

## **Strong, George Vaughan** <sup>[1]</sup>

### **Strong, George Vaughan**

by Claiborne T. Smith, Jr., 1994

**7 May 1827–10 Oct. 1897**

George Vaughan Strong, judge and legislator, was born near [Clinton](#) <sup>[2]</sup> in [Sampson County](#) <sup>[3]</sup>, the son of Dr. Salmon and Eliza Sampson Strong. The family of Dr. Strong had moved to North Carolina from Bolton, Conn. Eliza was the daughter of Michael Sampson and of the family of John Sampson, for whom the county was named. In the eighteenth century John Sampson was given a large tract of land in North Carolina by his uncle, George Vaughan of Dublin, Ireland. George Vaughan Strong was named for that connection. As a boy he lived for some time with his uncle, Dr. Fred Hill, at Hill's estate, Orton, on the [Cape Fear River](#) <sup>[4]</sup> below [Wilmington](#) <sup>[5]</sup>. The doctor later became his guardian. Strong was prepared for college at [Lovejoy Academy](#) <sup>[6]</sup> in [Raleigh](#) <sup>[7]</sup> and then entered [The University of North Carolina](#) <sup>[8]</sup>, where he was graduated with honors in 1845. In 1847 a New York publisher issued his *Francis Herbert, A Romance of the Revolution, and Other Poems* <sup>[9]</sup>, a juvenile production dedicated to a university classmate, Jesse P. Smith. Several of the poems related to the Lower Cape Fear, while one commemorated the death of his classmate, John W. Burton, of [Halifax](#) <sup>[10]</sup>, the son of Governor [Hutchins G. Burton](#) <sup>[11]</sup>. Later in life Judge Strong tried to suppress this work as being inconsistent with his career.

For a while Strong taught in Wilmington before moving to [Goldsboro](#) <sup>[12]</sup>, where he continued to teach until he acquired the *Goldsboro Telegraph*. He studied law, was licensed, and became a partner of [William T. Dortch](#) <sup>[13]</sup> in Goldsboro.

Strong represented [Wayne County](#) <sup>[14]</sup> in the Secession Convention of 1861. He raised a company of volunteer soldiers for the Confederacy but did not serve himself, as he was appointed Confederate States district attorney. He was also a member of the 1861–62 constitutional convention. During his residence in Goldsboro he was for many years vestryman and senior warden of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. Strong moved to Raleigh in 1871 and joined the practice of former governor [Thomas Bragg](#) <sup>[15]</sup> and W. N. H. Smith under the firm name of Bragg, Smith, and Strong. In 1874 he was elected to represent [Wake County](#) <sup>[16]</sup> in the [General Assembly](#) <sup>[17]</sup>. In the important session of the Assembly in 1875, Strong was a leader in reopening the university, which had been closed since 1868. It was reported that on this occasion he "made one of the most eloquent of his many eloquent speeches during a long and successful career at the bar."

He was elected judge of the criminal court of Wake County in 1876 and filled the post with distinction for many years. Also in 1876 Strong was one of the incorporators of the Historical Society of North Carolina. From 1877 to 1889 he was a trustee of The University of North Carolina, which awarded him an LL.D. degree in 1889. In his *History of the University of North Carolina* <sup>[18]</sup>, President [Kemp P. Battle](#) <sup>[19]</sup> cited Strong as "an excellent lawyer and judge, distinguishing himself in procuring the revival of the University."

An oval portrait of Strong painted by [William Garl Browne](#) <sup>[20]</sup> is in the possession of his great-grandson, George V. Strong IV of Philadelphia. According to tradition, it was painted while the artist was living at the Strong home in Goldsboro during the [Civil War](#) <sup>[21]</sup>.

Strong married Anna Eliza, the daughter of Robert Cowan of Wilmington and his wife Sarah, the daughter of Governor [David Stone](#) <sup>[22]</sup>. They had nine children, seven of whom reached maturity. Of the sons, George married Sally Smith and Robert Cowan married Daisy Horner. The daughters of Judge Strong were Mrs. William Hicks, Mrs. Weston Gales, Mrs. Norwood Giles, Mrs. John Calvert, and Mrs. John H. Kornealy. He was buried in [Oakwood Cemetery](#) <sup>[23]</sup>, Raleigh.

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#### **Additional Resources:**

Dialectic Society of the University of North Carolina Records. 1795-1954. The Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. <http://www2.lib.unc.edu/mss/uars/ead/40152.html> [30] (accessed August 6, 2014).

John Gilchrist McCormick Papers Relating to the 1861 North Carolina Secession Convention. 1896-1900. The Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. [http://www2.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/m/McCormick,John\\_Gilchrist.html](http://www2.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/m/McCormick,John_Gilchrist.html) [31] (accessed August 6, 2014).

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