

## Gertrude McGee Upchurch      XID 5362

**Commentary:** Gertrude McGee Upchurch was born in 1881 in Raleigh, NC and died there in 1966. She was the daughter of William W. Upchurch, who in turn was the great-grandson of Nathan Upchurch I, head of Upchurch clan # 3. Gertrude never married but distinguished herself by becoming an attorney and being the first female in North Carolina to represent the State in a legal case. Between the lines we read that during her lifetime women were not given equal treatment in the workplace. We value her accomplishments as she adds luster to the family of her grandfather Alfred Upchurch, a prominent businessman and citizen in Raleigh in the 1800s. He and his brother, William Clinton Upchurch I were movers and shakers in the Raleigh area. The large role that the Upchurch family played in Raleigh during the 19<sup>th</sup> century remains to be displayed adequately. More on the life of Gertrude will help to get this story told.

Phil Upchurch, 17 Apr 2018

Acknowledgements: This Biofile was transcribed by Ginger Sisney, one of Allied Families valued collaborators.

(1). 15NOV1977 letter from Raleigh Cemetery Association to RPU:

Miss Gertrude Upchurch died 10MAR1966 age 84 (Note: a 26FEB1978 search of Oakwood Cemetery by RPU revealed no stone).

(2). See Notes of RPU 25FEB1980 – Visit to Brown-Wynn Funeral home in Raleigh, NC

- a. Deceased Mrs. W.W. Upchurch (Anna Ella Hawkins) residence Richmond, VA. Buried Oakwood Cemetery, charge to Miss Gertrude Upchurch.
- b. Deceased – W.W. Upchurch (William W) Residence 208 Chamberlain St. Died at residence 12 SEP 1923. Cert Phy = McGee. Buried Oakwood. Goods ordered by Alfred Hawkins Upchurch. Charged to Miss Gertrude Upchurch of Raleigh.

(3). See Sheet preserved in the William W Upchurch Bible and filed with farmer Norman Upchurch (brother of Gertrude McGee U). Notes on this sheet indicate that Gertrude must have been the preserver of the William W. U Bible

(4). 19OCT1986 – RPU conversation with Sallaine (Sledge) U. Sallaine Sledge Upchurch says she remembers a Miss Gertrude U who took lunch at Miss Florence Dement's Boarding House on Edenton St. across from the Capital in Raleigh, NC in the period 1945-1947 where SSU lived. SSU remembers Gertrude as being large, a business woman, not too attractive, but very talkative and a good personality.

(5). Note: I. Nathan U I – head of clan (RPU)

