

Bennett, Ridsen Tyler ^[1]

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by Mary L. Medley, 1979

18 June 1840–21 July 1913



Bennett in Anson guards, Company C, Fourteenth Regiment, North Carolina Volunteers, 1861-1865. Courtesy of NC Digital Collections.

^[2]Ridsen Tyler Bennett, *Confederate* ^[3] colonel, congressman, and superior court judge, was born in *Anson County* ^[4], the son of Nevil and Catherine Harris Bennett. He attended *Gouldsfork Academy* ^[5] near his home and was graduated from Anson Institute, Wadesboro. He enrolled briefly at *the University of North Carolina* ^[6] but withdrew and went to the West, where he lived a varied life, including some time spent with Indians. He wanted to remain in the West, but his guardian, George Little, sent him fare and insisted that he return. He attended *Davidson College* ^[7] in 1859 and afterward studied at *Cumberland University* ^[8] and Lebanon Law School. His law study was completed under Judge *Richmond M. Pearson* ^[9], and he began practice in 1860. He was an ardent believer in *states' rights* ^[10] and enrolled in the Anson Guards in 1861, attaining the rank of colonel of the Fourteenth Regiment, N.C. troops. He was wounded at *Gettysburg* ^[11].



Oil Portrait of Ridsen Tyler Bennett. Courtesy of the NC Museum of

After the war Bennett became a law partner of Judge *Thomas S. Ashe* ^[12]. In 1872–74 he *History*. ^[13] represented Anson County in the *General Assembly* ^[14], and in 1875 he was a delegate to the constitutional convention. Appointed in 1880 to fill an unexpired term as superior court judge, he was afterward elected in his own right, serving until he resigned in 1882. He was a member of Congress from 1883 to 1887. He was interested in cultural and educational affairs and made available a collection of a thousand books to start a library in Wadesboro.

Bennett is said to have been reared a Primitive Baptist, but during the *Civil War* ^[15] he was baptized by a *Methodist* ^[16] chaplain. Later he joined the *Episcopal* ^[17] church. While at home on leave recuperating from wounds, he was married to Kate Shepherd; they became the parents of Mary, who married Eugene Little; Effie Nevil, who married John D. Leak; and Kate. Twin sons died as infants. Bennett was a popular orator and writer and contributed to *Charlotte* ^[18] and Wadesboro newspapers. He died in Wadesboro and was buried near his birthplace a few miles from town.

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