

Roberts, Edward Gallatin ^[1]

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by William S. Powell, 1994

26 Oct. 1878–25 Feb. 1931

Edward Gallatin Roberts, attorney and public official, was born in Flat Creek, Buncombe County ^[2], the son of Mary Elizabeth Buckner and Jacob R. Roberts. He attended Weaverville College, Washington College, and King College, the latter two institutions in Tennessee. After teaching school for several years he entered Wake Forest College ^[3] in 1902 to study law. Admitted to the bar in 1904, he established his practice in Asheville ^[4] and was county attorney in 1911 and 1912, represented Buncombe County in the General Assembly ^[5] in 1911, 1913, 1915, and 1917, and was mayor of Asheville from 1919 to 1923 and from 1927 to December 1930, when he resigned. In the General Assembly he supported the adoption of the Australian (secret) ballot and introduced a bill to secure it for his county. He also worked diligently for woman suffrage ^[6] and in 1917 introduced a bill in the legislature to confer municipal suffrage on women.

Roberts also held various local posts in the Democratic ^[7] party, was a popular speaker during World War I ^[8], and was active in the Presbyterian church ^[9] as an elder and a teacher of the men's Bible class. He was twice elected president of the North Carolina Forestry ^[10] Association. In addition, he was president of the State Municipal Association for three terms, a director of the Bank of West Asheville, and a member of the board of the Central Bank and Trust Company. Early in December 1930 the Central Bank failed with more than \$4 million in city funds on deposit. Six public officials and eleven bankers were charged with conspiracy. Protesting his innocence and that of several others who had been accused, Gallatin Roberts committed suicide in an office above the bank. He left a long, moving note addressed to the people of Asheville in which he reminded them of his long years of service, concluding: "My soul is sensitive, and it has been wounded unto death. I have given my life for my city, and I am innocent. I did what I thought was right."

In 1907 Roberts married Mary Altha Sams, and they were the parents of two children, Edward Gallatin, Jr., and Margaret Evelyn.

References:

Asheville Citizen, 26 Feb. 1931.

John L. Cheney, Jr., ed, *North Carolina Government, 1585–1979* (1981).

North Carolina Biography, vol. 4 (1928).

Raleigh News and Observer, 26 Feb. 1931.

A. Elizabeth Taylor, "The Woman Suffrage Movement in North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 38 (January, April 1961).

Additional Resources:

Images of Edward Gallatin Roberts. North Carolina Collection, Pack Memorial Library Special Collections, Pack Memorial Library, Asheville, NC. <http://history.abls.lib.nc.us/dbtw-wpd/exec/dbtwpub.dll> ^[11] (accessed May 7, 2014).

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Origin - location:

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Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press. ^[19]

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LINKS

[1] <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/roberts-edward-gallatin> [2] <https://www.ncpedia.org/geography/buncombe> [3] <https://www.ncpedia.org/wake-forest-university> [4] <https://www.ncpedia.org/geography/asheville> [5] <https://www.ncpedia.org/general-assembly> [6] <https://www.ncpedia.org/women-suffrage> [7] <https://www.ncpedia.org/democratic-party> [8] <https://www.ncpedia.org/world-war-i> [9] <https://www.ncpedia.org/presbyterian-church-0> [10] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/forests-and-fores> [11] <http://history.abls.lib.nc.us/dbtw-wpd/exec/dbtwpub.dll> [12] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/banks-and-banking> [13] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/biography-term> [14] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/lawyers> [15] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/public-officials> [16] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/authors/powell-william-s-0> [17] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/mountain-8> [18] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/mountain-9> [19] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/dictionary-no>