

Edwin Warfield



EDWIN WARFIELD

WARFIELD, EDWIN, Governor of Maryland, was born on Oakdale farm, in Howard county, on May 7, 1848, the son of Albert G. and Margaret Gassaway (Watkins) Warfield. His father was a courteous, refined gentleman of the old school, fond of music and poetry, possessing cultured tastes. He was a farmer or planter, who served for a term of four years as president of the county school board. His mother's influence was strong upon her son, both morally and intellectually. He writes of her: "She was a woman of superior mind and wonderful strength of character."

The Warfield family is descended from Richard Warfield, who came from England, settled in Anne Arundel county, near Annapolis, in 1660, and was vestryman of St. Ann's Protestant Episcopal Church in that town in 1692. Mrs. Warfield's father, Col. Gassaway Watkins, was a distinguished officer in the Maryland Line service throughout the whole of the Revolutionary War and also doing military duty in his elder years during the War of 1812. Col. Watkins, at the time of his death in 1840, was president of the Maryland State Society of the Cincinnati and the last surviving officer of the Maryland Line.

Edwin Warfield spent his youth on the paternal farm, which he now owns and on which he has his summer home. He was fond of reading poetry and history, and especially delighted in the poems of Burns, Goldsmith, Moore, Tennyson, Pope and Byron. American history, and especially the biographies of great Americans, interested him. He attended St. Timothy's School at Catonsville for one term, but laid the foundations of his education chiefly in the public schools, especially helped by a highly educated and learned teacher, who was a graduate of Harvard and Yale.

After his father's slaves were freed, he worked on the farm and did all kinds of labor. This training, he feels, was beneficial in developing robust physique and alertness of mind. He also had a training in a country store as clerk, for a year and a half from the time he was fourteen years of age. During that time he would come, about every two weeks, to Baltimore with the market wagon of the merchant

by whom he was employed, and purchase goods for his employer. In 1868 he began active life as a teacher of a public school in Howard county and continued in such teaching for six years. Of this period in his life he writes: "As I began teaching with but limited qualifications, I was compelled to study to keep ahead of my advanced scholars. Thus I became interested in lines of reading that were helpful to me as a teacher."

In 1874, Mr. Warfield was appointed Register of Wills for Howard county and served as such for a year and a half, after which he was elected on the Democratic ticket, to the same position, for a full term of six years. He declined a renomination, as he had completed the study of law and wished to enter upon the practice of that profession. Mr. Warfield bought the "Ellicott City Times" in 1882, and edited this paper in connection with the practice of law, until 1886. In the latter year he originated the movement which led to the establishment of the Patapsco National Bank of Ellicott City, in which institution he was a director until 1890.

He inherited an ambition "to serve the people." "This tendency," he writes, "was encouraged by my parents and the surrounding family influence. Home environment had much to do with shaping my inclinations and bringing success in life. Contact with men in active public and professional life, especially kinsmen, had much to do with my development." In 1881, Mr. Warfield was elected to the State Senate to succeed Hon. Arthur P. Gorman, who had been elected United States Senator from Maryland. He filled the unexpired term and was reelected in 1883. During his first two sessions he was a member of the most important committees, and in 1886, he served with general acceptability as President of the Senate.

On April 5, 1886, President Cleveland appointed Mr. Warfield Surveyor of the Port of Baltimore. On November 24 of that year, he married Emma Nicodemus of that city, by whom he has had four children, all of whom are living. His mother was a member of the Methodist Protestant Church, in which he was reared, but, of recent years he has attended the Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church, of which his wife is a member. In 1887, while Surveyor of the Port, which position he held until May 1, 1890, Mr. Warfield bought the "Maryland Law Record," a legal paper published in Baltimore, and in 1888 he made it a daily paper under the name of the

"Daily Record," under which name it is still successfully carried on. Up to the close of his Surveyorship Mr. Warfield had been very active as a member of the Democratic party. In 1878, he became a member of the State Central Committee, and in 1885, he was chairman of the State Executive Committee. After leaving the Surveyorship, he devoted himself exclusively to the newly organized Fidelity and Deposit Company of Maryland. Mr. Warfield had conceived the idea of forming this company and laid the foundation of its organization. The defalcation of public officials throughout the country, and especially in Maryland, had awakened the attention of business men, and methods were being considered for the better protection of the public and the relief of individuals from the hazard of personal suretyship. At that time there were but two companies doing a purely surety business in the United States, and neither of these companies bonded public officials. Mr. Warfield's long experience in public office made him familiar with the need of a company which would enter this field; so in January, 1890, he prepared a charter and took active steps for the formation of the company, associating with him some of the leading business men of Baltimore. The charter prepared by Mr. Warfield was approved by them and through his earnest efforts and perseverance, was passed by the legislature and signed by the governor on April 3, 1890. At the beginning of the company's active existence, Mr. Warfield assumed the position of second vice-president and general manager. On April 26, 1892, he became first vice-president and on January 11, 1893, president, a position which he still holds. The company limited its field to Maryland at first, but soon extended its bonding of public officials to those employed by the Federal government, as well as to those of the other states. Mr. Warfield's exertions were very successful in removing misconceptions as to the company's nature and security. In 1901 a branch of the Company was organized by him in London, England.

In 1896, Mr. Warfield was chosen as a delegate at large to the National Democratic Convention. As he participated in that convention, he felt that he was bound to support the party's nominee, and did so, though in the convention he had allied himself with the gold standard wing of the party. In 1899, he was a candidate for the Democratic nomination for governor and though unsuccessful at that time, he received the nomination in 1903 and was elected in November of that year, receiving a plurality of some twelve thousand

votes. He was inaugurated for a four years' term in January, 1904, and then took up his official residence at Annapolis. As governor, his most conspicuous act has been his courageous refusal to sign an amendment to the State Constitution, limiting the right of suffrage, the provisions of which amendment he believed to be wrong, and therefore not to be approved by him, though it was supported by the members of his party in the General Assembly.

From 1892, until his election as governor, he was one of the directors of the Maryland Penitentiary. He is a prominent member of the Maryland Historical Society and of the Maryland Club. Among the directorships which Governor Warfield holds may be mentioned, those of the Central Savings Bank, the Farmers and Merchants National Bank, and the Maryland Dredging Company, of Baltimore. He has taken great interest in patriotic societies, especially in the Sons of the American Revolution, having been president of the Maryland State Society and president-general of the National Society in 1902 and 1903. He is also a member of the Masonic Fraternity and of the Odd Fellows. His favorite relaxations from business are found in farming and horseback riding.

Governor Warfield is a man of fine presence, courteous and polished in manners, and with gift of eloquence. He is easily approached by those who have business to transact with him and is accurate and careful in small things as well as in great. "If I did not succeed in my first efforts I tried again. 'Try, try again' is a good motto" he says, and he adds "True success is to be gained by grit, reverence for religion and the Sabbath day, love of country, clean, decent politics, fidelity to duty, home life, simple ideas and tastes and respect for parents."

From "Men of Mark in Maryland", Volume 1, (pg 26-30)

By Dr. Bernard C. Steiner, PhD at Johns Hopkins University

Published by Johnson-Wynne Company, Washington, DC - 1907

www.MidMdRoots.com

now at Frederick MDGenWeb