

## **Perry, Alice Threatt** <sup>[1]</sup>

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**8 Feb. 1870–14 Sept. 1966**

Alice Threatt Perry, pioneer registered nurse in North Carolina, [Spanish-American War](#) <sup>[2]</sup> veteran, commander of the North Carolina Department of United Spanish War Veterans, and trustee of [Wingate College](#) <sup>[3]</sup>, was born near Dudley in Chesterfield County, S.C. Her early life on the family farm instilled in her a penchant for hard work and an empathy for the sick and needy that endured throughout her life. At age twenty-one, while nursing a sick friend, the attending physician suggested nurse's training to her. She entered [Asheville Normal School](#) <sup>[4]</sup> and earned her tuition by nursing sick students; later she completed her training in the Orange Memorial Hospital, Orange, N.J., receiving her license in 1897.

With the declaration of war against Spain in 1898, Alice Threatt volunteered for the [U.S. Army Nurses Corps](#) <sup>[5]</sup> for service in Cuba. She was stationed briefly at Fort Meyer, Va., then ordered to Cuba but was diverted en route to an army hospital in Albany, Ga., where troops for the regiment she was to join were being sent as they returned from Cuba.

After her release from service in 1900, she became the first registered nurse in private practice in [Charlotte](#) <sup>[6]</sup>, under the sponsorship of Drs. E. C. Register, John R. Irwin, Charles Meisenheimer, and Robert L. Gibbon, who were engaged in an effort to "educate" people on the value of using trained nurses for private duty. For five years she worked in many homes, in the Charlotte Sanatorium, and in St. Peter's Hospital, where at times she served as acting superintendent.

After a brief stay in St. Louis, Mo., she returned to her native Chesterfield County to nurse an aunt with a disability. The scarcity of physicians in that rural area and the great need for professional help led her to convert her aunt's home in Pageland into a private hospital known as Alice Threatt's Clinic, which she operated for six years. Following the death of her aunt, she closed the clinic and worked for ten years in Oklahoma City, becoming assistant superintendent of the Rolater Hospital.

In 1904 she helped to organize the veterans of the [Spanish-American War](#) <sup>[7]</sup> and thereafter regularly attended their conventions. In 1956 she was elected the first and only woman commander of the North Carolina Department of United Spanish War Veterans. She was the last survivor of the Spanish War Nurses Corps in the United States.

In the 1920s while on a trip, Alice Threatt befriended two Confederate veterans on their way to a reunion. One of them, William M. Perry, was so impressed by her kindness that a correspondence developed, leading to their marriage in 1924. For the next fourteen years they resided in Wingate, traveled extensively, and attended both Confederate and Spanish-American veterans' reunions. In 1932 she succeeded her husband as a member of the board of trustees of Wingate College, where she served for more than a quarter of a century. Mindful of her own early struggle for training, she assisted many worthy but impoverished students in acquiring an education, often financing them through senior college after they had been graduated from Wingate. Mrs. Perry was active in various organizations of the Baptist church and for fifteen years was a regular participant at the Baptist summer retreat at Ridgecrest.

Possessing a commanding personality, she was a competent nurse, administrator, and trustee yet, despite the public recognition accorded her, retained an abiding concern for the ill and the destitute. Without children of her own she became the foster mother of hundreds fortunate enough to pass her way and was known throughout life by the simple appellation of "Miss Alice." In politics she was a Democrat. At age ninety-two she suffered a cerebral hemorrhage that resulted in partial paralysis. She died from the infirmities of advanced years in the Veterans Hospital in Salisbury and was buried in the Wingate cemetery.

### **References:**

*Charity and Children* , 3 Aug. 1961.

### **Subjects:**

[Biographies](#) <sup>[8]</sup>

[Medicine](#) <sup>[9]</sup>

[Nurses and Nursing](#) <sup>[10]</sup>

[Women](#) <sup>[11]</sup>

### **Authors:**

[Percival, Perry](#) <sup>[12]</sup>

### **Origin - location:**

[Mecklenburg County](#) <sup>[13]</sup>

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[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press](#),<sup>[14]</sup>

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