

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Match Made in Heaven (Part 15)

Married in 1890, Laurah Wood Swain (1856-1934) of Bucklesberry and Rev. Dr. William Ellis Swain (1856-1923) of Washington County spent a lifetime together in the Gospel ministry. Laurah was an accomplished teacher by profession. However, she permanently suspended her career when she married William, choosing instead to be a supportive wife and loving mother of their children.

With Laurah's help as homemaker, William provided for the family through his pastoral work. Affiliated with the Methodist Protestant (M. P.) Church Conference for nearly four decades, he pastored churches in the Piedmont and eastern parts of North Carolina for 32 years. In his prominent role as Conference President from 1908 to 1912, he continued to preach for another five years around the State at constituent churches and at special meetings.

William retired in 1921. He died two years later in 1923. His death certificate documented cerebral hemorrhage as the cause of death. His health was already in decline the year he retired, though, according to an excerpt from his obituary published in the proceedings of the 1923 annual meeting of the M. P. Church Conference:

"At the [M. P. Church] Conference held in Burlington, 1921, Dr. Swain's health had failed to the extent that it was necessary for him to ask for Superannuated relation [i.e., retirement] to the Conference. He sat in our midst with bowed head and streaming eyes....After his superannuation, he repaired to the home of his daughter in Wilson [sic., Rocky Mount], N.C., where a faithful and loving wife and children did all they could for his comfort. While with sad hearts they watched the great light of his life grow less and less and less until on August 11, 1923, the Chief Shepherd appeared and gave unto him a crown of life which fadeth not away. This earthly house of his tabernacle was dissolved and his spirit went home to God. There he rests from his labors and his works do follow him." (p. 99)

From the moment they married in 1890 until William's retirement in 1921, Laurah faithfully shouldered the burden of ministry with her husband. The obituary excerpt confirmed they moved from their last known residence in Lexington to Rocky Mount in 1921 to live with their daughter Lynette Grimsley Swain Moss (1892-1957), her husband Vernon Floyd Moss Jr. (1887-1997), and their two sons Richard Norman Moss (1920-1983) and Vernon Floyd Moss III (1924-1990).

Laurah outlived her husband by more than a decade. Her death certificate identified cerebral hemorrhage coupled with senile arteriosclerosis as the cause of death. Senile dementia was also a

contributing factor. She died in Raleigh at the State Hospital, later renamed Dorothea Dix Hospital. There she presumably received treatment and care for mental illness the last thirteen months of her life.

Laurah and William met in Bucklesberry, where she was born and reared. They eventually wed in La Grange. William pastored several churches in the La Grange M. P. Circuit, including Bucklesberry's Hickory Grove Church, for six years. All three of their children were born in La Grange. They made numerous trips back to La Grange to visit friends and relatives over their many years of ministry in other counties.

They were appropriately buried at the Fairview Cemetery in La Grange, a town which became home to them both. From marriage to ministry, Laurah and William remained steadfastly together for the duration of their adult lives. Indeed, theirs was a match made in heaven.