

Scott, James Edwin ^[1]

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by F. Craig Willis, 1994

1 Aug. 1859–24 Aug. 1888

James Edwin Scott, merchant and tobacco manufacturer, was born in [Alamance County](#) ^[2], the son of Robert W. Scott. He attended the [Bingham School](#) ^[3] when it was under the direction of Major [Robert Bingham](#) ^[4] and studied at [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[5] during the period 1877–78. He was close to his brother, Robert W., and the two joined in several business ventures.

Scott briefly attended a business college in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., before opening a general store in Mebaneville (after 1883, [Mebane](#) ^[6]). Because of the number of merchants already there, however, he became a salesman of fertilizer to farmers living along the [Haw River](#) ^[7]. After several unwise business investments, Scott left Mebaneville for Philadelphia in 1880 and established a tobacco business. On 8 June 1881 he returned to North Carolina and founded a new tobacco firm that proved to be successful. His brother Robert, owner of the Alamance Stock Farm, at [Melville](#) ^[8], where he bred cows, horses, and sheep, and his friend, Joseph A. Tate, a dealer in leaf tobacco in [Hickory](#) ^[9], became minor partners in the business. They formed Scott Bros. Merchants and Scott and Company, Manufacturers of Tobacco, with primary operations centered in Mebaneville.

To establish agents and buyer for his product, James E. Scott traveled to Chicago, Indianapolis, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Louisville, Memphis, Nashville, Vicksburg, Birmingham, New Orleans, Mobile, Montgomery, Atlanta, Buffalo, Toledo, Cleveland, Grand Rapids, Milwaukee, La Salle, Davenport, Burlington, Bloomington, and Springfield. He developed a strong market in those cities.

Scott was innovative in packaging his product. He sold tobacco in paper pouches that advertised his firm's name. With the purchase of a pound of "processed" tobacco, his customers received a free handmade pouch. Scott's wife and her friends in Mebaneville made the pouches, so the cost of production was countered by the savings on the paper pouches.

The business grew slowly but steadily and produced such chewing tobacco brands as Alamance, Beauty Bright, Carolina, Della, Honest Sam, Josie, Mattie May, Melville Chief, Robina, and Rob Roy. Smoking tobacco brands were Old Bill and Tried and True.

On 15 Sept. 1885 Scott married Mary Belle, daughter of Dr. Benjamin Franklin and Frances Lavina Mebane of Mebane. They were the parents of a daughter, Margaret Graham, who married John Rumble Ross. After suffering poor health and an extended illness, Scott died at age twenty-nine.

References:

Elizabeth Scott Carrington, *Historical Sketch of Hawfields Presbyterian Church* ^[10] (no date).

Daniel L. Grant, *Alumni History of the University of North Carolina* ^[11] (1924).

[Mebane Family Papers](#) ^[12] (Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill).

Additional Resources:

Vincent, William Murray, 2009. *Historic Alamance County: an illustrated history*. San Antonio, Tex: Historical Pub. Network. <https://www.worldcat.org/title/historic-alamance-county-an-illustrated-history/oclc/424455420> ^[13] (accessed July 15, 2014).

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