

Colonel Lydall P. Saxon "The Early Years"

Lydall Saxon was a nineteenth-century resident of Wetumpka who was active in many community affairs. He was a Democrat, Mason and Presbyterian, and served as Alabama's state treasurer from 1865 to 1868.

Lydall was born on April 15, 1803, in Laurens District, South Carolina, the son of Revolutionary War veteran Capt. Lewis Saxon (1761-1813) and Sarah Allen (1769-1854). Lydall, known as L. P. or Lyd, was raised in a large family whose kinsfolk included civic officials, military leaders and landowners. Not only did his father serve in the American Revolution, but his grandfather, Charles Saxon, served as well. By 1768, Charles joined the Regulators in Orange County, North Carolina. The Regulators protested high fees and taxes and agitated violently for government reform. After being defeated in battle by Governor Tryon's militia, some of the Regulators were tried, convicted and hanged. Charles and others were forced to leave North Carolina.

Charles Saxon moved to Laurens District, South Carolina, about 1773, where he became an officer in the Revolutionary Army and also supplied provisions for the troops. After the war, he became a justice of the peace. His brother, Samuel Saxon, was a member of the convention that ratified the United States Constitution in 1788.

The Saxons' connections with notable figures increased with marriage alliances. A cousin, Mary Ann Saxon, married Revolutionary patriot, General John Archer Elmore - the man for whom Elmore County, Alabama, would later be named. Mary Ann's brother, James Saxon, another Revolutionary War veteran, married General Elmore's sister, Nancy, and settled in Autauga/Elmore County. General Elmore's daughter, Charlotte, married a Laurens District physician who had served as a surgeon in the War of 1812, Dr. Abner Crenshaw. Through this connection, Lyd Saxon would meet his future wife and move with the doctor's family to Wetumpka.

Lyd Saxon was educated at West Point, entering as a cadet in 1819 at age 16. Though he did not remain at the academy to graduate, he kept up the military traditions of his family by becoming a colonel of militia. He was also a planter and attorney. On December 27, 1831, he married Mary Eliza Crenshaw in Laurens District. Mary Eliza was born August 29, 1815, the daughter of Archibald Crenshaw and Mary Finch of Newberry District, South Carolina. She and her sister, Martha, were raised by their uncle, Dr. Abner Crenshaw, after their parents' early deaths - their mother in 1816 and father 1818. Her sister, Martha, married Addison Pyles in South Carolina in 1827.

Nine months after they married, Lyd and Mary Eliza had a daughter, Laura Charlotte Saxon, born September 23, 1832, in Laurens District. Three days later, Dr. Abner Crenshaw's wife, Charlotte, bore a son. The Saxons' baby daughter thrived, but Abner and Charlotte's infant son died after only three hours of life, and his mother died two weeks later. It was a tragic occurrence for both the Crenshaws and the Saxons. Charlotte's death prompted Dr. Abner Crenshaw to take his young children to live near some of his remaining family, who had moved to Alabama and were urging the Crenshaws and Saxons to join the migration.

In spring 1833, Lyd Saxon came to Autauga County with his wife, infant daughter and the widowed Dr. Abner Crenshaw and his children. They stayed with Abner's father-in-law, Gen. John Elmore, while deciding where to settle permanently. Dr. Abner wrote from

General Elmore's home: "I have not yet determined where I shall locate my family yet, though it is probably it will be some where in the neighborhood of Wetumpka; Col. Saxon seems inclined to higher up in the country, either in the nation or else in the old settled part. He has not been up to see it yet, and will not likely pitch on a plan to settle till he does see that part of the country."

