

Mercer, William Parker ^[1]

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by John Mercer Thorp, Jr., 1991

16 Mar. 1855–28 May 1919

William Parker Mercer, physician and state senator, was born on his father's plantation in the Town Creek section of Edgecombe County ^[2]. He was the only son of John Routh and Susan M. Vick Mercer, who were also the parents of seven daughters. The elder Mercer farmed and practiced medicine in the area.

Like his father, William chose medicine as a career. He left the family farm for Trinity College ^[3] in 1873 and was graduated in 1877 with an A.B. degree. He attended medical school at the University of Virginia in 1878 and finished his medical education at Bellevue Hospital in New York. Returning home in 1879, Mercer began to practice medicine with his father. Late in 1880 he married Mary Speed Jones, of Warren County ^[4], who later achieved fame as an author and composer. The couple had one son and four daughters.

Although active in local Democratic ^[5] politics, Mercer was surprised when he was nominated for the North Carolina Senate ^[6] by his fellow citizens without his knowledge or consent. He reluctantly accepted the nomination and won the election in a close race. Mercer went on to win a second term in the senate, where he served on the education and agriculture committees.

A devout Methodist, ^[7] he was a lifelong member and benefactor of the Temperance Hall Church near his home (his grandfather, John Mercer, had donated the land and the building for the church). His service to Methodism included involvement with Trinity College as an active supporter and trustee.

Mercer also participated in local affairs in Edgecombe County. The first telephone line in the county ran from Tarboro to his home—an improvement that increased the speed with which he could deliver medical care to the countryside. Near the end of his life, he was chairman of the Edgecombe County Exemptions Board for the draft in World War I ^[8]. A decline in his health forced his retirement and resulted in his death at age sixtyfour. Mercer was buried in a family cemetery in Edgecombe County within sight of his home.

References:

Raleigh *News and Observer*, 30 May 1919.

R. H. Routh, *The Routh Family in America* (1976).

W. F. Tomlinson, *Biography of the State Officers and Members of the General Assembly* (1893). <https://archive.org/details/biographyofstate00toml> ^[9] (accessed October 3, 2014).

J. K. Turner and J. S. Bridgers, *History of Edgecombe County, North Carolina* (1920). <https://archive.org/details/historyofedgecom00turn> ^[10] (accessed October 3, 2014).

Additional Resources:

Mary Speed (Jones) Mercer Papers, 1903 - c.1937; undated. (accessed October 3, 2014).

Subjects:

Biographies ^[11]

Physicians, Dentists, Pharmacists, and other Medical Professionals ^[12]

Public officials ^[13]

Authors:

Thorp, John Mercer, Jr. ^[14]

Origin - location:

Edgecombe County ^[15]

From:

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Links

[1] <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/mercer-william-parker> [2] <https://www.ncpedia.org/geography/edgecombe> [3] <https://www.ncpedia.org/trinity-college> [4] <https://www.ncpedia.org/geography/warren> [5] <https://www.ncpedia.org/democratic-party> [6] <https://www.ncpedia.org/general-assembly> [7] <https://www.ncpedia.org/methodist-church> [8] <https://www.ncpedia.org/world-war-i> [9] <https://archive.org/details/biographyofstate00toml> [10] <https://archive.org/details/historyofedgecom00turn> [11] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/biography-term> [12] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/physicians> [13] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/public-officials> [14] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/authors/thorp-john-mercer> [15] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-20> [16] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/dictionary-no>