

REVEREND JOHN WESLEY HEPTINSTALL – a sketch
1814-1891

John Wesley Heptinstall was all accounts, a man of strong conviction and great will power. He was a minister, a business owner, and a cofounder of the Littleton Female College in Littleton, NC. At one time, he was president of the Local Preachers Conference.

John Wesley Heptinstall was born to William H Heptinstall 1775-1822 and Dolly B. Vaden 1775-1848 near the town of Halifax in Halifax County, North Carolina. His parents had moved to the Halifax County North Carolina area from Virginia. They own some property but were not affluent. John Wesley was left fatherless at the age of twelve. A Halifax County court document dated in 1833 specifies the appointment of commissioners to settle the guardian account for John Wesley Heptinstall, Jesse Heptinstall, and Dolly Langford, formerly Heptinstall. John Wesley apparently had four other brothers, Joshua, born about 1804 and appears not to have survived to adulthood, Jesse born about 1810 and married Ophelia Bullock in 1859, Asa born about 1809 married Rebecca Sledge, the sister of John Wesley's wife. Asa lived in Enfield in Halifax County and died early, in 1837, leaving two children, of which one was George W. Heptinstall who was a minister in Enfield. John Wesley also had possibly three sisters, Rebecca who was born about 1813 and was listed on the 1860 census, Dolly who perhaps had a marriage to a Langford and possibly one to a Vaden and Mary who was born about 1820 and was listed on the 1850 census. Some records specify that John Wesley's mother and two of his sisters lived with him until their deaths.



John Wesley married Nancy Ann Sledge 1809-1878, daughter of Henry Sledge 1775-1845 and Sarah Ivey 1786-1850 of Weldon, Halifax County NC.

John Wesley and his wife had six children. The oldest two boys, Henry Hamnet and Philmer Bangs died as a result of the Civil War. The third boy was John Olin Heptinstall 1846-1922 who married Hannah Marion Bailey 1854-1926 of Jarratt, Virginia. There were three daughters, Harriet who was born about 1832 and little is known, Eugenia Atkins Clark Heptinstall who married John Frank Jackson and Ellen Ann Soule who married Marion Eaton Newsom.

John Wesley Heptinstall was a Methodist minister preaching in churches in both Halifax and Warren counties. He was an exhorter until he was licensed to preach at age forty-five. In addition, he was a business man owning a cotton gin, general store, lumber mill, and a grist mill. He owned several thousand acres of land and acquired a plantation home, the Heptinstall House Plantation, in the 1840s.

After his wife passed away, he married a second time to Cornelia Boddie Moore, the widow of his friend, Reverend Junius P Moore. They built a home in Littleton about seven miles from the plantation and his only surviving son John Olin and his wife moved into the plantation home.

A book written by Nancy Cornelia Heptinstall Van Wormer, a granddaughter of the Reverend John Wesley Heptinstall has been edited and put on the website. It chronicles the lives and times of some of the Heptinstall family.

More information about the family, ancestors and descendents is listed on the website.

Another source of information is the book: TOWN LEADERS, Littleton, North Carolina 1790-1920 by Rebecca Leach Dozier. The publisher is The Reprint Company in Spartanburg, South Carolina, 1996. ISBN 0-87152-505-4.