

Hall, Josephus Wells ^[1]

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by James S. Brawley, 1988

19 Mar. 1805–6 Dec. 1873

Josephus Wells Hall, physician, was born near South River in [Rowan](#) ^[2] (now [Davie](#) ^[3]) County, the son of Joseph Hall (1770–1850) and Margaret Linster Hall (1771–1842). His mother was the daughter of Moses Linster of Ireland (1740–1817) and Sarah Wells of Pennsylvania (1747–1818). His father was the son of Dr. Joseph Hall, who built the first gristmill on South River which later became known as the Foard and Lindsay Mill.

Hall was prepared for college by Dr. Jonathan Otis Freeman of the Presbyterian church in Salisbury. Following in the footsteps of his grandfather, he began the study of medicine under Dr. Joseph McDowell at Transylvania College. After earning his degree he practiced in Frankfort, Ky., where he met and married Henrietta Stockton of Indiana in 1836. He then went to Europe for further study, returning in 1839 to Louisville, Ky., his home. He later moved to St. Louis, Mo., where his wife died in 1849. While in St. Louis, Hall was associated with the founding of the Kemper School of Medicine in 1839. However, a disagreement with the head of the school necessitated a move after one year to a rival medical school at St. Louis University. Subsequently the two schools merged to form the present medical school of Washington University. In 1846 Hall was named St. Louis health officer.

For some reason that is not clear, his land in Missouri was confiscated and he returned to Salisbury, N.C., about 1850, a widower with one child and destitute of his former fortune. But he soon improved his prospects by courting the spinster daughter of Thomas L. Cowan, one of Salisbury's wealthiest merchants. He married Mary Cowan in 1853, and they lived with her parents on the south square until they purchased the former [Salisbury Academy](#) ^[4] building on Jackson Street. Written on an inside wall of the house's only closet is the information that they moved into their new home on 19 Oct. 1859. Hall embellished the structure by adding iron grillwork around the porches and entrance gate fashioned by Peter Frercks of Salisbury.

Now that his wife had made him a wealthy man, Hall confined his medical practice to needy cases and spent his time in busy leisure by forming an artillery company and giving frequent lectures on geology and other scientific subjects at the newly formed [YMCA](#) ^[5] in Temperance Hall. At the outbreak of the [Civil War](#) ^[6], he was commissioned as an army surgeon on 13 Dec. 1861 and assigned responsibility for the Confederate prison hospital in Salisbury. In addition, he worked tirelessly with the Wayside Hospital established by the Ladies Aid Society at the east corner of Lee and Council streets near the depot. When a general hospital consisting of ten buildings was erected along Bringle Ferry Road in the winter and spring of 1864, he was placed in charge. For his services to the Confederate medical corps he had to obtain a pardon after the war from President [Andrew Johnson](#) ^[7]; this was granted on 11 May 1866.

After the war, Hall resumed his building and real estate business that he and his brother, Newberry F. Hall, had begun in 1858 when they erected a three-story brick shop on South Main Street. In the 1860s and early 1870s he built two brick stores on Innes Street and another group of large brick stores on North Main Street.

At age sixty-nine Hall died at his home on Jackson Street. The house was purchased by the Historic Salisbury Foundation in 1972 and designated the [Josephus W. Hall House](#) ^[8]. "In his death," wrote the editor of the *Carolina Watchman*, "Salisbury has lost an excellent and highly valued citizen and one of her best, most cautious, yet judicious and active business characters." He was buried from St. Luke's Episcopal Church where he had been a member of the vestry for many years. His remains were placed in the Old English Cemetery but were later moved to the Chestnut Hill Cemetery. His wife, Mary Cowan Hall, died in 1902 and left all her real property to Hall's daughter, Henrietta, who was the wife of Julius D. McNeely.

References:

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Additional Resources:

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[3] <https://ncpedia.org/geography/davie>

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[5] <https://ncpedia.org/ymca-and-ywca>

[6] <https://ncpedia.org/civil-war>

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