

William Eldridge Hatcher was born on July 25, 1834 in Bedford County, Virginia, near the Peaks of Otter. He was the son of Henry and Mary (Latham) Hatcher, and a first cousin of Doctor Jeremiah Bell Jeter.

The first of the family to set foot on American soil was William Hatcher, who served as a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses and took part in Bacon's Rebellion in 1676.

After attending the schools of his native county, Hatcher studied at Richmond College (later the University of Richmond), where he received the Bachelor of Arts degree in 1858.

Immediately upon graduation Hatcher was called to be pastor of the Baptist church in Manchester, now a part of the city of Richmond. There he witnessed some of the scenes of the Civil War. In 1867 he became pastor of the Franklin Square Baptist Church in Baltimore, remaining only one year. While successful here, his heart was really in his native state, where he was destined to spend the rest of his life.

He returned to Virginia to take charge of the First Baptist Church in Petersburg; then for twenty-six years, from May 1875 to May 1901, he was pastor of the Grace Street Baptist Church in Richmond.

Meanwhile, from 1882 to 1885, he was editor of the Religious Herald, to which he remained throughout life a frequent contributor. He also spoke frequently at religious gatherings in Washington, Philadelphia, and other cities.

In 1888 he went to Europe and visited Spurgeon in London and his friend George B. Taylor in Italy. In 1899 he championed the cause of William H. Whitsitt, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, who had been attacked on account of his views as to the history of immersion among English Baptists.

When Whitsitt was forced to resign, Hatcher was instrumental in his being called to Richmond College as professor of philosophy.

He was president of the board of trustees of Richmond College, 1896-1908, and was the founder of Fork Union Academy (later Fork Union Military Academy) in 1898. He died at his country home, "Careby Hall, " Fork Union, Virginia.

William Eldridge Hatcher was a gifted preacher. His sympathies were with the masses, and especially after the Civil War he felt it his mission to reach out to them. His vivid personality made deep impress on his denomination, and throughout the South his leadership in Baptist circles was notable. His published works include: Sketch of the Life and Writings of A. B. Brown (1886), written in collaboration with his wife; Life of J. B. Jeter, D. D. (1887); The Pastor and the Sunday School (1902); and John Jasper (1908), the life of a noted and picturesque Negro preacher of Richmond. Along the Trail of the Friendly Years (1910) is a charming autobiography.

In 1864, Hatcher married Oranie Virginia Snead. They had nine children, four of whom died in infancy.

Father: Henry Hatcher

Mother: Mary (Latham) Hatcher

Spouse: Oranie Virginia (Snead) Hatcher Daughter: Kate Jeter (Hatcher) DeMott Daughter: Edith Longwood (Hatcher) Harcum Daughter: Elizabeth Herndon (Hatcher) Sadler Son: Orie Latham Hatcher

Son: Eldridge Burwell Hatcher

(Source: World Biographical Encyclopedia)