In the 1830s, the town of Wetumpka had its west side in Autauga County and its east side in Coosa County. Lyd Saxon bought land in both counties. Although the state's financial troubles of 1837 slowed progress, he established a plantation and a law practice and invested in other enterprises. In the 1840 Autauga County census, Lyd Saxon's household consisted of himself, his wife and two daughters, Sarah Maria and Laura Charlotte. He had 11 slaves, with 7 persons engaged in agriculture. He and Dr. Abner Crenshaw had separate households in the 1840 census, but in 1850 and 1860 shared the same dwelling in Wetumpka. They were both founding members of the Presbyterian Church and supported the church as well as local educational institutions.

The Biographical Memoranda prepared for the Alabama Archives by Mrs. Amelia Townsend in 1920, used to publish the sketch of Col. Lyd Saxon in Owen's *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography*, lists Lydall Saxon's children as "Laura - married William Graham, Sallie - married Leonard Townsend, Lewis - unmarried, Mattie - unmarried," who were "all dead" at that time. Lyd and Mary Eliza's children and grandchildren have only partially been traced, but further research should answer questions on their families and descendants.

Submitted by: Richard Calvin Crenshaw Jr. Written by: Annie Crenshaw, 8150 Ridge Road, Greenville, AL 36037. Sources: Family Bible of Dr. Abner Crenshaw; Wetumpka City Cemetery Records; 1840-1850-1860-1870 Autauga, Coosa and Elmore County censuses; "Biographical Memoranda" submitted to Alabama Archives in 1920 by Mrs. Amelia Townsend; Some of the Descendants of Daniel Martin (1745-1829) of Laurens County, South Carolina and the Allied Families of Hudgens, McNeese, Rodgers and Saxon by Christine South Gee (1963).

Colonel Lydall P. Saxon "Life in Wetumpka"

Lydall Saxon and his wife Mary Eliza Crenshaw had more children after settling in Wetumpka in 1833. Although only three children's birth dates are listed in Dr. Abner Crenshaw's Bible (Laura Charlotte, Sarah Maria and Martha Caroline), these were the children who reached teen years or adulthood, and there were others who died young. An obituary notice for daughter, Mary H. Saxon, who died March 18, 1840 in Wetumpka, was published in the *Wetumpka Argus*. Her grave is probably one of the unmarked graves in the Saxon-Crenshaw section of the Wetumpka Cemetery.

Daughter Sarah Maria "Sallie" Saxon was born April 27, 1836. She married Leonard F. Townsend of Wetumpka in 1858, and their children were Sallie and John. Leonard Townsend was a merchant in dry goods and also held several civic positions. He was treasurer of Elmore County in 1874 and alderman of the West Ward of the town of Wetumpka in 1877. He was commissioned as Wetumpka's postmaster in 1894, an office that he held for nearly a decade. Many Townsend family records are found in Coosa County where Leonard's parents, William Townsend and Sarah Zimmerman, settled.

Lyd and Mary Eliza Saxon are believed to have had a son, Lewis Saxon, who died young, though his birth and death dates are uncertain. He does not appear in the 1840, 1850 or 1860 census with the Lydall Saxon family, but he was named in the 1920 biographical sketch.

Daughter Martha Caroline "Mattie" Saxon was born July 13, 1841, and died unmarried. She is mentioned in family letters of the 1850s, but has not been found in census or marriage records after 1860, though she may have been living in a relative's household after 1868. Further research in available records may yield facts on her and her brother Lewis, including their death dates.

Lydall and Mary Eliza's eldest child, Laura Charlotte Saxon, married William A. Graham about 1854 after his first wife, Pauline Louise Thomas, died. William was the son of John Graham and Jennette Smith, and grandson of Major Archibald "Baldy" Graham of North Carolina. William's uncle, William Archibald Graham, was a prominent early settler of Montgomery who was elected Alabama's state treasurer in the first legislative session held after

the capital was moved to Montgomery in 1846. William and Pauline had a son, Leonidas Robert Graham, born in 1848 in Wetumpka.