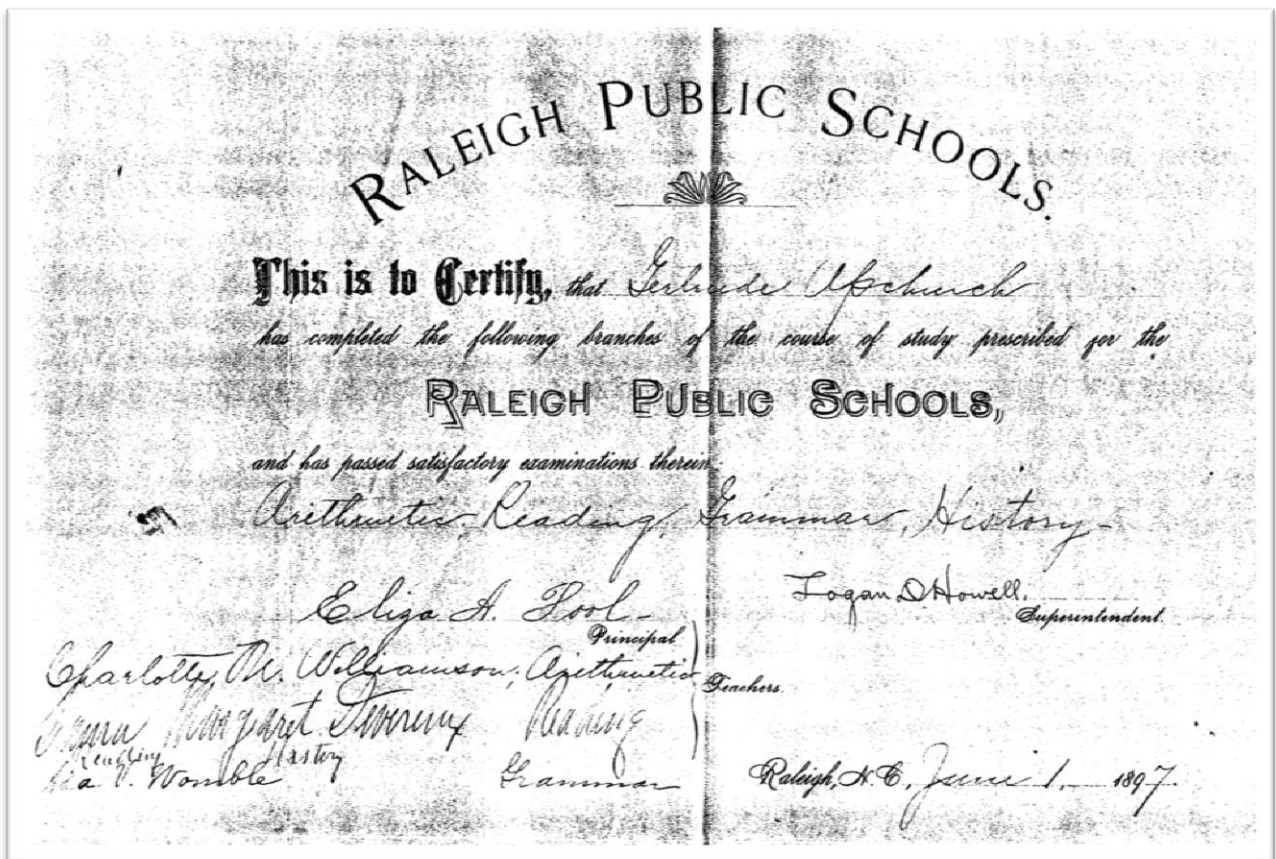
A. Burtis U

1. Alfred U

a. William W

i. Gertrude McGee U

(6). Copy of Gertrude's High School diploma dated June 1, 1897. This item was preserved in the William W Bible and was sent to RPU by Edythe Lee Medlin in 1980. (see next page)



(7). Copy of newspaper clipping – The News & Observer, Sunday, 5OCT1941 Raleigh, NC. This clipping was preserved in the William W U Bible supplied to RPU by Edythe Lee Medlin. There is a photo of Gertrude, Chairman of the State Radio Committee of the Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs.

## BUSINESS WOMEN SPONSOR ADDRESS

To Launch Business Women's  
Week With Talk by R. L.  
McMillan Here Today

National Business Women's Week, extending from October 5 through 11, will be ushered in today with a radio address by Department Commander R. L. McMillan of the American Legion over WPTF from 5:15 to 5:30 o'clock.

Subject for the Raleigh Legionnaire will be "Strengthen Democracy in Our Town," along the theme of the national organization.

National Business Women's Week is sponsored by the business and professional women of the nation, and the radio address here today will be sponsored by the N. C. Business and Professional Women's Clubs. It will be one of many State-wide addresses arranged during the week by the radio committee of the federation, of which Miss Gertrude Upchurch is chairman.

During past observances of the special week, Raleigh has provided several distinguished speakers for the occasion, including Josephus Daniels, Ambassador to Mexico; and U. S. Senator Josiah W. Bailey.

The national organization of Business and Professional Women started just before the World War with a small group led by Lena Madesein Phillips, a young Kentucky lawyer. In July, 1919, Charlotte women organized the first club in North Carolina with Miss Julia Alexander as its first state president. The federation of North Carolina clubs celebrated its 21st birthday last year with approximately 2,000 members in 32 clubs and two additional clubs on the way to affiliation with the national organization.

The Raleigh Club originated in 1919 with Miss Minnie Baawell as the first president. Others who have occupied that post are Miss Elsie G. Riddick, Mrs. Hathalene Holding, Miss Eugenia Herrera, Mrs. Carrie Phillips Hubbard, Miss Gertha Hellen, Miss Annie Lewis Bledsoe, Mrs. Charles A. Gurganus, Miss Mae Reynolds, Miss Jennie Parker, Miss Edith Gilbert, Miss Ruth C. Wilson, Miss Catherine Dennis, Miss Frances Johnson and Mrs. Frances W. Hoffman, who is now president.

