

Walser, Zeb Vance ^[1]

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by Richard Walser, 1996

17 June 1863–17 Feb. 1940

Zeb Vance Walser, lawyer and politician, was born near [Yadkin College](#) ^[2] in [Davidson County](#) ^[3], the oldest son of Frances Edith Byerly and Gaither Walser. He attended Yadkin College, founded by his grandfather [Henry Walser](#) ^[4], and [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[5], then received an LL.B. from the University of Michigan in 1886. In politics, he inherited Whig and [Unionist](#) ^[6] principles and became a [Republican](#) ^[7]. He began practicing law in Lexington and for several years was deputy collector of internal revenue.

In 1888 Walser was elected to the state house of representatives and in 1890 to the state senate, where he was minority leader. Chosen speaker of the house by his Populist and Republican colleagues in 1895, he returned to Raleigh as attorney general in 1897, when the entire state [Fusion ticket](#) ^[8] was elected. On 24 Nov. 1900, less than two months before the end of his term of office, he resigned on being appointed reporter to the state supreme court; by March 1905 he had compiled eleven volumes of the *North Carolina Reports*. In 1908 he was defeated for Congress by [Robert N. Page](#) ^[9]. His admiration for Theodore Roosevelt prompted his joining the Progressive party in 1912, when Roosevelt led his followers out of the national convention at which William Howard Taft was nominated. He then undertook the management of Roosevelt's campaign in North Carolina, a task he similarly performed for General Leonard Wood in the 1920 contest for the Republican nomination.

Throughout his life, Walser was a crusader for education, attested by his long service as trustee of The University of North Carolina and member of the Lexington School Board. He was a Presbyterian. For the Sunday supplements of the state newspapers, he wrote feature stories, but ill health prevented his completing a book on "Senators and Representatives from North Carolina in the Congress of the Confederate States, 1861–1865." He married Frances Estelle Adderton of Lexington, and they had five children: Pattie A. (Mrs. H. B. Turner), Zeb Vance, Jr., Donald Adderton, Frances Harcourt, and [Richard Gaither](#) ^[10]. He was buried in the Lexington City Cemetery. A portrait by Paul Knepper hangs in the courtroom of the Davidson County Courthouse.

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Origin - location:

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