

David Andrew Vines, Judge
Washington County, Tennessee
1876 – 1960

“He was that kind of man.”



Sometimes, the spirits of those gone before us speak to us. Not in an audible way, but with subtle hints for us to look at them—research them—acknowledge them. This has happened to me several times during the past twenty or thirty years, and others tell me that they have had similar experiences.

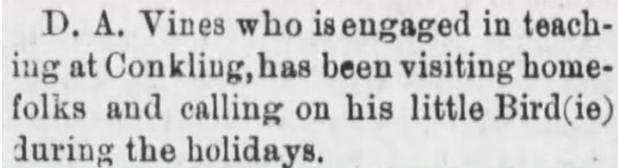
One such occurrence happened back in the summer. While out driving with our archives' assistant, I pointed to a house, and said, “A judge used to live there, but I can't think of his name.” We turned around, and saw the street sign, “Judge Vines Road.” After that, we went to a play in Jonesborough that portrayed the circumstances around the shooting of an officer in 1928. Judge Vines presided over the trial. He had come to my mind three times within two hours, and I knew it was time to research the good judge.

David A. Vines was born April 24, 1876 to parents, William Lafayette Vines and Nancy Carr Vines. He attended Bell's Schoolhouse near his childhood home. In 1894, he was in the first class to graduate from Bell's Schoolhouse, one of only six graduates from the 8th grade. This school was in Johnson City, near Mayfield Drive and west of the old Bayless house on Chatham. We believe the circled area on the map below is approximately where it stood.



He then attended the Jonesboro High School. He continued his education by attending Tusculum College, and the Lebanon Law School of Cumberland University.

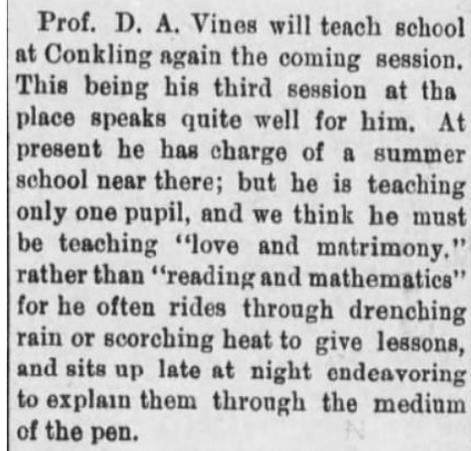
After Law School, he taught school in the Conklin community. By 1898, the school boasted an enrollment of 96. (*Herald and Tribune*, Jonesborough, Tennessee, Wednesday, Dec. 12, 1898, page 3.)



D. A. Vines who is engaged in teaching at Conkling, has been visiting home-folks and calling on his little Bird(ie) during the holidays.

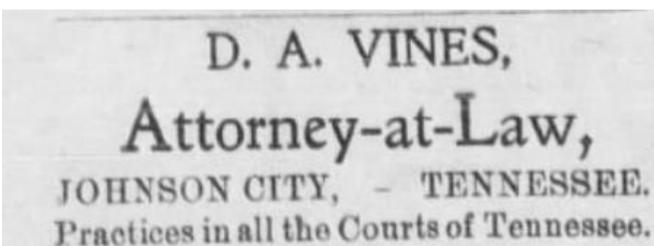
The Comet, Johnson City, Tennessee.
Thursday, January 6, 1898, page 2.

The Comet, Johnson City, Tennessee, Thursday, May 18, 1899, page 2) vividly expressed how dedicated David Vines was to his students.



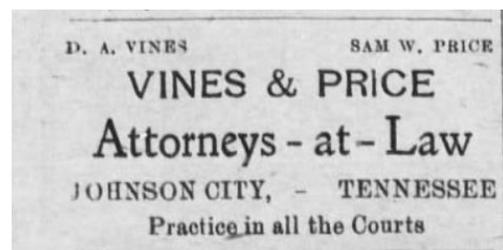
Prof. D. A. Vines will teach school at Conkling again the coming session. This being his third session at the place speaks quite well for him. At present he has charge of a summer school near there; but he is teaching only one pupil, and we think he must be teaching "love and matrimony." rather than "reading and mathematics" for he often rides through drenching rain or scorching heat to give lessons, and sits up late at night endeavoring to explain them through the medium of the pen.

By August 1901, Vines had become a practicing attorney in Johnson City, Tennessee. He entered the general practice with Judge Thaddeus A. Cox, and practiced with him until 1904. He, along with Sam Price, then formed the firm of Vines and Price.



