

## **Graham, Augustus Washington** <sup>[1]</sup>

### **Graham, Augustus Washington**

by [C. Sylvester Green](#) <sup>[2]</sup>, 1986

**8 June 1849–12 Oct. 1936**

Augustus Washington Graham, lawyer and jurist, was born in Hillsborough, the son of [William Alexander](#) <sup>[3]</sup> and Susannah Sarah Washington Graham. His paternal grandfather was General [Joseph Graham](#) <sup>[4]</sup>, a military leader, a onetime member of the North Carolina General Assembly, and a founder of [The University of North Carolina](#) <sup>[5]</sup>. His father (b. 5 Sept. 1804), a graduate of the university, was a lawyer and legislator who subsequently served as a U.S. senator (1841–44), governor of North Carolina (1845–49), and secretary of the navy in President Millard Fillmore's administration (1850–52) before he was an unsuccessful candidate for the vice-presidency of the United States. The career of [William Alexander Graham](#) <sup>[6]</sup> was distinguished by his advocacy of education and civic progress.

With such a background, Augustus Washington Graham began his formal education in the Nash and Kollock School at Hillsborough and later at Alexander Wilson's School in [Alamance County](#) <sup>[7]</sup>. He was graduated from The University of North Carolina with a bachelor of arts degree in 1868. For four years he read law, first under the preceptorship of his father in Hillsborough and then under William K. Ruffin. He was admitted to the North Carolina bar in 1872. Graham practiced in Hillsborough for sixteen years, then moved to Oxford where he formed a partnership with his brother-in-law, [Robert W. Winston](#) <sup>[8]</sup>. In 1890 Winston was elected to the superior court, and for the next five years Graham practiced independently until elected to the superior court, succeeding Judge Winston. He served only two years and refused reelection, preferring to return to private legal practice.

In 1900, he formed a partnership with William A. Devin. After Devin became a superior court judge in 1913, Graham's son, [Augustus W., Jr.](#) <sup>[9]</sup>, who received the bachelor of arts (1912) and bachelor of laws (1914) degrees from The University of North Carolina, joined him in Oxford to establish the firm of A. W. Graham and Son, Attorneys. That partnership continued until 1927, when Judge Graham suffered a stroke and retired from active practice. He lived nine more years, dying at the age of eighty-seven.

Although his law practice was always his major professional interest, Graham held many important related positions while declining others. He was secretary of the Board of Arbitration, created by the legislatures of Virginia and Maryland to determine amicably the boundaries of those states long in dispute, and served three years on the board (1873–76). In 1883, however, he turned down the secretaryship of the newly created U.S. Civil Service Commission. Later he served on the Board of Town Commissioners of Oxford (1889–92) and as chairman of the board of education of [Granville County](#) <sup>[10]</sup> (1907–8). Under presidential appointment in 1915, Graham became the attorney for the U.S. Cotton Futures Association and for three years was its full-time president, living alternately in Washington and New York. He returned to Oxford in 1922 to concentrate on the practice he shared with his son.

Graham was also active in state politics. In 1885, he began a one-term membership in the North Carolina Senate, representing Orange, Durham, Person, and Caswell counties. Having been chairman of the Democratic Executive Committee for fourteen years while living in Hillsborough, he was a logical choice to represent Granville County in the North Carolina House of Representatives in four regular sessions and one special session. He was speaker of the house in the session of 1909. In addition, he was a delegate to the Democratic national conventions in Cincinnati (1880) and Baltimore (1912), when Woodrow Wilson was nominated.

Of all his public service, Graham was proudest of the thirty-four years he served as a trustee of The University of North Carolina, continuing the tradition of dedication established by his grandfather and father before him.

On 21 Nov. 1876 Graham married Lucy Anne Horner, whose father founded the [Horner Military Academy](#) <sup>[11]</sup> in 1851. They had five children: Susan Washington, Augustus Washington, Jr., Sophronia Moore, Alice Robertson (Mrs. H. G. Shirley), and a child who died in infancy.

Graham and his family were members of the Oxford Baptist Church, where he held numerous positions of leadership through the years. He was buried in Elmwood Cemetery, Oxford.

#### **References:**

Samuel A. Ashe, *Cyclopedia of Eminent and Representative Men of the Carolinas of the Nineteenth Century* (1892).

John L. Cheney, Jr., ed., *North Carolina Government, 1585–1974* (1975).

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

*North Carolina Biography*, vol. 4 (1928).

*Oxford Public Ledger*, 12 Oct. 1936.

#### **Additional Resources:**

A.W. Graham Papers, 1805-1936 (collection no. 00955). The Southern Historical Collection. Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. <http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/g/Graham,A.W.html> [12] (accessed March 14, 2013).

Board of Arbitrators to Adjust the Boundary Line Between Maryland and Virginia. *Communication from the governor of Virginia transmitting report of the Commissioners to Arbitrate the Boundary Line Between Virginia and Maryland*. [Richmond. 1877. <https://archive.org/details/communicationfro00boar> [13] (accessed March 21, 2014).

Joseph Graham Family Bible Records. 1759-1922. State Archives of North Carolina. <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/joseph-graham-family-bible-records/1348759> [14] (accessed March 21, 2014).

#### **Subjects:**

[Biographies](#) [15]

[Lawyers](#) [16]

[Public officials](#) [17]

#### **Authors:**

[Green, C. Sylvester](#) [18]

#### **Origin - location:**

[Granville County](#) [19]

[Oxford](#) [20]

[Orange County](#) [21]

[Hillsborough](#) [22]

#### **From:**

[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press](#). [23]

1 January 1986 | Green, C. Sylvester

---

**Source URL:** <https://ncpedia.org/biography/graham-augustus>

#### **Links**

[1] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/graham-augustus> [2] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/green-charles-sylvester> [3] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/graham-william-alexander-1> [4] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/graham-joseph> [5] <https://ncpedia.org/university-north-carolina-chapel-hill> [6] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/graham-william-alexander> [7] <https://ncpedia.org/geography/alamance> [8] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/winston-robert-watson> [9] <https://archive.org/stream/yacketyyackseries1912univ#page/n51/mode/2up> [10] <https://ncpedia.org/geography/granville> [11] <https://ncpedia.org/horner-school> [12] <http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/g/Graham,A.W.html> [13] <https://archive.org/details/communicationfro00boar> [14] <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/joseph-graham-family-bible-records/1348759> [15] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/biography-term> [16] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/lawyers> [17] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/public-officials> [18] <https://ncpedia.org/category/authors/green-c-sylvester> [19] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmont/g> [20] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmont-22> [21] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmont/o> [22] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmont-6> [23] <https://ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/dictionary-no>