

Biography of Judge B. H. Zellner (1820 – 1901)

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JUDGE B. H. ZELLNER, Forsyth, Ga., is the head of one of the largest and most influential families in Monroe county, all of whose members occupy honorable positions in their several communities, commercially and socially.. For seventy years, continuously, Judge Zellner has been a resident of the county, during which period he has come to be regarded as one of the most reliable and trustworthy of men-a man of the sternest morality and of unbending integrity. So conspicuous have been these characteristics, and so excellent his business capabilities, that he has been entrusted, as administrator or executor, with the management of more estates than any man in the county. He has the remarkable record of having settled some twenty-three estates, some of them the largest in the county, without the loss of a dollar or the aid of the courts. The family is of German origin, George Zellner, the judge's grandfather, having been born and reared to young manhood in Hanover, Germany. The independence of the United States having been established he concluded to cast his lot with the new nation, and came first to North Carolina and settled in Bertie county, where not long after he married a Miss Mary Capheart. Several years afterward, in 1799, he migrated to Lincoln county, Ga., thus introducing the name into this state. He was not robust man, his constitution having been impaired in consequence of medicine having been carelessly administered in his youth, and he died at a comparatively early age. He raised a family of four sons and two daughters, who scattered after his death to Tennessee, Alabama and elsewhere. Andrew Zellner, Judge Zellner's father, was born in North Carolina in 1798, and was only six months old when the family came to Georgia. He was reared in Lincoln county, and was married in 1818, just across the line in Wilkes county, to Rebecca Holmes, who bore him eight children: B. H., the subject of this sketch; Francis A., deceased; George; Andrew B., John W., planter, Monroe county; James, deceased; Mary, widow of Ebenezer Pharr, Forsyth, Ga., and Sarah J., wife of William Walker, Thomaston, Ga. In 1824 he moved with his family to Monroe county and settled about eight miles southwest of Forsyth, where he lived until 1837 when he moved to the place where Judge Zellner now lives, four miles southeast of Forsyth. His wife died in 1875, aged seventy-two years, but he survived until 1892, having attained to his ninety-fourth year. In some respects he was a remarkable man, his longevity being largely due to his methodical habits and abstemiousness, it being a fact worthy of note and imitation that he never used tobacco in any form, nor drank a drop of liquor except as a medicine. Before the war he was a whig in politics; a Primitive Baptist always. Judge B. H. Zellner was born in Lincoln County, Feb. 2, 1820. He received a common school education such as the time and the locality afforded, and his youth was passed in the pursuits congenial to the planter-life of the day. In 1850-51, as soon as he attained to his majority, he served the county as sheriff, and for several years following as one of the justices of the inferior court. Before the war he was a whig and strongly opposed to secession. In the convention which nominated the delegates to represent the county, his name was presented without his consent, but he came within four votes of being chosen. Although opposed to secession, he acquiesced in the action of the convention, and earnestly supported the cause to the end. Having large planting and milling interests, he was exempt from military duty; but he contributed largely to the support of the army, and sent two of his sons to the front to do battle

for the cause. He was elected to represent the county in 1868-69 in the general assembly, and again in 1878-79. In 1876 he was chosen as one of the new board of county commissioners and served until 1883, which terminated his official life. There has been no period in the life of Judge Zellner when he did not feel a profound interest in the welfare of the county -- local, state and Federal -- whether in office or not. In all the trusts confided to him he has maintained his character for faithfulness and strict integrity, and given the same careful attention to public business as to his private affairs. He was at one time one of the largest land owners in Monroe county, but he has divided his holdings among his children until he has reduced his own to about 500 acres. Judge Zellner was married in Monroe county, Sept. 7, 1842 to Susan, daughter of Thomas M. Evans. She was born in Jones county, but her family moved into Monroe county about the same time the Zellners did. Judge Zellner and his wife have had eight, children born to them: Thomas J. and Andrew J., planters, Monroe county; Nancy R., widow of Dr. B. F. Chambliss, Culloden, Monroe Co.; Emma, wife of Hon. W. A. Worsham, Monroe county; Wiley E., planter and county treasurer; William J., planter, Monroe county; Charles J., merchant, Forsyth, Ga., and Lillie, wife of Col. C. J. Shipp, lawyer, Cordele, Ga. Although an ardent whig before the war, he cheerfully fell into line with the only white man's party, and has since acted with the democrats. For fifty-two years himself and wife have harmoniously "kept together" on life's pilgrimage, and for more than fifty years he has been a constant member of the Primitive Baptist church, and can now look back upon a well-spent life and duty faithfully done, and look-confidently forward to the fulfillment of the glorious promises "to him that overcometh."