D. A. VINES,
Attorney-at-Law,
JOHNSON CITY, - TENNESSEE.
Practices in all the Courts of Tennessee.

The Comet, Johnson City, Tennessee
Thursday, January 14, 1904, page 1



D. A. VINES SAM W. PRICE
VINES & PRICE
Attorneys - at - Law
JOHNSON CITY, - TENNESSEE
Practice in all the Courts

The Comet, Johnson City, Tennessee,
Thursday, May 3, 1906, page 1

The noted judge and historian, Samuel Cole Williams included David A. Vines in a list of Johnson City mayors after 1885, serving from 1904 - 1908. (Williams, Samuel Cole. *History of Johnson City and its Environs*. Johnson City, Tennessee, Watauga Press, 1940.)

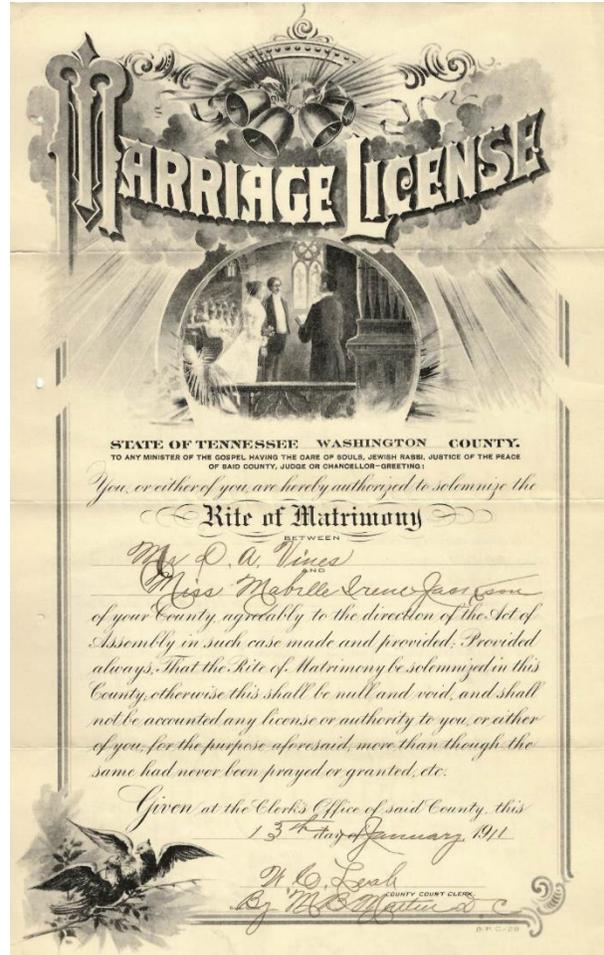
In 1910, he was elected attorney general of the First Judicial District, until he became Judge of the First Judicial Circuit Court in 1918, serving the counties of Johnson, Carter, Washington, Sullivan, Greene, Unicoi, Hawkins, Hancock, and Claiborne Counties.

On January 13, 1911, he quietly married Miss Mable Jackson, at the home of her parents in Johnson City.

The couple were parents of Geraldine Vines, who followed in her father's footsteps, becoming a respected attorney in Johnson City.

Geraldine married Frank Hawkins, and can be seen in the 1940 Federal Census as living in the same household with her parents and their three-year-old daughter, Marilyn. The Hawkins had two more children, David, and Frank Roy.

David and his brother, William Madison Vines, purchased property on the corner of Highway 34, and what is now called, "Judge Vines Road," just outside of the town of Jonesborough. It is believed that this property is where David and his family were living in 1940. The property eventually became the home where Geraldine and her family lived.



Judge Vines was an advocate of law enforcement, and especially the temperance laws. He told the Herald and Tribune on December 27, 1921 that he intended "to enforce the prohibition law to the fullest extent of his power". A headline in 1922, read, "Vines is Hard on Rum Runners."

Circuit Court judge for 24 years, serving Washington, Carter, Johnson, and Unicoi Counties, he retired in 1950. The judge suffered a stroke in October, 1954, and subsequently, his health failed for several more years.

The beloved judge died on June 20, 1960, and is buried in Oak Hill Cemetery, Johnson City. His wife, Maybelle died only three years later.



After his death, an editorial piece on page 4 of the *Johnson City Press* on June 22, 1960 read:

“During nearly a quarter century on the circuit court bench, Judge D. A. Vines became known to most people simply as “Judge.”

It was a term used to denote respect, affection, love—and, occasionally, fear. There were other judges and other courts, but when a man spoke of “Judge,” it was understood he meant Judge Vines....

“Judge” was impressive both on and off the bench, a man who easily stood out in a crowd without making any conscious effort to do so. Powerful physically and stern of visage, he was not to be trifled with. Yet he was not a man without warmth. He could be moved to tears, or to laughter—and the daily unfolding of emotions in his courtroom produced many occasions for both.

His death will be mourned by many, and they will include lawyers who practiced in his court, litigants who came into his presence seeking justice, and even, we dare say, some of the great number who stood before him to receive prison sentences for some evil deed they had done.

He was that kind of man.”

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