

OBITUARY OF JOSEPH WILLIAMS

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FATHER WILLIAMS

The End of a Good Man, almost a Centenarian

There are few, very few if any, more beloved and revered than Father Williams was. The writer knew him forty-three years ago, at Newnan, Georgia. The subject of this sketch was then about fifty-seven years of age. The good old man was born May 22, 1880 *(should be 1780), in Surry county, North Carolina, and consequently he was 99 years, 7 months, and 13 days old at the time of his death, which occurred at the residence of his daughter, Mrs. Judge Stokely of this town, on Sunday night at 9:21 o'clock. But a few moments before he breathed his last, he asked Mr. R. W. Murphey, who was watching by his bedside, to lift him to a chair. Mr. Murphy did so promptly and tenderly; but he did not sit there a minute before he asked to be put back in bed. Mr. Murphey had scarcely adjusted the covering, when he discovered that the lamp of life had flickered out and the soul of the old man had taken its flight to "that bourne from whence no traveler ever returns".

As we have stated, Father Williams was born in North Carolina in 1780. In 1788 his father moved to Tennessee, which was then a territory, and settled in what was afterwards known as Hawkins county, East Tennessee. Joseph Williams, in March, 1803, was married to Mrs. Margaret Smith, of Henry county, Virginia, after which he settled in Rhea county, Tenn., where he remained until April 14, 1828. He moved thence to Georgia and settled in Newnan, Coweta county, being one of the first settlers of that place. There he remained until February 6, 1867, when he came to Cartersville to reside with his daughter.

Some time ago Rev. Mr. Ryburn, the minister of the Methodist Church here, mentioned to "Uncle Joe" the death of Lovick Pierce, when he replied that he had heard the doctor preach frequently in Columbus, adding: "I will soon be gone, and I would not give my hope of heaven for the North American continent." In his sickness he told Mr. Ryburn that his trust was in Christ, and that he was resigned to the will of God. His last words were, "I have a home in Heaven, and I want to go to it." The old man did greatly desire to live until his next birthday, May 22nd, which would have been his hundredth. When the press convention met here last May, out of respect to his venerable age, Uncle Joe was invited to take a seat upon the stage with the president of the association, and we can say to our brethren of the Georgia press that he greatly appreciated the compliment.

Of course, the death of so aged a man excited great respect, and the attendance upon his funeral was full. The services took place at Judge Stokely's, Rev. Mr. Ryburn conducting the same, assisted by Rev. Mr. Headdan of the Baptist church and Rev. Mr. Smith of the Presbyterian church. The opening hymn was that old and familiar one, "How firm a foundation, etc." read by Mr. Ryburn, which was followed with prayer by Mr. Headdan. Mr. Ryburn then read the 90th psalm, after which Mr. Smith read the 15th chapter of Corinthians. Next came another hymn: "Hear what the voice of Heaven proclaims," etc. Appropriate remarks were then indulged by Mr. Ryburn and Mr. Smith, and the services at the house were closed with a prayer by Mr. Ryburn.

The remains of the venerable one were taken to the hearse and followed to the cemetery

by a long train of carriages. Arriving at the grave the closing ceremonies were concluded by reading the burial services of the Methodist Episcopal Church, by Mr. Ryburn, the hymn selected for the occasion being "I would not live always," with the chorus of "Home, sweet home".

The rumbling clods then fell upon the last of the good old man and hid him from earthly view forever, there to remain until the resurrection morn. May the flowers of early morn be strewn upon his grave, and the full blown roses of May, his natal month, be showered by loving hands upon his resting place!

Contributed by Patti Andrews

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