

Williamson, James Monroe ^[1]



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by William S. Powell, 1996; Revised February 2022

1810–16 June 1877

James Monroe Williamson, businessman and legislator, was born in Roxboro, the son of James and Susan Payne Williamson. His given name (James Monroe), his mother's maiden name (Payne), and the fact that the maiden name of North Carolina-born Mrs. James Madison was Dolley Payne suggests a relationship between these families of friendship if not blood. Williamson was graduated from [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[2] in 1831, studied law, and opened a practice. He represented [Person County](#) ^[3] in the [House of Commons](#) ^[4] for three terms between 1834 and 1837 but in 1838 moved to Tennessee, where he began to practice law in Somerville, Fayette County, and represented the district composed of Fayette, Hardeman, and Shelby counties in the state senate from 1845 to 1849.

While in the legislature, he moved to Memphis in Shelby County and was clerk and master of the county court during the years 1847–54. Later he was president of the Memphis and Little Rock Railroad (1853–56) and cashier of the Bank of West Tennessee (1857–68). Simultaneously he was also president and director of the Memphis City Gas Light Company for twenty years.

Williamson, a [Democrat](#) ^[5] and a Presbyterian, was married to Leonora J., whose surname has not been found. Their children were Alice, Irene, Leonora (Mrs. William F. Shelley), Jacob T., and James Monroe, Jr. Williamson died in Memphis and was buried in Elmwood Cemetery there. [Calvin Jones](#) ^[6], a Raleigh physician and on whose land [Wake Forest College](#) ^[7] was built, was Williamson's brother-in-law. Jones moved to Boliva in West Tennessee in 1832, and it may have been he who convinced Williamson in 1838 to move from North Carolina to Tennessee.

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