

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Match Made in Heaven (Part 14)

Rev. Dr. William Ellis Swain (1856-1923) was a preacher of the Gospel for almost four decades. Married to Laurah Wood Swain (1856-1934) of Bucklesberry, he pastored numerous churches in the Methodist Protestant (M. P.) Conference of North Carolina. His last one-year appointment was with five Lexington area churches in the North Davidson M. P. Church Circuit in 1921. Based at Shiloh M. P. Church, William's ministerial work was often reported:

1921, May 12: "There will be an all-day service at Shiloh [M. P.] Church next Sunday, May 15th. Everybody is invited. Come, bringing well-filled baskets, take part in the worship, meet each other socially, have a good time, and thus make it a bright and happy day for all. W. E. Swain, Pastor" (*The Dispatch*, Lexington)

The final year of ministry for William and Laurah progressed with little fanfare and possibly with mixed feelings as retirement was on the horizon. It was an uneventful year, for the most part, with the exception of the marriage of their son John Paris Swain (1898-1983) in May, 1921. The Swains nonetheless were the focus of several social news items in the spring of 1921. One referenced their last known residence in Lexington. The other reported a sick grandchild:

1921, Feb. 17: "Mrs. E. L. Hayworth, of Asheboro, is visiting Dr. and Mrs. W. E. Swain on 300 E. Center Street, Lexington, N.C." (*The Dispatch*, Lexington)

1921, March 28: "Mrs. W. E. Swain left this morning for Wilson to visit her daughter, Mrs. V. F. [Lynette] Moss, Jr. Mrs. Swain was called to Wilson by a message announcing the serious illness of a grandchild." (*The Dispatch*, Lexington)

One of the most impactful actions of William's career occurred in 1921. As the former President of the M. P. Church Conference of North Carolina, he was involved in the organization of fundraising efforts to build an M. P. Church college in High Point. Constructed in 1924, the now High Point University remains one of the top-ranked institutions of higher education in the South:

1921, May 26: "Rev. W. E. Swain, pastor of [North] Davidson charge of the Methodist Protestant Church, and Mr. J. L. Lindsay, member of the local congregation, were in Greensboro yesterday to attend the luncheon and conference to set up the campaign for additional funds for the big Methodist Protestant college to be built at High Point." (*The Dispatch*, Lexington)

William's retirement was formally announced at the annual M. P. Church Conference meeting in Burlington in November, 2021. Within weeks, Laura and William were preparing for the move from their residence in Lexington to live with their daughter Lynette Grimsely Swain Moss (1892-1957) and her family in Wilson. A mid-December news item documented the sale of their furnishings:

1921, Dec. 15: "AUCTION SALE--LOT OF HOUSEHOLD and kitchen furniture and garden tools; at auction on Friday, Dec. 16th, at 1 o'clock, at the court house. W. E. Swain" (*The Dispatch*, Lexington)

More on the twilight years of Laura Wood Swain and Rev. Dr. William Ellis Swain will be shared in an upcoming Bucklesberry article.