

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Match Made in Heaven (Part 10)

A well-regarded educator, Laura Wood Swain (1856-1934) of Bucklesberry never saw her career grow to fruition. Her own professional aspirations relinquished, there is no evidence she taught school again after she married Rev. William Ellis Swain (1856-1923). Rather, she supported her husband in the ministry and was a homemaker and loving mother to their three children.

William's career, on the other hand, flourished. By the time he and Laurah wed in 1890, he had already completed two, three-year pastoral appointments at the La Grange and Winston Circuits of the Methodist Protestant (M. P.) Church Conference. With Laurah by his side, he went on to serve as pastor of the North Granville, La Grange (second term), Mount Herman (Alamance County), and Asheboro (Randolph County) M. P. Church Circuits.

At the end of his four-year term in Asheboro in 1907, William was catapulted from pulpiteer to President of the M. P. Church Conference. In his first year as top Conference leader, William was awarded an honorary doctoral degree:

1908, August 6: "At the recent commencement of Western Maryland College, Westminster, MD....The degree of Doctor of Divinity [D.D.] was...conferred upon Rev. W. E. Swain, President of the North Carolina M. P. Conference....The conferring of a degree...[on Rev.] Swain is a high honor, and [his] many friends appreciate this distinction..." (*The Courier*, Asheboro)

Loved and respected, William served as President for the maximum five-year period allowed by the Conference. He was subsequently appointed pastor of the Mebane M. P. Circuit, located about 50 miles from his and Laurah's Asheboro residence. On the eve of his return to pastoral service in 1913, they sold the home they built in Asheboro nearly a decade earlier:

1912, October 10: "Rev. W. E. Swain has sold his home on South Fayetteville Street to Mr. Walter Presnell, who will move to Asheboro by the first of the year." (*The Courier*, Asheboro)

By the time they began their service at the Mebane Circuit in 1913, Laurah's and William's children—Lynette Grimsely Swain Moss (1892-1957), James Wood Swain (1894-1956), and John Paris Swain (1898-1983)—were young adults. Accordingly, both Laurah and William were age 57 and in their twilight years. The following family news was publicly reported during their three-year appointment in Mebane:

1913, May 22: "Mr. John Swain a 14-year old son of Dr. [and Mrs.] W. E. Swain has accepted a position with Mecca Drug Co. John is a clever boy and we believe will make good in life." (*The Mebane Leader*)

1913, October 30: "Mr. John Swain of Elon College spent Sunday here with his parents Rev. and Mrs. W. E. Swain." (*The Mebane Leader*)

More on the lives and family of Laurah Wood Swain and Rev. Dr. William Ellis Swain will be shared in an upcoming Bucklesberry article.