

## Twitty, Sallie Duke Drake <sup>[1]</sup>

### Twitty, Sallie Duke Drake

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**28 July 1835–26 July 1923**

Sallie Duke Drake Twitty, teacher and school administrator, was born at the Fitts Place, her mother's family home, near Oakville, [Warren County](#) <sup>[2]</sup>, the daughter of Matthew Mann and Winnifred Fitts Drake. She attended private schools in Oakville and Warrenton and was graduated from the [Warrenton Female College](#) <sup>[3]</sup>. Afterwards she studied at Patapsco Institute in Ellicott City, Md.

On the last day of 1862 Sallie Duke Drake married John Eldridge Twitty, a young Confederate corporal. By now promoted to sergeant, he was mortally wounded at the [Battle of Spotsylvania Court House](#) <sup>[4]</sup>, on 12 May 1864, and on the twenty-first he died in enemy hands in [Carver Hospital, Washington, D.C.](#) He was buried in the recently established [Arlington Cemetery](#) <sup>[5]</sup> on the grounds of [General Robert E. Lee's](#) <sup>[6]</sup> former home. In November 1865, however, his remains were transferred to the Fitts family cemetery in [Warren County](#). <sup>[2]</sup> Mrs. Twitty became the model Confederate widow—she wore black, in mourning for her husband, for the remainder of her life and worked to support herself by teaching and in caring for surviving Confederate veterans. She also was a leader in organizing the [United Daughters of the Confederacy](#) <sup>[7]</sup>.

Mrs. Robert Jones, a teacher in Warrenton for many years, was also widowed, and she and Sallie Twitty were employed after the war as teachers in the [Warrenton Female College](#) <sup>[3]</sup> for the year 1868–69. The college closed at the end of the term, and the two women, acting as coprincipals, opened a school for girls in May 1869. Formally termed Warren High School, it was known locally simply as "Mrs. Jones's and Mrs. Twitty's School." When Mrs. Jones remarried in 1873, the school was closed, and Mrs. Twitty became caregiver in the family of [Elias Carr](#) <sup>[8]</sup>, who was chief executive of the state for the term 1893–97. The Carr family's home was Bracebridge Hall in [Edgecombe County](#) <sup>[9]</sup>, but they had a summer house in Warrenton, and there, in the summers between 1873 and 1880, Mrs. Twitty operated a school for small boys. She then taught English in the [Wilson Collegiate Institute](#) <sup>[10]</sup> in Wilson for the term 1880–81. She was an English teacher and lady principal in charge of the preparatory department in Wilson Collegiate Institute (1881–85), Oxford Female Seminary (1885–89 and 1893–1915), and Luray Female Institute, Luray, Va. (1889–93).

As lady principal she was second in authority to the president, ready to assume charge of the college in his absence. At all times she rang the rising bell, inspected the rooms and the person of each student, presided over the meals in the dining hall, conducted religious worship in the chapel, gave the instructions for the day, taught her own classes, led the students on a daily walk, saw to it that they were all safely in their rooms for study and quiet, and rang the bell for retiring. She was in charge of student discipline and conduct on the college grounds and in the town.

It was her responsibility in these finishing schools to train girls from childhood to adulthood in all the accomplishments of womanly life, which in those days meant presiding over a home and family or teaching school. She was expected to form her pupils by her own example. She taught simple subjects to students ranging from six-year-old beginners to mature young women, but she taught them thoroughly. She was a stern disciplinarian. For instance, she gave four lessons a week in spelling to each student, and no student was graduated until she could pass with a perfect mark Mrs. Twitty's examination of ninety-nine words.

When she retired on 25 May 1915, the senior class at [Oxford College](#) <sup>[3]</sup> presented a portrait of her to the school. A member of the graduating class, who spoke on the occasion, characterized the gift as a symbol of the love and devotion "her girls" had felt for their teacher over a period of forty-seven years. In retirement she lived at the home of Mr. and Mrs. George R. Scoggin in Warrenton, and at her death at age eighty-eight she was buried beside her soldier husband in the Fitts family cemetery in Warren County. A devout member of the Methodist church all of her life, she favored the Democratic party and was a leader in the [United Daughters of the Confederacy](#) <sup>[7]</sup>, whose Warrenton chapter was named in her honor.

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**Subjects:**

Biographies <sup>[11]</sup>

Educators <sup>[12]</sup>

Women <sup>[13]</sup>

**Authors:**

House, Robert B. <sup>[14]</sup>

**Origin - location:**

Wilson County <sup>[15]</sup>

Warren County <sup>[16]</sup>

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