

# JAMES RICHARD DODGE

## An Interesting Personality, Who Once Resided In Wilkesboro.

By HENRY REYNOLDS

One of the attorneys to locate in Wilkesboro, in the early days, for the purpose of practicing law, was James R. Dodge. That was in 1826, and on May 24th, of that year, he was married to Miss Susan Williams, daughter of Maj. Joseph Williams, Clerk of the Superior Court of Surry county. It would seem, then, as a natural inference, that Mr. and Mrs. Dodge arrived there as a newly married couple. Just why Wilkesboro was chosen by them as a place of residence is, of course, not known, but it evidently held out the prospect and promise of being a good location, at which an ambitious and diligent young attorney might make satisfactory progress in getting ahead.

The Dodges occupied the home recently removed from the lot southwest of the Court House, in Wilkesboro, known to many as the Calloway place, but in later years owned and occupied by the

late Isaac Chapley Wellborn. The property now belongs to Dr. Calloway's grandson, Dr. Fred C. Hubbard. It is not certain that the Dodges ever owned the home, for there seems to be no record of deed to them to the property.

While the Dodges lived in Wilkesboro, four children were born to them. They were Richard Irving, born May 19, 1827; Susan Taylor, born April 20, 1829; Anne Sarah, born Mar. 31, 1831; and Mary Helen, born March 15, 1833. On January 25, 1838, triplets were born to them, christened John, Joseph and James, but the three died before they were six months old. It is doubtful, however, that the Dodges were living in Wilkesboro at that time.

When Saint Paul's Episcopal church, of Wilkesboro, celebrated its centennial, on September 13, 1936, it was recalled and recited then that that date marked the 100th anniversary of a baptismal service conducted by the

Rt. Rev. Levi Silliman Ives, then Bishop of the Diocese of North Carolina, in the home of James R. Dodge. At that service, three of the Dodge children were baptized. It was also stated then that, shortly thereafter, the Dodges moved to Lincolnton. It would seem, then, that twelve years marked the duration of the Dodge residence in Wilkesboro.

The Rev. W. L. Sherrill, in his published Annals of Lincoln County, asserts, however, that the Dodges were residents of Lincolnton from 1834 to 1945. In this connection it might be stated that those of the Episcopal faith, in Wilkes county, had no permanent place of worship until the present church was completed and consecrated, on July 8, 1849, just one hundred years ago, this Summer. Among the charter members of the church were Dr. and Mrs. Calloway, Miss Fannie Williams and Mrs. Mary Taylor Williams Peden. The last two were sisters of Mrs. Dodge. Among the first to be confirmed in the church were the Dodge children.

Mr. Dodge was styled Colonel by many of his friends, though he never acquired that title through military promotion, yet we find it easy and distinctive to refer to him in that manner. He was, by all the standards of his time, considered by his contemporaries as a skilled and successful practitioner. He rode the circuit and engaged in a wide and general practice. He early established a sound reputation for uprightness and integrity. Among his clients was William P. Waugh, the leading merchant of Wilkesboro, in his day, and a co-owner of a chain of mercantile establishments, located at strategic trading points through the Northwestern section of the State, a precedent followed, at a later date, by another of Wilkesboro's leading and enterprising merchants.

In 1835, J. J. Bryan, then sheriff of Wilkes county, sold 100 acres of land, belonging to Conrad Eller, to satisfy an execution in favor of Waugh, at which sale Col. Dodge became the last and best bidder, for the fabulous sum of \$26.50. While the title to the land may have been acquired for a nominal sum, even by the monetary standards that day, it clung with unusual tenacity, for it took three distinct recorded deeds to transfer title to the property to Gen. William Lenoir.

During Col. Dodge's stay in Wilkesboro, his law practice experienced two important interruptions. The first was his appointment as Clerk of the Court for Wilkes county. This appointment was made by the Hon. Thomas Settle, Judge of Law and Equity, then presiding over a term of court in Wilkes county.

Col. Dodge gave bond in the sum of \$10,000.00 for the faithful performance of his duty in that office, with his wife's father, Maj. Joseph Williams, and her uncle, Nicholas Lanier Williams, as sureties. This and subsequent bonds are recorded in Book N, in the Register of Deeds office. The second and more important interruption, though it only limited his law practice to civil matters, was his election as Solicitor for his district. This office necessitated his being away from home a good portion of his time, and may have been the compelling reason why the family decided to move their residence to Lincolnton.

In Lincolnton, as in Wilkesboro, Col. Dodge took an active interest and part in all community affairs. He was a member of the school board there and was always an enthusiastic and devout churchman. After concluding their residence in Lincolnton, the Dodges removed to their farm in Yadkin county, which some one, probably a member of the family, infelicitously dubbed "Log Town." This farm is on the south side of the Yadkin river, near the Lime Quarry, and adjoins Richmond Hill, where Chief Justice Pearson conducted his well-known law school.

Col. Dodge's term of public office was not exhausted by the

two positions already recited. He was later to be a clerk in the Legislature, for a period of twelve years, and was, for a long time, clerk of the Supreme Court, sitting at Morganton, as, in those days, during a portion of the year, it was accustomed to do. During much of this time the family continued to reside on the farm, which, in the absence of the husband, as Col. Dodge was later to acknowledge, was operated by Mrs. Dodge with rare skill and success. Even after the removal to the farm the Dodges seem to have maintained their church membership in Wilkesboro. We find that, in 1858, Col. Dodge, Dr. Calloway, James Gwyn and Ransom Hickerson were delegates from Saint Paul's to a Diocesan convention at Edenton.

James R. Dodge was born in Jamestown, New York, October 27, 1795. He could trace his ancestry back to Triston Dodge, who was a citizen of Salem, Mass., in 1660. His father, Richard Dodge, who had joined Washington's army, in 1778, as a fifer, for the duration, rose to be a Brigadier General in the war of 1812. Young Dodge, at the age of seventeen, became his father's aid and saw service at Sacketts Harbour and other engagements. After the war, he got further military training as a member of

a company at Albany. Col. Dodge's mother was Anne Sarah Irving, the only sister of the celebrated author and distinguished diplomat, Washington Irving. The author presented his nephew with a full set of his literary works, which during his whole life remained a prize possession. It is still in the possession of one of Col. Dodge's descendants. Young Dodge received a substantial academic education. He de-

clined his father's offer to send him to Union College, preferring to accept the prospect of getting (Continued on page seven)

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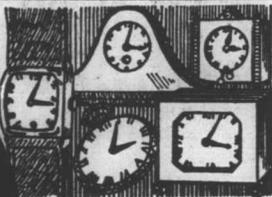
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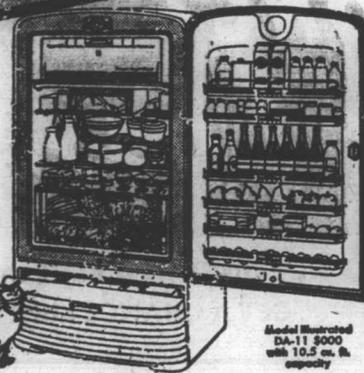
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