

ROBERT VAUGHN:

At the regular sessions of Parts One and Two of the Chancery Court for Davidson County, Tennessee, on February 8th, 1924, Chancellors John R. Aust and James B. Newman, respectively, presiding, due official notification was given of a meeting of the members of the Nashville Bar, held on February 2nd, 1924, touching the death of Robert Vaughn, a member of the Nashville Bar and formerly Clerk and Master of the Chancery Court; when it was requested, that the Resolutions, adopted by the Bar Meeting, be received by these Courts and spread upon the appropriate Book of Records.

The Resolutions are as follows:

Robert Vaughn died in the early morning of Saturday December 29th, 1923, at his home in the 11th (formerly the 18th) Civil District of Davidson County, Tennessee, where he was born, on August 10th, 1856, and where he resided throughout his sixty-seven years of life. He was an honored and distinguished member of the Nashville Bar; for ten years he was Attorney-General for Davidson County, and for twelve years was Clerk and Master of the Chancery Court at Nashville, in each of these important and responsible offices, he has left a record of public service that is without stain or blemish.

General Vaughn, was a most worthy representative of one of the oldest and most highly respected families of Middle Tennessee; his ancestors were of the pioneer settlers, and they and their descendants have exercised a wide influence and have rendered large service in establishing and developing and upbuilding this part of the State. He was a son of Michael and Emma (Baxter) Vaughn; his father, until his death about twenty-five years ago, was a prominent and highly respected lawyer at Nashville, having been a member of the law firm of Houston, Vaughn and Malone. His grandfather, David Vaughn - a man of great energy and force of character - was born in North Carolina in 1772, and removed, about the year 1810 to Davidson County, Tennessee, when he married Sarah Thomas, a daughter of Joshua Thomas; General Vaughn's father was a son of this marriage. David Vaughn was a farmer of fine intelligence. He purchased a large area of the fertile land along the Cumberland River, which he cleared and developed to a high state of cultivation, and such was his success that, in addition to supplying his family with the needs and comforts of life, he was able to provide the means by which his children obtained liberal educations.

The land on which General Vaughn's home stands was granted to his ancestor, John Thomas, for military service, by the State of North Carolina, on February 16th, 1784; from the issuance of this grant, the part thereof occupied by the homestead, has remained the property of the grantee and his descendants.

John Thomas and Joshua Thomas, were among the original settlers who founded the town of Nashborough, which developed into the present City of Nashville. The name of each appears as signers to the historic "Articles of Agreement or Compact of Government, entered into by the Settlers on the Cumberland River" of May 1st, 1780.

Joshua Thomas was chosen in 1783, an officer of the military establishment which the settlers organized for their protection against the persistent attacks of hostile Indians, and the early records of the Cumberland settlement bear explicit testimony to his courage and unselfish devotion in protecting the lives and the property of the settlers. He was a member of the "Nickojack Expedition", directed by General James Robertson, against the Chickamauga and Cherokee Indian Tribes, and which culminated in the crushing defeat of the Indians at the Battle of Nickojack, on September 13th, 1794. Joshua Thomas was killed by the Indians in the Battle. Referring to the effect of the Indian defeat at the Battle of Nickojack, Phelan has observed, in his history of Tennessee, that thereafter, "the question of Indian depredations passed out of the daily thoughts of the Cumberland people."

General Vaughn's mother was a person of brilliant and cultured mind and of great strength and nobility of character, and refinement of thought and feeling; she was gracious and unaffected in manner and endowed with remarkable gentleness and sweetness of disposition. The author of "Old Days in Nashville" refers to Mrs. Vaughn and describes her "very beautiful and charming". One of the finest traits in General Vaughn's character was manifested in his reverence and love for his mother and the tenderness of his attentions and devotion to her; she was a daughter of Robert and Rebecca Boone (Mockabee) Baxter, of Montgomery County, Tennessee.

The maternal grandfather, Robert Baxter, (whose given name was bestowed upon General Vaughn) established himself in Middle Tennessee in the days of the early settlers, becoming eminent and acquiring large wealth through his success in developing the iron-making industry in Montgomery and Dickson Counties; he is mentioned, in a sketch of the history of iron-making in Tennessee, as one of a group of pioneer iron-masters, described as "most remarkable men; distinguished, in their day, for business capacity, amplitude of comprehension, unconquerable energy, unyielding courage, unerring sagacity, invincible will, great firmness of purpose, and of financial strength." "When the Country" says the historian, "was a comparative wilderness - when there was no railroads, no telegraph lines, when exchanges were difficult and uncertain, and credit was based more upon character than upon collaterals - these men entered the iron regions of Middle Tennessee and established a character for Tennessee iron that gave it pre-eminence in every market in the Mississippi Valley."

