

Last Installment On Life Of Meshack Franklin Appears Today

And now for the second (and last) installment on the life of Meshack Franklin, younger brother of Governor Jesse Franklin, and a prominent figure in his own right.

If you remember, Meshack married Mildred Edwards, the daughter of the very prominent and wealthy Gideon Edwards, the builder of the now restored Edwards-Franklin House. That tract, called the Skull Camp tract, of 550 acres, Edwards bought from Martin Armstrong.

If you remember, too, Edwards, a member of Virginia aristocracy, had married Anna Perkins, a member of another Virginia aristocratic family and a sister to the wife of Governor Franklin and also to Thomas Perkins, after whose Mount Airy plantation the town of Mount Airy was named. Thomas Perkins, too, if you remember, had bought his plantation from Martin Armstrong who, by that time, had gotten himself into deep land fraud

troubles and had to leave the state.

When Meshack first married Mildred Edwards they settled on a farm in what is now Yadkin County. When Gideon Edwards died in 1810, Meshack Franklin had become involved in politics. So the couple moved in with Mrs. Edwards. Then, when Mildred Edwards died in 1820, the couple acquired the Edwards property and Meshack began to add acres and acres of land along Fisher River to his property. It was soon



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after Mrs. Gideon Edwards died, in 1823, that Meshack began to remodel the house as it is today.

Around 1790, Meshack became involved in politics. He was elected to the North Carolina General Assembly and served two terms. Then, in 1803, he decided to run for the United States Congress.

In this Congressional race, Meshack faced a very tough job. The Congressional

district was made up of Surry, which then included Yadkin County, Stokes, Iredell, Wilkes and Ashe counties. And Franklin was running against four very tough opponents, two of whom were Revolutionary War veterans, Joseph Winston and Thomas Lenoir. Then, there was a former speaker of the House of Commons, Mussedine Matthews, and George Hauser, an ambitious local leader. This campaign, a researcher concluded, rudely awakened Meshack Franklin to the rough game of politics. Meshack lost, but surprisingly he ran a close second to the very well known and popular and able Joseph Winston, losing by only 50 votes. This spoke well for Meshack who, like his brother, Jesse, was no orator.

This near-victory established Meshack as a political figure with which to reckon.

Again, in 1804, Meshack elected to run for Congress, but again he lost to Joseph Winston. But Meshack was learning.

In 1806, Meshack made another try for Congress. This time, one of his opponents and the chief one was William Lenoir. This time, Meshack made it. He defeated Lenoir by a comfortable two-to-one mar-

gin. In Congress, he stayed for four years.

In Congress, he supported Thomas Jefferson, deplored the presidency of John Quincy Adams over Andrew Jackson. He supported James Madison and approved the War of 1812, which seemed to have sealed his fate. When he ran again, he lost to Lewis Williams, who was no weak opponent and a very able man.

Off and on afterwards Meshack was appointed to the Council of State, the advisory board of North Carolina. He worked for issues which had concerned his brother, Jesse, advocating state support for public schools, working for more political power for the western part of the state which power the wealthy slave owners of the east had had, popular election of the governor among them. With the reorganization of the Constitution, Meshack helped to make North Carolina a model. Furthermore, Meshack kept his popularity at home. When time came for the constitutional vote, Surry County supported it with a vote of 1,751 in favor and just 4 against.

Some time between his political duties Meshack organized and helped run one of the few agricultural societies in the state.

Meshack was very interested in the welfare of the small farmers of western North Carolina. The topics for discussion are just as vital today: the rotation of crops, the cultivation of crops, which crops were the most productive, contour farming, etc. Those same issues are still being discussed today.

Meshack died on December 18, 1839 and was buried in the family graveyard on the south side of the house with the Gideon Edwards family. Twelve slate monuments are visible today but the inscriptions have worn off.

Meshack had ten children, seven of whom moved to Tennessee or to Mississippi, one died and one remained in North Carolina. And another, Columbus, who had married a Gwyn, moved back to North Carolina and settled in Elkin. There, Columbus established a family. So Meshack's family was scattered, but families of the brothers, Jesse and Shadrack, are still around.