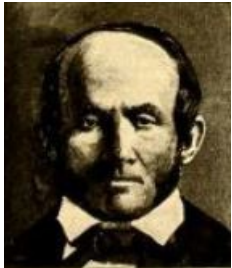


Graves, Ralph Henry ^[1]

Graves, Ralph Henry

by Mildred Martin Crow, 1986

9 Mar. 1817–10 May 1876



Ralph Henry Graves.

Image courtesy of

"History of the

University of North

Carolina."

^[2]Ralph Henry Graves, educator, was born in [Granville County](#) ^[3], the second son of Henry Lewis and Mary Brown Dickens Graves. His mother was the granddaughter of Colonel Robert Dickens, a soldier in the [Revolutionary War](#) ^[4]. Members of the Graves family migrated to North Carolina from Virginia; the family homestead, Belmont, was located near the Virginia line in the Nut Bush and Shiloh Church area. Henry Lewis Graves was a founder and trustee of the Shiloh Classical School, Granville County, where his son Ralph Henry received much of his preparatory education under the instruction of Robert Tinnin, who was hired in January 1827. Ralph's grandfather, Elijah Graves, had opened the Pleasant Grove Academy in 1812 near Bullock's store in Pleasant Grove. Thus, when Ralph Henry Graves was awarded the A.B. degree from [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[5] in 1836 and began to tutor mathematics students in 1837, he was following a family line of educators. He received an M.A. degree from the university in 1839 and continued tutoring until 1843.

Graves began his teaching career at the [Caldwell Institute](#) ^[6], [Guilford County](#) ^[7], as early as 1844. In the same year he helped organize the Alumni Association of [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[5] and became the treasurer and librarian. In 1845 he moved with the Caldwell Institute to the old [Hillsborough Academy](#) ^[8] site, remaining there until it closed in 1850. The Hillsborough Academy reopened in 1852, and Graves became its principal the following year. In 1854 he served on the academy examining committee, which was appointed by the school board to hold examinations for teachers three times a year; those who passed were granted certificates to teach for one year.

Just before the [Civil War](#) ^[9], Graves purchased Belmont, the family homestead, where he opened a boys' school and taught until 1866. That year he moved to Williamsboro in what is now [Vance County](#) ^[10]. In 1869, he moved again—to Graham in [Alamance County](#) ^[11]. Two years later he became affiliated with James H. Horner in an academy at Oxford. In 1874, the [Horner-Graves school](#) ^[12] was moved to the old [Hillsborough Military Academy site](#) ^[13] (founded in 1859 by [Charles C. Tew](#) ^[14]) at the urging of P. C. Cameron, who purchased the buildings in 1872. The Horner-Graves partnership was dissolved in 1875, but Graves continued to run the school until his death.

Politically Graves was a [Whig](#) ^[15]. He was said to have been an avid supporter of both Henry Clay and [Willie Person Mangum](#). ^[16]

In 1849 Graves was married in [Orange County](#) ^[17] to Emma Taylor, the daughter of John and Tempe Benton Taylor of Hillsborough. Emma's father was clerk of the superior court from 1800 to 1845. When he died in 1849, she inherited his house on lot 18 on the corner of King Street; it had been deeded to him in 1800 by her maternal grandfather, [Samuel Benton](#) ^[18] of Oxford. In the 1880s the house became a part of the Occoneechee Hotel complex. Ralph and Emma Graves reared two children. Their son, Ralph, Jr. (b. 1 Apr 1851), was also a graduate of The University of North Carolina where he became a professor of engineering and related subjects, teaching from 1875 until his death in 1889. Their daughter, Emma, was the first wife of [Edwin A. Alderman](#) ^[19], a president of the university. Ralph, Jr.'s son, [Ralph Henry Graves III](#) ^[20], was the city editor (1915–17) and Sunday editor (1917–23) of the [New York Times](#) ^[21]. In 1923 he joined the syndicate of Doubleday, Doran and Company as editor, remaining in that position until he became editor of his own syndicate in 1936.

Ralph Henry and Emma Taylor Graves were buried in the Taylor-Graves plot near the central walkway in the old town cemetery, Hillsborough.

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Additional Resources:

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Image Credits:

Battle, Kemp P. (Kemp Plummer). *History of the University of North Carolina*. Raleigh, N.C.: Printed for the author by Edwards & Broughton Printing Company. 1907. <https://archive.org/details/historyofunivers00batt>^[25] (accessed May 24, 2013).

Subjects:

[Biographies](#)^[26]

[Educators](#)^[27]

Authors:

[Crow, Mildred Martin](#)^[28]

Origin - location:

[Alamance County](#)^[29]

[Granville County](#)^[30]

[Guilford County](#)^[31]

[Orange County](#)^[32]

[University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#)^[33]

[Hillsborough](#)^[34]

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1 January 1986 | Crow, Mildred Martin

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