Shepherd, James Edward

by Grady L. E. Carroll, 1994

26 July 1847–7 Feb. 1910


James Edward Shepherd, jurist, was born at Mintonville, near Suffolk, Va., the son of Thomas S. Shepherd. Orphaned at age ten, he was placed under the care of his brother, William S. Shepherd, and attended school in Murfreesboro, N.C. In 1861, although only fourteen, he attached himself to the Sixteenth Virginia Regiment and served as a “marker” for the regiment. Later he became a military telegraph operator and served in West Virginia and in Wilson, N.C.

In 1867 and 1868 Shepherd studied law at The University of North Carolina. After being licensed in 1868, he practiced first in Wilson and then in Washington, N.C. He served as a member of the constitutional convention of 1875 and the next year became chairman of the Inferior Court of Beaufort County. Between 1882 and 1888 he was a superior court judge. Elected to the North Carolina Supreme Court in 1888, Shepherd was appointed chief justice in 1892 following the death of the incumbent, Augustus S. Merrimon. He served in that position until 1895, when he was defeated for reelection. The University of North Carolina, where he taught law for eight summer terms, awarded him an honorary LL.D. degree in 1889.

In 1871 Shepherd married Elizabeth Bowen Brown of Washington, Beaufort County. They resided in Raleigh after he became a member of the supreme court. An Episcopalian, a Democrat, and a Freemason, he was buried in Oakwood Cemetery, Raleigh. His portrait hangs in the North Carolina Supreme Court.

References:

Samuel A. Ashe, ed., *Biographical History of North Carolina*, vol. 6 (1907).


Josephus Daniels, *Editor in Politics* (1941).


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