year, and saw three degrees administered. When she was finally caught up with, it was thought best—even though she was under 21 years of age—to put her under oath, initiate her into the Masonic fraternity, and administer the three degrees she had seen given, namely: Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason. No other woman has ever had these degrees.

In 1834, she was married to Benj. B. Babington. She told him she was a Mason. He was not a Mason and thought she was joking. One day while they were living in Siler City, N. C., she and her husband were sitting on their front porch, and saw coming up the walk William Murdock, a Masonic lecturer who lived at Salisbury. She gave him the signs of the three Masonic degrees that had been administered to her. Amazed and astounded, he returned her greetings, but demanded that both Mr. and Mrs. Babing-

ton get with him behind closed doors and explain. He found her well versed in Masonic lore.

The Babingtons moved to Shelby in the early 1870's. She died about ten years later.

A FEMALE PAUL REVERE

Rebecca Black lived near Kings Mountain. Early in October, 1780, she observed the British and Tories were gathering in the vicinity of Kings Mountain. She rode horseback for more than forty miles—well into Rutherford county—to tell friends what was happening. It is probably that some of the men whom she told joined the patriots in their march in pursuit of Col. Ferguson, and took part in the battle of Kings Mountain. This is according to a story by P. M. Newton, of Oklahoma.

NORA TRACY-DURHAM-DIXON

A remarkable and lovely woman, Mrs. Nora Tracy-Durham-Dixon spent much of her life in Shelby. Her father, Dr. James Wright Tracy, was a pioneer physician of Kings Mountain.

In 1866, she married Capt. Plato Durham, who had distinguished himself in the War Between the States, and who was a leader in the county under the terrible so-called Reconstruction. Capt. Durham died in 1875. After his death she was married to Dr.