## Principals In Business Women's Week



These are women prominent in the State's observance during this week of National Business Women's Week. At left is Mrs. Frances W. Hoffman, president of the Raleigh Business and Professional Women's Club; at center is Mrs. Doss M. Gurganus, first district supervisor for the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, sponsor of the observance; and at right is Miss Gertrude Upchurch, chairman of the State radio committee of the federation.

The Raleigh club has numbered with its membership such women as Mrs. May Thompson Evans, recently named chief of consumer relations in the Office of Price Administration; Mrs. Kate Burr Johnson, former State welfare commissioner; Mrs. W. T. Bost, present welfare commissioner; Miss Nancy Devand Miss Juanita McDougald, prominent in the State Department of Public Instruction; the late Mrs. Thomas W. Bickett, widow of the former governor and county welfare superintendent; and the late Dr. Della Dixon Carroll, prominent physician here.

Raleigh will play host for the second time to the annual State convention of the Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs here next June. The first convention here was in 1931, when Mrs. Charles A. Gurganus was president of the Raleigh club and Miss Lona Glidewell was federation president.

Mrs. Millie J. Crowell of Thomasville is president of the State federation now, and Dr. Minnie L. Maffett, an outstanding physician of Dallas, Texas, is president of the national organization.



(8). Item in email 27MAR2007 Lynn Rountree to RPU – By the way, are you related to Gertrude McGee Upchurch of Wake County? Several years ago I co-authored a book on the first one hundred attorneys in NC, and the self-same Gertrude was one of these first one hundred. (I'm attaching a copy of the brief bio sketch of her for your files, in case you don't already have it)

Gertrude McGee Upchurch    Licensed 1932 (1881-1966)

Gertrude McGee Upchurch was licensed to practice law in Raleigh in 1932.

Miss Upchurch worked as a stenographer for state government in Raleigh during the 1920s, first for the State Auto License Department, and subsequently for the Department of Revenue and the Attorney General's office.

After receiving her law license – yet while still employed as a “secretary” – North Carolina Attorney General Dennis G. Brummitt asked Miss Upchurch to write several briefs for cases before the North Carolina Supreme Court. She did so, writing five signed briefs in the course of a year, beginning in May 1932. Thus, Gertrude M. Upchurch became the first female attorney to act in an official legal capacity on behalf of the State of North Carolina.

Nonetheless, the Attorney General's office continued to employ her as a “stenographer-reporter” in the mid-1930s, and after 1933 Miss Upchurch's name does not appear on any briefs or court filings. By 1938, Miss Upchurch had moved on to a job with the Works Progress Administration's State and Municipal Government Records Survey. In the 1940s she worked as a clerk-stenographer for the State Public Welfare Board.

Miss Gertrude Upchurch died at Wake Memorial Hospital in Raleigh on March 10, 1966, at the age of eighty-four. She is buried in Raleigh's Oakwood Cemetery.

Hill's Raleigh, North Carolina, City Directory. (1925-1965).

Sources: “Miss Gertrude Upchurch” [Obituary.] Raleigh News and Observer, March 11, 1966.

North Carolina Supreme Court Reporter, vol. 202.

Social Security Death Index.

“State v. Dock Ingram et al.” North Carolina Supreme Court Reporter, pg. 557.

“State v. Gillespie.” North Carolina Supreme Court Report, Vol. 240, Pg. 533

“State v. Jake Boger.” North Carolina Supreme Court Report, Vol. 202, pg. 702

“State v. Noland.” North Carolina Supreme Court Reporter, Vol. 204, pg. 329.

“State v. Patrick.” North Carolina Supreme Court Reporter, Vol 204, pg. 299.

“Under the Dome.” Raleigh News and Observer, March 2, 1940, pg. 2.

“Under the Dome.” Raleigh News and Observer, March 12, 1940, pg. 4

U.S. Federal Census 1930: Census Place: Wake County, Raleigh Township, City of Raleigh.