The force and high character of his ancestors and the culture and refinement of his family were impressed upon and splendidly reflected in the life of General Vaughn; in the fullest and truest meaning of the term, he was a gentleman, - intelligent, dignified, truthful, just, self-reliant and absolutely fearless, and also considerate, genial, kind, generous and tenderly sympathetic. He was a valuable citizen, an able and efficient lawyer, a faithful public official, and a true and loyal friend. He was a man of impressive appearance - handsome of countenance and of fine physique. His expression was open and frank. He won friends to himself and held them by the attractiveness of his unmistakable sincerity. His acquaintanceship with the people of Nashville and throughout Davidson County was extensive and intimate - probably no one was more widely known than he, and none was more universally respected and beloved; the memory of his genuine worth, as a true man, is reverently cherished in the minds of all who knew him.

General Vaughn had the advantage of fine academic and collegiate training which he supplemented with extensive and well-selected reading. He was fond of history and delighted in associating his mind with the minds of the masters of English literature. He was prepared for college at the Mims School in the 18th District, remembered as the "Rugby" of Davidson County. In 1875 he was graduated with the highest honors of his class, from the University of Nashville, receiving the degree of Bachelor of Arts. In 1877 he was graduated from the Lebanon Law School, with the degree of Bachelor of Laws, and, at once, entered actively upon the practice of law at Nashville, being then but twenty-one years of age. His ability as a trial lawyer was not slow in manifesting itself. During the term, from 1878 to 1886, of General W. H. Washington as Attorney-General for Davidson and Rutherford Counties, General Washington frequently associated General Vaughn with himself in the trials of important cases, and often had him appointed to serve as attorney-general pro tem for Davidson County.

The criminal law so attracted General Vaughn's interest that he applied himself to thoroughly mastering it, and such was his success that he became one of Tennessee's most eminent lawyers in this branch of the law.

In August 1892, General Vaughn was elected to fill an unexpired term of the office of Attorney-General for Davidson County, and was re-elected in August 1894, to serve a full term of eight years, at the conclusion of which he declined to stand for further re-election. He served, for these ten years, with marked distinction, and discharged the duties devolving upon him with ability, courage and fairness. During these years there were presented for his attention many of the most important and difficult criminal cases that have arisen in Davidson County, and, in conducting these cases, he fully sustained and justified his reputation as a skillful and thoroughly conscientious lawyer. The supreme and controlling motive of his entire course as attorney-general was the attainment of justice, and while he was most zealous, at all times, in asserting and vindicating the rights of the State, he was careful to protect his office from being used as an instrumentality for oppression.

In November 1906, General Vaughn was appointed Clerk and Master of the Chancery Court at Nashville, and, at the expiration of his term in November 1912, he was re-appointed for a second term which concluded in November 1918, at which time he had begun to experience the distress of failing health; and he, therefore, declined to accept a further appointment. Throughout his twelve years as Clerk and Master he continued to maintain the high standards for fidelity and efficiency which marked his career as Attorney-General.

General Vaughn was married on February 3rd, 1889, to Miss Eula Ramsey Williams, a member of one of the old families of Davidson County, and a daughter of Dr. and Mrs. William Williams. He is survived by his widow and by one child, Emma Baxter Vaughn, who married Joel B. Fort, Jr. General Vaughn was an affectionate and devoted husband and father; to him, home, with his loved ones about him, was the supremest expression of happiness.

In politics, General Vaughn was most earnestly and emphatically a Democrat; and, until his health began to fail, he was active and influential in his party. His political ideals were of the highest and he was insistent in his efforts to adapt the party organization to accomplishing the best in Government.

As a lawyer, General Vaughn's chief excellencies appeared in his skill in examining and cross-examining witnesses, and in his force as an advocate. He was especially gifted in presenting cases to the consideration of Courts and juries, in a clear, impressive and convincing manner. He was an orator, and his easy command of language enabled him to present his arguments most attractively and with great power.

In all the relationships of life and especially in his associations with his fellow-lawyers, General Vaughn was uniformly courteous and affable and thoroughly democratic. He was a wise and helpful counsellor, and was always deeply interested in the success of the younger members of the bar.

The most impressive of General Vaughn's characteristics was his superb integrity; he was absolutely honest and truthful; upon this foundation the structure of his whole life was made to stand.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

That, in the death of Robert Vaughn, the Bar of Nashville has lost an able and distinguished member, and the community a noble and valuable citizen.

That his career has been an honor to his profession, and his life has been a help and an inspiration to his fellowmen.

That we commend the example of his life as one worthy of respect and emulation.

That we express to his widow and his daughter and to the members of his family our profound sympathy with them in their bereavement.

That these resolutions be preserved upon the minutes of the Chancery Court, and copies be furnished for enrollment upon the other courts, for preservation as a memorial to General Vaughn.

February 2, 1924.

Respectfully,
E. L. McNeilly, Chairman.
J. M. Anderson,
H. H. Barr,
John T. Lellyett,
W. C. Cherry. COMMITTEE.

