

Meares, William Belvidere, II ^[1]

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by John R. Jordan, Jr., 1991

22 Jan. 1826–7 Apr. 1896

William Belvidere Meares, II, physician, planter, and Confederate officer, was the fifth son of William Belvidere and Catherine Grady Davis Meares. He followed in the footsteps of his father in many ways, particularly in agricultural and educational pursuits. Young Meares attended the [Bingham School](#) ^[2] at Hillsborough and was graduated from [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[3] in 1846. After receiving a medical degree from Jefferson College in Philadelphia, he returned to Wilmington and joined in the management of the family lands as he continued to carry out agricultural improvements devised by his father. On 20 May 1850 he married Mary Thomas Exum of Verona, the Exum plantation in [Northampton County](#) ^[4]. Mary's sister, Martha (Pattie), married Matthew W. Ransom, and their husbands became close friends, their lives and careers touching each other's from that time.

With the outbreak of the [Civil War](#) ^[5], Dr. Meares volunteered for service and was commissioned in June 1861 as assistant surgeon of the Twentieth Regiment. Although initially assigned to [Fort Caswell](#) ^[6], his brother-in-law, [Matt Ransom](#) ^[7], was now in the field as a general of the Confederate army and called for his services. Meares was then transferred to Ransom's staff and served throughout the war as the general's aide-de-camp (lieutenant).

In May 1862, while the naval war was raging along the North Carolina coast, Meares took the precaution of moving his family from Wilmington to [Davidson County](#) ^[8], where he purchased the Ellis plantation (formerly the home of Governor [John W. Ellis](#) ^[9]). When the war ended, the family chose to remain there rather than return to Wilmington. Meares resumed the farming activities for which he had already demonstrated great skill. For the remainder of his life he was also a loyal supporter of [Matt Ransom](#) ^[7], whose career had taken him to the U. S. Senate. Ransom continued to rely on Meares as one of his closest advisers until his retirement from the Senate in 1895.

In his seventy-first year Meares became seriously ill and was rushed to New York City for treatment by specialists, but his life could not be saved. His remains were returned to North Carolina, where they were received by Senator Ransom and interred in the Ellis family cemetery in [Davidson County](#). ^[8] Ransom outlived his old comrade by seven years.

References:

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Origin - location:

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[Wilmington](#) ^[19]

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