Roll:T626 I725; Page: 11B; Enumeration District 92-35.

(9). 1900 Census – Wake Co. NC

Sarena U 51 b abt 1849

Hattie E Love Dau 21 b abt 1879 [nee Hattie E. U]

John Love gson 5 b abt 1895

Gertrude U dau 18 b abt 1882 [she is nee Gertrude McGee U b 12JUL1881 d/o William W. U and Anna Ella Hawkins – therefor probably not the d/o Sarena U – RPU.]

Ida Turrell – Boarder 26 b abt 1874 [Crossfile on Ida Terrell – RPU]

(10). Social Security output 1870-1991

Gertrude U Birth NC 07/12/1881 243-30-3473

Gertrude U death NC 3/00/1966 243-30-3473

(11). Death Certificate to RPU 10 OCT 2010 from Craig Earningham.

APR 12 1966

NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF HEALTH  
OFFICE OF VITAL STATISTICS

**CERTIFICATE OF DEATH** 10425

REGISTRATION DISTRICT NO. 9245 REGISTRAR'S CERTIFICATE NO. 303

1. PLACE OF DEATH  
a. COUNTY Wake b. TOWNSHIP c. CITY OR TOWN Raleigh

2. USUAL RESIDENCE (Where decedent lived. If institution: residence before admission)  
a. STATE N.C. b. COUNTY Wake c. CITY OR TOWN Raleigh

3. FULL NAME OF (If not in hospital or institution, give street address or location)  
Wake Memorial Hospital

4. DATE OF DEATH 3-10-66

5. NAME OF DECEASED (Type or Print) Gertrude McGee Upchurch

6. SEX Female 7. MARRIED ☐ NEVER MARRIED ☒ 8. DATE OF BIRTH 3-10-84

9. AGE (In years last birthday) 84

10. USUAL OCCUPATION (Give kind of work done during most of working life, even if retired) Secretary - Retired

11. BIRTHPLACE (State or foreign country) Raleigh, North Carolina - U.S.A.

12. CITIZEN OF WHAT COUNTRY U.S.A.

13. FATHER'S NAME William W. Upchurch

14. MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME Anna Hawkins

15. WAS DECEDENT EVER IN U.S. ARMED FORCES? (Yes, no, or unknown) (If yes, give war or dates of service) No

16. SOCIAL SECURITY NO. 243-30-3473

17. INFORMANT'S NAME AND ADDRESS Richmond Va Stanley N. Upchurch, 8850 Quakerhatch

18. CAUSE OF DEATH - ENTER ONLY ONE CAUSE PER LINE FOR (a), (b) and (c).

PART I. DEATH WAS CAUSED BY  
IMMEDIATE CAUSE (a) Cerebral Vascular Thrombosis  
ANTECEDENT CAUSES - Conditions, if any, which gave rise to above cause (a), stating the underlying cause last.  
DUE TO (b) Generalized Arteriosclerosis  
DUE TO (c) Hypertensive pneumonia

19. INTERVAL BETWEEN ONSET AND DEATH 9 days

20. TIME, MONTH, DAY, YEAR OF INJURY 3-7-66

21. I attended the deceased from 3-7-66 to 3-10-66, and last saw her alive on 3-10-66

22. SIGNATURE Lela F. Kenan M.D.

23. ADDRESS Raleigh N.C.

24. DATE SIGNED 3-19-66

25. DATE REC'D BY LOCAL 21 MAR 1966

26. REGISTRAR'S SIGNATURE M.B. Butler, M.D.

27. FUNERAL HOME Mitchell Funeral Home - Raleigh

28. ADDRESS NC

29. DATE OF BURIAL 12-12-1966

30. NAME OF CEMETERY OR CREMATORY Oakwood Cemetery

31. LOCATION (City, town, or county) Raleigh

32. STATE NC

33. DATE OF DEATH 3-10-66

34. TIME OF DEATH 7:15 P

35. PLACE OF DEATH Wake Memorial Hospital

36. CITY OR TOWN Raleigh

37. COUNTY Wake

38. STATE NC

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(12). Article – North Carolina Women – RPU note – Gertrude a “first” for a female in NC but this article did not accommodate her. 10 SEP 2014

Georgia Broadwick, the first woman to parachute from an airplane, was a spunky Tar Heel, too.



