

Tilley, Nannie May ^[1]

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by William S. Powell, 1996

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Nannie May Tilley, professor and historian, was born on a tobacco farm at Bahama, [Durham County](#) ^[2], the daughter of Roscoe and Lucy Roberts Tilley. She was graduated from the North Carolina College for Women (now the [University of North Carolina at Greensboro](#) ^[3]) in 1920. From 1921 to 1930 she was principal of an elementary school in Durham County and in the summer during a part of that time did graduate work at [Duke University](#) ^[4], from which she received the master's degree in 1931. From 1930 to 1935 she taught history at [Western Carolina Teachers College](#) ^[5] after which she was admitted to the doctoral program at [Duke University](#) ^[4], where she became head of the manuscript collection until 1947. She was one of the compilers of the *[Guide to the Manuscript Collections in the Duke University Library](#)* ^[6] (1947). Awarded a doctorate by Duke in 1947, she promptly became professor of history at East Texas State Teachers College; she was the head of its history department during the period 1950–58. In 1958–59 she taught at Del Mar College, Corpus Christi, Tex., and from 1959 to 1964 she was historian of the [R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company](#) ^[7] in [Winston-Salem](#) ^[8].

Her lifelong interest in [tobacco](#) ^[9] was reflected in her two major works: *[The Bright-Tobacco Industry, 1860–1929](#)* ^[10] (1948) and *[The R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company](#)* ^[11] (1985), both published by The [University of North Carolina Press](#) ^[12]. She also wrote other books including a history of the Trinity College Historical Society and articles for scholarly journals. A pioneer member of the Southern Historical Association, she sat on the editorial boards of the *[Journal of Southern History](#)* and *[Agricultural History](#)*. After a long illness she died in Commerce, Tex., where she had lived since 1947.

References:

Directory of American Scholars, vol. 1 (1969).

Duke Alumni Register, vol. 39 (May 1943).

Journal of Southern History 55 (May 1989).

Additional Resources:

Nannie May Tilley, Texas State Historical Association: <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ftiqc> ^[13]

Nannie May Tilley oral history interview, March 27, 1974. East Carolina University: <http://digital.lib.ecu.edu/14671> ^[14]

Nannie May Tilley in the NC Literary Map, UNC-Greensboro: <http://library.uncg.edu/dp/nclitmap/details.aspx?typ=auth&id=2810> ^[15]

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[Biographies](#) ^[16]

[Educators](#) ^[17]

[Women](#) ^[18]

[Writers, journalists, and editors](#) ^[19]

Authors:

[Powell, William S.](#) ^[20]

Origin - location:

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[Winston-Salem](#) ^[22]

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