

## WILLIAM ALLEN COLLIER

1838-1922

By Robert L. Williams

William Allen Collier, son of Charles Miles Collier and his wife, Sarah Ann Cowles, was born in Hampton, Virginia in August, 1838 and died in McIntosh County, Oklahoma, on February 8, 1922.

His paternal grandmother was Ann Marshall, a cousin of Chief Justice John Marshall.

He was educated at Hampton Military Academy, of which John B. Cary, the great educator, was President. His father and uncle, his eldest brother and another brother, Charles H. Collier, were Naval Officers in the service of the United States prior to the Civil War and he and the said brother, Charles H. Collier, were Naval Officers in the Confederate States Navy. A member of the Confederate States Congress caused him to be appointed as Cadet in the "Schoolship" *Patrick Henry* on the James River near Richmond (the Confederate States Naval School). He served as a midshipman in the Confederate States Navy under the command of Lieutenant Parker, remaining in the service until the close of the Civil War in 1865, when he located at Clanton, Alabama, where he and his brother, Charles H. Collier, taught school. He read law and began the practice of law at Clanton, Chilton County, Alabama, and became a leader of the bar. Later he moved to Birmingham where he engaged in the practice of the law and became a member of the firm of Bowman, Harsh and Collier.

After the declaration of the War against Spain in 1898, being advised that President McKinley would be glad to confer with him, he went to Washington and the President proposed to commission him (a former Confederate Naval Officer) for service in the United States Navy in the war against Spain, and on July 26, 1898 he was appointed to serve in the Navy as Assistant Paymaster with the rank of Ensign and served on the *Pompey*, one of the ships in the North Atlantic Squadron employed in blockade duty off the coast of Havana, Cuba, serving from August 8th to December, 1898. The *Pompey* was at Cardenas from July 14th until August 2, 1898, and then at the Isle of Pines until August 17th, 1898, arriving at Norfolk Navy Yards September 22, 1898.

He removed from Alabama to the Indian Territory in December, 1906 and located at Eufaula. Though past middle life at the time, he immediately became active in the practice of law and established for himself in the new country a reputation as an able and efficient lawyer.

In 1912 he was one of the delegates from Oklahoma to the National Democratic Convention held at Baltimore and prior to his removal from Alabama to the Indian Territory he had been a leader not only of the bar in that State but also one of the leaders in the Democratic Party beginning with the reconstruction era. He

was appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Supreme Court as a Supreme Court Commissioner, effective March 5, 1915, and held said office until the close of January 31, 1917. Prior to that time he had been appointed as Special Judge on the Criminal Court of Appeals where he prepared opinions in important criminal cases.

In 1919 he was appointed by the Governor as Pardon Attorney, in which office he continued until his appointment as a Justice of the Supreme court, where he served with distinction until the expiration of his term.

Opinions prepared by him as Supreme Court Commissioner and also as a Justice of the Supreme Court, to which he was appointed on November 5, 1920, are reported in Vols. 61-64 incl. and 79-81 incl., *Oklahoma Supreme Court Reports*.

Judge Collier was the only Confederate soldier who served as a Justice of the Supreme Court or as Commissioner of the Supreme Court of Oklahoma.

At the time of his death he was serving as County Attorney of McIntosh County to fill out an unexpired term to eliminate complications that had arisen in the County affairs. Though advanced in age, he performed the duties of the office ably and efficiently.

On the evening of Feb. 8, 1922 he died suddenly while attending to official business at Checotah, Oklahoma and interment was at Eufaula, Oklahoma. He was twice married. By his first wife he had two sons who died in infancy and three daughters who reached maturity, one preceding him in death. His other two daughters, Mrs. Inez Collier Gullahorn and Mrs. Alice Collier McKinnon, survive him and reside in Birmingham, Alabama. By his second wife he had two children, one daughter, Ruth Collier, and one son, William Allen Collier, Jr., both of whom reside in Oklahoma City, the son now being an officer in World War II, serving in the United States Navy.

About six feet tall, averaging in weight about 200 pounds, he was of distinguished and commanding appearance. For a man of his years, his record and achievements in Oklahoma were remarkable. A strong character loyal to his friends in any cause he espoused, he had the courtly bearing of the old days and was one of the last connecting links between the present and the civilization of the old South.

While not dogmatic, he had the courage of his convictions and believed in and practiced the rules of honor and integrity.