#### ANSWERS TO OUR STATE QUIZ, PAGE 10

1. A. Charlotte
2. B. Tiny
3. C. Penelope Barker
4. B. Asheville
5. B. Gastonia
6. B. 2002
7. A. Charlotte Hawkins Brown
8. A. Dobson
9. C. Terry Sanford
10. B. Beverly Perdue

## North Carolina Women

They are leaders, educators, and occasional rebels who, in their will and compassion, shape the state.

BY ALAN HODGE

**1** Annie Lowrie Alexander was a North Carolina native and the first woman to practice medicine in the South. In 1887, she started practicing in what Mecklenburg County city?

- A. Charlotte
- B. Gastonia
- C. Monroe

**2** Born in 1893 in Granville County, Georgia Broadwick made history in 1913 when she became the first woman to parachute from an airplane. Due to her small stature, Broadwick went by what nickname?

- A. Pee Wee
- B. Tiny
- C. Shrimp

**3** In 1774, an Edenton woman organized a “tealess tea party” with 50 other ladies in her hometown to protest taxation without representation. What was her name?

- A. Virginia Dare
- B. Martha Washington
- C. Penelope Barker

**4** In 1920, Lillian Exum Clement became the first woman elected to the N.C. General Assembly. Dubbed Brother Exum, Clement was from what Buncombe County city?

- A. Waynesville
- B. Asheville
- C. Rolesville

**5** In 1929, Ella Mae Wiggins, a textile worker, labor organizer, and singer, was shot and killed on the way to a rally to protest working conditions at the mills in what western Piedmont city?

- A. Kernersville
- B. Gastonia
- C. Forest City

**6** Elizabeth Dole served as a cabinet secretary for two U.S. presidents before being elected as North Carolina's first female U.S. senator. A native of Salisbury, Dole won the senate seat in what year?

- A. 2000
- B. 2002
- C. 2008

**7** Founded in 1902, the Palmer Memorial Institute was a nationally recognized preparatory school for black children located in Sedalia, east of Greensboro. Today a museum there honors what woman who founded the school?

- A. Charlotte Hawkins Brown
- B. Louisa May Alcott
- C. Catherine Ferguson

**8** The first woman licensed to practice law in North Carolina, Tabitha Holton, was admitted to the state bar in 1878. She lived across from the courthouse in what Surry County town?

- A. Dobson
- B. Taylorsville
- C. Southern Pines

**9** The first female chief justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court, Susie Sharp of Rocky Mount, was appointed to that post by what North Carolina governor in 1962?

- A. Zebulon Vance
- B. James Hunt
- C. Terry Sanford

**10** Seventy-two men served as North Carolina's governor before what woman became the first female elected to the office in 2008?

- A. Kay Hagan
- B. Beverly Perdue
- C. Virginia Foxx

Answers on page 167

(13). Email 3NOV2017 – Virginia Ax Sisney to RPU

Dear Phil,

I enjoyed my stay in NC. We drove thru the Oakwood neighborhood and happened on the house wehre great-aunt Gertrude lived when she died. Do you know if she owned it or was just staying there? 123 Bloodworth.

We went to the cemetery but couldn't find the family plot. The ladies in the office showed us where it is, but there were no tombstones there. Do you know if there are tombstones? I was looking for William W and Gertrude.

Then we went to E Hargett St. where Alfred U had a carriage shop in the 1860s. We had lunch next door and it was all very nice. I did go to Yates Mill and Green Level church the next day. Such beautiful country.

Thank you for your help and I will donate when I can.

Ginger Ax Sisney

(14). RPU entry 4NOV2017 from Find a Grave – no tombstone pictured.

Gertrude Upchurch

Birth: Jul. 12, 1881

Death: Mar. 10, 1966

Burial:

Oakwood Cemetery

Raleigh

Wake County

North Carolina, USA

Plot Section: EAST BRANCH Plot 42

Created by: William Mills

Record added: Aug 26, 2015

Find A Grave Memorial # 151257393

