

Birdsong, James Cook ^[1]

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by Maury York

(15 Mar. 1843–18 June 1918)

James Cook Birdsong, printer and state librarian, son of Miles and Dolly Graves Birdsong, was born in Southampton County, Va ^[2]. In 1856 Birdsong entered the Petersburg printing establishment of Crutchfield and Campbell, publishers of the *Daily Express*. On 20 Apr. 1861, he enlisted as a private in Company B of the Twelfth Regiment of Virginia Infantry and remained at that rank until the end of the Civil War. He fought in the battles of Seven Pines and Second Manassas and on 2 May 1863, he was captured at Chancellorsville and taken to the Old Capitol Prison. He was released by exchange in September of that year. He was wounded through the right shoulder at Cold Harbor in May 1864 but continued to serve until the surrender at Appomattox Court House.

Birdsong moved to Raleigh ^[3] in 1866 where he continued his career in printing. For many years he worked for Edwards and Broughton of Raleigh. Between 1876 and 1897 he held the position of examiner of state printing. A resolution of the North Carolina General Assembly on 6 Mar. 1893 directed him to prepare *Brief Sketches of the North Carolina State Troops in the War Between the States* ^[4] (1894).

Upon the death of Randolph Abbott Shotwell, the Trustees of the Public Libraries appointed Birdsong state librarian. He assumed the duties in October 1885 and held the position until April 1893.

Birdsong married Ophelia Crocker, daughter of A.J. Crocker, in 1867. They had seven children, including Miles B., Mamie, John H., Edward G., Ludlow, and Heber. For years Birdsong was clerk of the Raleigh Association of the Baptist Church and a member of the board of deacons of the Raleigh Baptist Tabernacle. He was a member of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows ^[5]. Birdsong also held the positions of adjutant of the L. O'B. Branch Camp of Confederate Veterans and secretary of William G. Hill Masonic Lodge.

References:

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Chas. Emerson & Co.'s Raleigh Directory, 1880–'81 ^[6] (1879)

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Biographies ^[12]

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Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press,^[16]

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<https://ncpedia.org/geography/raleigh> ^[4] <http://books.google.com/books?id=La8dAQAAAJ&pg=PA1#v=onepage&q&f=false> ^[5]

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