

Archer

ARCHER, STEVENSON (Oct. 11, 1786–June 26, 1848), jurist, the son of John Archer [*q.v.*], was born at "Medical Hall," Harford County, Md., within a few hundred yards of the birthplace of Edwin Booth. He attended school in Baltimore, entered the sophomore class of Princeton College, graduated in 1805, and studied law first in the office of John Montgomery at Belair and later with Chancellor Johnson at Annapolis. Soon after coming to the bar he was elected to the legislature as an Independent, 1809, and the next year was reelected as a Democrat. He married in 1811 Pamela Barney Hays, whose father owned the adjoining farm. She was a capable woman, who in her husband's absence on court business took active control over hundreds of acres. Archer was elected to Congress the year of his marriage, and was twice reelected to succeed himself. In these war years he was a reliance of the administration, and in 1817, declining a fourth term, was appointed, by President Madison, judge of Mississippi Territory. He held court at St. Stephens on the Alabama River, and also exercised gubernatorial powers of a broad character. Though he had ordered a flatboat built at Wheeling to bring his family and effects down, he concluded in less than a year to return to Harford, whence in 1819 he was again sent to Congress. His law practise had widened to embrace Harford, Cecil, and Kent Counties when, in 1824, he was appointed chief judge of the 6th judicial district, embracing Baltimore and Harford Counties. This appointment made him associate justice of the Maryland court of appeals, of which, on the death of Judge Buchanan in 1844, Gov. Pratt appointed him chief judge.

He was a tall man, of strong frame, and his portraits show a kindly, thoughtful countenance. During his twenty-five years on the bench he was deliberate and painstaking in judgment and considerate in manner. His opinions display industry and patience in details. It is said of him that "his amenity won the universal respect of the bar, while his sound judgment and . . . legal attainments commanded for his decisions entire confidence." He presided in courts on both the western and eastern shores, and during a summer session at Easton, in the flat country, contracted a fever of which, after a few days' illness, he died at his home in Harford.

[*Biog. Cyc. Rep. Men of Md. and D. C.* (1879); James McSherry, "Former Chief Judges of the Court of Appeals of Md.," in *Rept. Ninth Meeting Md. Bar Ass.*, 1904, pp. 120–21; *Bench and Bar of Md.* (n. d.), pp. 291–92; *Baltimore Sun and Baltimore American*, June 27, 1848; *Green Bag*, VI, 232; *Biog. Cong. Directory, 1774–1903* (1903).]

B. M.

Archer

ARCHER, WILLIAM SEGAR (Mar. 5, 1789–Mar. 28, 1855), congressman, came of a family whose emigrant ancestor, George Archer, was living in Henrico County, Va., in 1665. During the Revolution all of the Archers were warm supporters of the American cause. An uncle and several first cousins of William S. Archer were officers in the army and this uncle, Col. William Archer, was captured and died in a British prison ship. Col. Archer's son, Lieut. Joseph Archer, was killed in the battle of Brandywine and two other sons, John and Peter Field, were majors. Dr. Branch I. Archer [*q.v.*], a son of Peter Field, played a distinguished part in the early history of Texas. William Segar Archer, the son of Maj. John Archer (brother of Col. William Archer just referred to) and Elizabeth (Eggleston) Archer, was born in Amelia County, Va. He was graduated from William and Mary College in 1806, studied law, was admitted to the bar, and practised his profession during the rest of his life. He was elected to the Virginia house of delegates in 1812 and was reelected every year till 1819 (E. G. Severn and John W. Williams, *Register of the General Assembly of Virginia, 1918*). He was a Whig and was a member of the United States House of Representatives from January 1820 to March 1835, and of the United States Senate from Mar. 4, 1841 to Mar. 3, 1847 (*Biographical Congressional Directory 1774–1911*, p. 444). Archer was nominated for the Senate on anti-Bank grounds and the success of the Whigs carried him into office. In debate in reference to the Bank, Senators Archer and Rives opposed Henry Clay, whom they charged with attacking President Tyler. Finally, however, Archer voted in support of the bank. In a letter dated June 18, 1841, Henry A. Wise wrote to Beverley Tucker: "Archer is *obliged* to be with us, or perhaps he would not be. He is weak, but not wicked. For instance, I am told that he is sophomore enough to say if Clay's plan is presented to Tyler, he must veto, but then *resign!*" (Lyon G. Tyler, *The Letters and Times of the Tylers*, 1885, II, 47). Archer was an ardent advocate of the annexation of Texas, as his printed speeches show. At the time of the annexation he was chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations. A tall, dark man of refined appearance and gentle manner, he never married, but built for himself in Amelia County a charming home which he named "The Lodge" and which is now a picturesque ruin. There he lived with two devoted maiden sisters till death overtook him at the age of sixty-six. His epitaph in Amelia declares that: "This monument is erected to the memory of William S. Archer by his affectionate sisters to whom