

Abernethy, Arthur Talmage ^[1]

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by Peter L. Abernethy, 1979

See also: [Abernethy, Arthur Talmage](#) ^[2]

1872–15 May 1956



Mural, Lyric Poetry (detail)

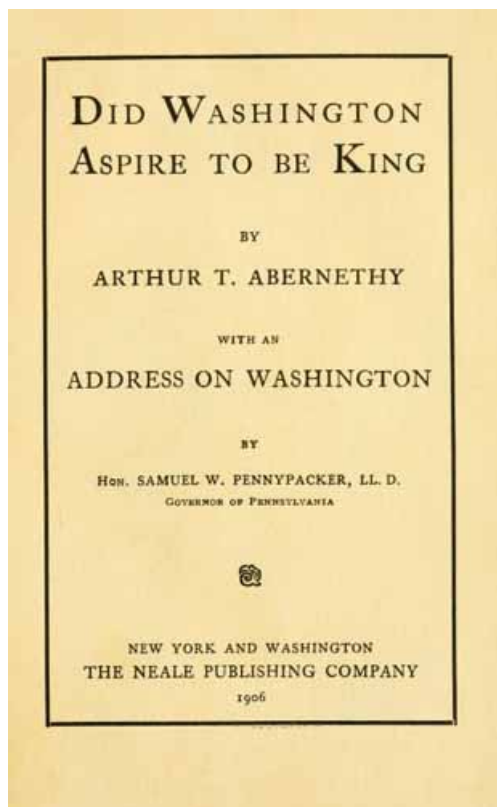
[South Corridor, Jefferson

Buidling, Library of Congress]

^[3]Arthur Talmage Abernethy, author, minister, and educator, was born of Scottish and German ancestry in the town of [Rutherford College](#) ^[4]. His father, a [Methodist](#) ^[5] minister and the founder and president of Rutherford College, was Robert Laban Abernethy; his mother was Mary Ann Hayes. A cousin, [Charles Laban Abernethy](#) ^[6], was a member of [Congress](#) ^[7] for twelve years. Arthur Abernethy was graduated from Rutherford College at fourteen; he received his master's degree from [Trinity College](#) ^[8] (now [Duke University](#) ^[9]) and his doctorate from [Johns Hopkins University](#) ^[10]. A Latin and Greek scholar at seventeen, he taught for seven years at Rutherford College as one of the youngest professors in the nation.

Seeking a change from teaching, Abernethy began a long journalistic career when he became secretary to the publisher of the *Philadelphia Record*. He worked there for seventeen years, frequently writing editorials. In Philadelphia he also served as business manager of the Philadelphia College of Commerce; there he met his wife, the former Mrs. Edna Beatty Lachot of Philadelphia, who was a graduate of the college. Later he became feature editor and Sunday editor of the *Pittsburgh Post*, columnist for the *Milwaukee Sentinel* ^[11], and feature writer and drama critic for the *New York Tribune* ^[12]. Throughout his life he contributed to the *Charlotte Observer* ^[13] and other North Carolina papers.

Abernethy is perhaps best known for his writing, which ranged from novels and poems to collections of sermons and



Abernethy, Arthur Talmage, b. 1872;
 Pennypacker, Samuel W. (Samuel Whitaker).
 Did Washington aspire to be king?. New York,
 Washington, The Neale Publishing Company.

factual 1906.

[14]works of a speculative nature. He was the author of more than fifty books, in which his sense of humor and his strong southern orientation, an inheritance from his father, are prominent. His religious writings, usually evangelical rather than descriptive, include *The Apostles' Creed: A Romance in Religion*, *Center-Shots at Sin*, and *Christian's Treasure Island: A Restoration Romance*. His interest in historical and anthropological subjects is represented in numerous works ranging from a three-volume *History of New York* to such pamphlets as *The Jew a Negro* and *Did Washington Aspire to be King?* He is perhaps best known, however, for his regional stories, novels, and sketches including *Moonshine*, *Being Appalachia's Arabian Nights* [15], a collection of sketches dealing with mountain people and the manufacture of "moonshine" liquor. One of his historical romances, *A Royal Southern Family*, is autobiographical, drawing on the history of his family from its origins in Scotland and, particularly, upon the character of his great-grandmother, Fanny Wetner (or Whitener), who traced her lineage back to a member of the royal Wedner family of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha.

In November 1948 Governor R. Gregg Cherry [16] named Abernethy poet laureate [17] of North Carolina for the remainder of his administration which ended the following January. It was only in 1953, however, that a successor poet laureate was named.

Abernethy had long wanted to enter the ministry, as his father and two brothers—the Reverend John Turner Abernethy and the Reverend Will Abernethy—had done. A third brother, Dr. Logan Berge Abernethy, like his father became a college president, first at Weaver College [18] and then at Mt. City College. Late in his life A. T. Abernethy realized this ministerial ambition, serving first for four years as pastor of the First Methodist Church in Belmont, N.Y., then for a number of years as pastor of a large Christian church in Cincinnati, Ohio. For the last two years before his retirement he was pastor at the Asheville Christian Church. During retirement he served a term as mayor of the town of Rutherford College, acted for several years as magistrate, and occasionally preached in local churches. The last of his family, he died at the age of eighty-three and was buried in Rutherford College Cemetery.

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Additional Resources:

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NC LIVE ^[19] resources

Personal letters from the papers of Governor R. Gregg Cherry, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC, USA.

Powell, William, ed. *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, vol. 1 (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press), 4. **Online access via NetLibrary and NC LIVE** ^[20].

WorldCat ^[21] (Searches numerous library catalogs)

Abernethy, Arthur Talmage, b. 1872; Pennypacker, Samuel W. (Samuel Whitaker). *Did Washington aspire to be king?*. New York, Washington, The Neale Publishing Company. 1906. <https://archive.org/details/didwashingtonasp00aber> ^[14] (accessed January 18, 2013).

Past Poet Laureates, N.C. Arts Council: <https://ncpedia.org/biography/abernethy-arthur-talmage> ^[1]

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Abernethy, Arthur Talmage, b. 1872; Pennypacker, Samuel W. (Samuel Whitaker). *Did Washington aspire to be king?*. New York, Washington, The Neale Publishing Company. 1906. <https://archive.org/details/didwashingtonasp00aber> ^[14] (accessed January 18, 2013).

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Writers, journalists, and editors ^[25]

Authors:

Abernethy, Peter L. ^[26]

Origin - location:

Burke County ^[27]

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