Laura and William Graham were in Texas by May 1856, when Sarah Anderson Crenshaw wrote to her son, Edward, in Wetumpka: "Tell Cousin Lyd [Saxon] that I got a letter from Laura. She says he has not written her since she got to Texas... I know how she feels... do write to Laura, she says she is so lonely." In 1860, the William Graham family was in Rusk County, Texas, with three children born in Alabama in addition to Pauline's son Robert. Mary Eliza was born about 1855, John Lydall "Lyd" about 1856-1857 and Jeannet about 1858. William and Laura Graham and daughter Jeannet apparently died by fall 1868, when children Mary and Lyd were living in Wetumpka with Sallie and Leonard Townsend. The children's schooling expenses were paid by their grandfather's estate and they were part of the Townsend household in the 1870 census.

Lyd Saxon's wife, Mary Eliza, died January 31, 1848, in Wetumpka, at age 32. She was buried in the Wetumpka Cemetery. Col. Lyd Saxon did not remarry, though his relatives may have expected him to. "How does Cousin Lyd come on? Is he a courting? How has he progressed, is he married?" wrote Sarah Anderson Crenshaw to her son, Edward, in Wetumpka in November 1856. Lyd may or may not have been courting, but he was taking part in festive community affairs. During the Fourth of July celebration in 1859, he was one of the Marshalls of the Day and a judge of target practice for the militia company.

In the 1850 census, Lyd Saxon gave his occupation as lawyer with real estate worth \$4700. In 1860, he was a planter with \$6000 in real estate and \$14,650 in personal property. The War Between the States caused hardships, but Lyd kept his plantation going and his family provided for. A generation passed away with Dr. Abner Crenshaw's death in 1863, and the Saxon household must have been strangely different without the elderly patriarch.

After the war, Lyd's political endeavors and family connections resulted in his becoming state treasurer. He served in that position from 1865 to 1868. It was a difficult time as the state struggled to recover from the war while under military authority and Reconstruction government. Dealing with state finances was an arduous task, but Lyd Saxon did a competent job and was spoken of with respect by his contemporaries. Elmore County was formed while he was in office, and his son-in-law Leonard Townsend would later become county treasurer. In 1866, Col. Howell Rose - one of the wealthiest men in Coosa County - left his Fort Jackson plantation and library to Lydall Saxon and other friends who served as estate executors. Lyd was able to loan money to friends and relations. The sum owed him by Benjamin and William Screws of Montgomery was secured by a one-fourth interest in *The Montgomery Daily and Weekly Advertiser*.

Lydall Saxon died August 19, 1868, in Wetumpka, just one month after Alabama's state representatives were finally allowed seats in the U.S. Congress again. Although his final illness is not identified, Dr. Edward Mason treated him every day from August 14 until his death, and presented the estate with a bill for \$18.00.

The notice of Lyd's death was published in a Montgomery newspaper: "Death of Col. Saxon. - Private advice from Wetumpka informs us of the death of Col. L. P. Saxon, the late State Treasurer, at that place yesterday evening. Col. Saxon was widely known through the state, and will be sincerely mourned by a host of friends." (*The Daily Picayune*, Thursday, August 20, 1868).

Leonard Townsend was the administrator of Lyd Saxon's estate. The household inventory included nine paintings, several looking glasses, furniture, a gold watch and a pair of gold spectacles. The Saxon plantation and residence were offered for rent through the 1870s and the property was gradually sold.

No headstone can be found for Lydall Saxon in the Wetumpka Cemetery today, though he is probably buried in one of the unmarked graves near his wife and Dr. Abner Crenshaw.

Submitted by: Sarah Ellis Bates. Written by: Annie Crenshaw, 8150 Ridge Road, Greenville, AL 36037. Sources: "Biographical Memoranda" submitted to Alabama Archives in 1920 by Mrs. Amelia Townsend; Family Bible of Dr. Abner Crenshaw; Wetumpka City Cemetery Records; 1840-1850-1860-1870 Autauga, Coosa and Elmore County censuses; and 1860 Rusk County, Texas census.