

Dr. John Shelby
May 24, 1785 – May 15, 1859

Section 27 # 270060

John Shelby was born on May 24, 1785, the son of David and Sarah Bledsoe Shelby, in Sumner County, Tennessee. As a young man he travelled to study at the Medical College of the University of Pennsylvania, founded in Philadelphia in 1765. His medical dissertation was entitled "On Gunshot Wounds." He married Anna Maria Minnick at St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Burlington, New Jersey on November 12, 1809. After graduation they moved to Sumner County where he started his practice. Four years later he left home to serve as military surgeon with Andrew Jackson's Tennessee Volunteers during the Creek War. Wounded at the Battle of Enitachopco, he lost the sight of one eye.

In 1817 Dr. Shelby and his family relocated to Nashville. The next year, as Christmas gifts, his father David Shelby presented his two sons, John and Anthony, with a 640 acre tract of land, on the east side of the Cumberland River, which he had bought from James Shaw. Immediately John Shelby purchased his brother's share for \$2,5000. On this land John Shelby built three houses: "Shelby Hall, "Fatherland" for daughter Priscilla and "Boscobel" for daughter Anna. Over the years, all three of these houses, in what was called Edgefield, have been razed.

Dr. Shelby was a founding member of Christ Church, the first Episcopal parish in Nashville in 1829, where he served on the Vestry for 25 years. In 1860, on a lot in Edgefield, provided by Dr. Shelby, St. Stephen's, "a wooden Gothic chapel," was built at Fourth & Boscobel. After the Civil War, the little church was bankrupt. Dr. Shelby's two daughters Priscilla and Anna donated two lots to raise money and a new church St. Ann's Episcopal was built on Woodland Street.

The doctor was involved with many civic endeavors. He supported efforts for a suspension bridge to be built across the Cumberland River, for the establishment of the first insane asylum in the state, for the Tennessee Medical Society and the study of scientific agriculture. He also served as Nashville's Post Master from 1849 to 1852. Shelby Medical College, named in his honor, opened in 1858, at Vine (now 7th Avenue South) & Broad. During the Civil War, the Federal Army requisitioned these hospital buildings. The college never re-opened after the war.

His death, at age 73 years, occurred on May 15, 1859. Following his funeral at Christ Church, a great procession of Masonic Fraternity brothers, Shelby life Guards and many carriages with relatives and friends moved slowly to City Cemetery. Interment was in the Shelby Family Mausoleum. Today the Shelby name is honored by Shelby Park, Shelby Bottoms Greenway along the Cumberland River and streets in East Nashville named Shelby, Fatherland & Boscobel.

Sources

Old Sumner: History of Sumner County, Tennessee. Walter Durham. 1972
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Hospital Surgeon. Jackson's Division. War of 1812. On-line
Davidson County, TN. Deed Book B. 1788. Land Grant to James Shaw. TSLA
Obituary, *Nashville Republican Banner*, May 17, 1859. John Shelby. City Cemetery website

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