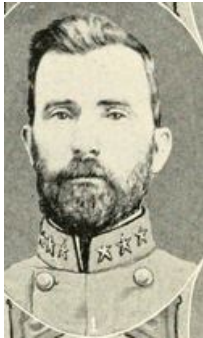


Folk, George Nathaniel ^[1]

Folk, George Nathaniel

by Kimberly P. Barger and Richard D. Howe, 1986

8 Feb. 1831–14 May 1896



George N. Folk.
Image courtesy of
Histories of the
several regiments
and battalions from
North Carolina, in
the great war 1861-
'65.

^[2]George Nathaniel Folk, lawyer and president of his own law schools, was born in Isle of Wight County, Va., the son of William and Annie Folk. He was educated at the [College of William and Mary](#)^[3] and at the age of twenty moved to North Carolina where he spent the next year in [Charlotte](#)^[4] studying law. He was admitted to the bar in 1851. Moving to Boone, Folk practiced law and in 1856 and 1860 was elected as a [Whig](#)^[5] to represent [Watauga County](#)^[6] in the House of Commons. In 1861 he moved to [Asheville](#)^[7], only to return to Boone with the outbreak of the [Civil War](#)^[8]. Although originally a Union man, Folk voted for secession and was one of first to volunteer for Confederate service. He was also the first to enlist volunteers in Watauga County. In the Confederate Army, Folk quickly attained the ranks of captain, lieutenant colonel, and colonel in the Sixty-fifth Regiment, North Carolina Troops (Sixth Regiment, North Carolina Cavalry). He was wounded at the battles of [Chicamauga](#)^[9] and Pea Vine Church and in East Tennessee. From 22 June 1864 to 15 Dec. 1864, he was a prisoner of Union forces but was later exchanged and paroled at Charleston Harbor, S.C., on 15 Dec. 1864.

After the war Folk returned to Boone, but in 1866 moved to Lenoir and opened a law school in the Jones house. Most of his students were Confederate veterans. He soon purchased Cherry Hill on North Main Street in Lenoir where he continued teaching law during the winter until 1882. From 1867 to 1895 he also operated law schools in Boone and Blowing Rock in the summer. Folk's report to the U.S. commissioner of education in 1889 concerning his law school in Boone lists one resident professor and nine students. This number compares favorably with the twenty-two students enrolled in law at [The University of North Carolina](#)^[10] during the same period. There were 600 volumes in Folk's library, the annual charge for tuition was \$75 per person, and receipts from these fees came to \$675. In 1889 the total income from the law school was \$3,000. In 1882, Folk purchased Riverside in [Caldwell County](#)^[11] and moved his law school there. Among his students were [Edmund Jones](#)^[12], [William Horton Bower](#)^[13], E. B. Cline, Henry Starbuck, and [Frank Osborne](#)^[14].

An active and patriotic citizen of the Lenoir community, Folk exerted considerable political influence after [Reconstruction](#)^[15]. He served on the vestry of St. James Episcopal Church and was influential in the formation of the Masonic Lodge, serving as junior warden in 1866. In 1876, Folk became a senator for [Caldwell County](#)^[11] in the [General Assembly](#)^[16] where he was chairman of the Judiciary Committee. In 1882 he was nominated and ran for state supreme court judge as a liberal [Democrat](#)^[17] but lost. He returned to Lenoir in 1894 and spent the last two years of his life at Hillside Cottage on North Main Street.

In 1853 Folk married Elizabeth A. Council, the daughter of Jordan Council, Jr., who kept the only store and post office in the Watauga section. In 1850 the Council Store community became the town of Boone; the same year Council donated the land for the first courthouse in Boone. The Folks had four children: Henry Clay, Sally Virginia, John Woodfin, and George Blackwell, but only the latter survived infancy.

Folk was buried in Bellavue Cemetery, Lenoir. His widow died in 1912.

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Additional Resources:

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Clark, Walter. *Histories of the several regiments and battalions from North Carolina, in the great war 1861-'65* Raleigh, E.M. Uzzell, printer. 1901. <https://archive.org/details/historiesofsever03clar> ^[2] (accessed May 23, 2013).

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Origin - location:

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[Watauga County](#) ^[27]

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