

Charles Asbury Bird

Charles Asbury Bird (September 30, 1853-January 25, 1938) was born in Macon County, the son of John Williamson Bird and Jane Elizabeth Moore Bird, grandson of Clark S. Bird, and great-grandson of Jonathan Bird. A descendant of Methodist preachers, his name "Asbury" was a tribute to Bishop Francis Asbury, whom they admired greatly. His mother died when he was only seven years old, and he grew up in the home of his Moore grandparents near Franklin, NC. He came to Webster in Jackson County after the Civil War and worked as a clerk in the store of a Mr. Spake. Here he made the acquaintance of his future wife Sarah Ermina "Sally" Terrell (August 5, 1861-July 14, 1943), the young daughter of Captain James W. Terrell, a Civil War veteran. On October 4, 1877, when she was sixteen (considered a marriageable age) they were married and settled on a farm of more than one hundred acres of rolling upland fields on Shoal Creek in the Qualla section of Jackson, about half-way between Whittier and Cherokee, then known as Yellow Hill.

Charles Asbury and Sally Terrell Bird had ten children:

(1) Minnie Myra Bird (July 28, 1878-December 11, 1954), who married T. Woodfin McLaughlin (1879-1955) and lived in Jackson and Buncombe counties. They had two daughters and one son (who died in World War II). Both Minnie and Woodfin McLaughlin, as well as their son, are buried in the Thomas Cemetery at Qualla.

(2) Nellie Eliza Bird (September 27, 1880-August 11, 1895), who died at the age of 15 from blood poisoning after a ruptured appendix. She is buried in the Old Campground Cemetery at Qualla.

(3) John Williamson Bird (December 28, 1882-October 9, 1964), who married first Birdie Gilmore (1890-1954) and reared two daughters

in Fortuna, California. After Birdie's death, he married Pearl Anderson.

(4) James Terrell Bird (May 25, 1885-August 22, 1953), who married first, in 1909, Alice McGuire (1888-19). They had two daughters and one son (died in World War II). Some time after they were divorced, he married Ruth Lewis of Sylva. He is buried in the Keller Cemetery in Sylva, NC.

(5) Joel Monroe Bird (September 27, 1887-October 10, 1969), who lost his hearing in an accident during early childhood, married Bessie White (1888-1942) of Charlotte in 1915. They lived in Bryson City where he published the Bryson City Times. They had one daughter. After Bessie's death, he married Eva Pate (1893-1961) of Goldsboro. They moved to Sylva where he owned part interest in the Sylva Herald. He is buried in the Thomas Cemetery at Qualla.

(6) William Ernest Bird (July 21, 1890-October 22, 1975), who married Myrtle Wells (1891-1983) of Sandy Mush, NC, daughter of Charlie L. Wells and Anna Reynolds Wells. They lived in Cullowhee nearly all of their married lives, where was associated with Western Carolina University as English teacher, Dean, and President. They had 2 daughters and one son. Both are buried in the Thomas Cemetery at Qualla.

(7) Mary Bird (December 7, 1892-), twin of Charles Roy Bird, married Lattie Blackwell (1893- ?). They had five children. After they were divorced, Mary served as a matron at the Methodist Children's Home in ~~Lexington~~^{Winston-Salem}, NC. Her children settled around Lexington, Winston-Salem, and Greensboro. Later, she married Nannis Crouse (1899- ?).

(8) Charles Roy Bird (December 7, 1892-August 31, 1968), twin of Mary Bird, married Edna Coward (1896-1979), daughter of David

and Lou Coward of Cullowhee, NC. They reared two children at Guilford, NC, where he was principal of the school. Both Roy and Edna are buried at Forest Lawn Cemetery, Greensboro.

(9) Annie Bird (December 17, 1896-September 11, 1974), who married David S. Flintom, son of Pinkney A. and Mamie Woods Flintom of Durham County, NC. They made their home in Charleston, SC. They were killed in an Eastern Airlines plane crash, September 11, 1974, at Charlotte. They are buried at St. Andrews Parish Cemetery, Charleston, SC. They had no children.

(10) Henry Grady Bird (January 19, 1899-), who married Josephine Patton (1902-), daughter of Sarah "Sally" Thomas and William T. Patton of Jackson County, grand-daughter of William H. Thomas, Jr., and great-grand-daughter of Colonel William Holland Thomas, Civil war leader of the "Thomas Legion." Henry and Jo make their home on the old William H. Thomas, Jr., farm across the Tuckaseegee river from Stekoiah Fields near Whittier. They had two children, both of whom still live in Western North Carolina.

Charles Asbury Bird was a small, lean man whose average weight was about 120 pounds, but he was agile, strong, and handy at anything he undertook to do. Though he had little formal education, as such was rare for children who grew up in the area during and following the Civil War, he was far from illiterate and could write out, with utmost ease and confidence, a deed or other legal document that could pass the courts without a flaw. He was active in church and community affairs, serving on the school board and county commission. His wife Sally was a small, red-haired woman, fond of books and music, and the couple encouraged their children to take advantage of any opportunities for education. Of their ten children,

at least seven attended Cullowhee Normal School. One son, Ernest, became Dean and later President of Western Carolina University; another son, Roy, was principal of Guilford High School at Guilford, NC; their son Joel, deaf from an early age, attended the special school for the deaf at Morganton, NC, for eight and a half years. Of their 21 grandchildren, sixteen attended college, passing on the respect for education that Charles Asbury and Sally shared.

They spent the last years of their lives with their son William Ernest Bird at Cullowhee, where they both died. They are buried in the Thomas Cemetery at Qualla.