

Hall County history

E.M. Johnson held many high positions in Hall County

By MRS. SYBIL McRAY
Special to The Times

At the death of Ephraim Malone Johnson, Sept. 26th, 1884, two prominent groups passed resolutions: the Quarterly Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and the Superior Court of the Circuit which included Hall County.

The Quarterly Methodist Conference passed the following proceedings in memoriam: (excerpts) "the oldest and most venerable member of our body was suddenly stricken down by the hand of death...His place, so long and punctually filled, is vacant...Of the honorable and exalted position which our brother so long occupied as a lawyer and a public man, we leave others to speak. It is sufficient to say that Hall County has never boasted of a more talented and patriotic citizen; that his record as a lawyer was eminently pure, honorable and creditable to the bar...but how much greater reason has the church to mourn...To his zeal and piety was due the organization of the First Methodist Church in Gainesville, over 50 years ago. From its cradle to its present prosperous condition, under the mercy of God, this church has been the object of our brother's most tender and earnest devotion...Long may the church be founded remain a bulwark to religion, a blessing to the world,

and a noble monument to our sainted brother!"

The resolutions adopted by the superior court give a full report of the life of E.M. Johnson.

"Georgia, Hall County: To the Superior Court of said County.

"Your committee, to whom was referred the mournful duty of drafting a suitable memorial, and appropriate resolutions touching the death of our revered Brother, Ephraim M. Johnson, beg leave to present the following report as the result of its labors:

"Ephraim Malone Johnson was born on the 20th of December, in the year 1803, in Baldwin County, Ga., from which place, when quite a youth, he removed to Pendleton District, S.C., and remained there until grown.

"Our deceased brother married Rebecca King, on 19th of February 1826, in Pendleton District, S.C., and left there the next day, for his native state, and settled in DeKalb County, and remained there until 1828, when he removed to this county, and continued to reside here until his death, living in the house now occupied by his stricken widow, 43 years.

"Rebecca King died on the 19th of April, 1837, and to them were born seven children, to-wit: Robert A., now deceased; Sarah F., now Mrs. Bryson; A. Malone; Nancy A., now Mrs.

Carr; Lucinda J., now Mrs. Timmons; Mary E., now Mrs. Roling; and Rebecca E., now Mrs. Montgomery.

"On the 7th of August, 1838, our deceased brother was married to his second wife Faitha Wells, who still survives, and is the oldest resident of our city. To this marriage were born five children, to-wit: George W., Walter C., Ephraim H., William L., the last three now deceased, and Ella C., now Mrs. Winburn. The children of both marriages all grew to be upright, honorable and useful members of society.

"Brother Johnson was one of the first members of the Methodist Church, of this place, and it was largely through his instrumentality that the same was organized...

"He led an active business life from the time he came to our county, until January 1836, when he was elected the Clerk of this Court, recording his first deed January 25th, 1836, and

continued to fill said office until February 1846...He was Clerk of the Court of Ordinary from 1840 to 1847...Upon retiring from the office of Clerk of the Superior Court, he again entered mercantile pursuits, and carried on business here until 1850 when the town was destroyed by fire, and his house and stock was consumed in that great conflagration.

"During these years he read law with our late deceased brother, John Gray, and was in the spring of 1851 admitted to the Bar at Gainesville, Ga., under Judge James Jackson...In the year 1856, he was elected Ordinary of Hall County...He was a member of the Convention which carried the State out of the Union in 1861, and was a steadfast friend of the Union, and refused to sign the Ordinance of Secession; but when his State decided to dissolve her relation with her sister States, he threw his whole soul and strength with his

native State, and the cause of the South...His last official and public acts were as Notary Public and Ex-officio Justice of the Peace for the 411th District Georgia Militia of this County...Our brother was one of the chief promoters of the building of the Air-Line Railroad, and under its first organization was a Director, and remained such until its bankruptcy. (The RR was completed 26th September 1873)

"RESOLVED: That in the death of Col. Ephraim M. Johnson, our Bar has lost its oldest, and most revered, and respected member, one who was to the profession a model of dignity, courtesy and most scrupulous honor...That we who survive him will ever treasure an affectionate memory of his shining character as a legacy left us for our encouragement and emulation...

W.F. Findley, H.H. Perry, Samuel C. Dunlay, W.P. Price, Committee."