

Obituary of Joseph Williams
The Cartersville Ga. Express
Friday, January 9, 1880

On Monday, January 4th, 1880 at 9:21 o'clock p.m., Joseph Williams died at the residence of his son-in-law Judge Thomas Stokely, aged 99 years, 7 months and 18 days. The deceased was so well known in this community that any sketch of his life would not be news to us; but so remarkable a man deserves at his death more than a passing comment. A mere statement that he was born on May 22, 1780, and died January 4, 1880, would of itself be a wonderful biography. "The days of our years", we are told in one of the grandest of inspired passages, "are three-score years and ten," and yet here is a man who survived three generations. In olden days, this would have been a life of but ordinary length; but statisticians now tell us that the average of human life is thirty-three years. How replete with honors is that life which triples its average, and silvers the revered locks of its possessor with a century of winter's snows! The subject of this sketch was born in Surrey County, North Carolina, on the date above mentioned, May 22, 1780. When he was eight years old, his father moved to Tennessee, then a territory, and settled in Hawkins County. Young Williams here learned the trade of stone mason, in addition to which he engaged in farming. In 1806, he then being twenty-six years of age, he married Margaret Smith, of Henry County, Va., soon after which he moved from Hawkins to Rhea County, Tennessee, where he lived a farmer's life until April 1828. At that time he left Rhea County and the state of Tennessee and moved to Newnan, in Coweta county, Ga., where he lived, earning his livelihood by the toil of his trade until 1867. In 1814 he was converted, at the age of 34 years, and joined the Methodist church, of which he has been a faithful and useful member ever since. On the 29th of March, 1847, his first wife and the mother of all his children died. He afterwards married a Miss Duncan, of Coweta, who has preceded him to "that undiscovered country". On February 5, 1867, he moved to Cartersville, where he resided until his death. Father Williams was an old-time whig and warmly devoted to his party. He, however, was no politician and had no aspirations of that sort. He never longed to any society, or indeed, organization of any kind, except the church. Until recently, his health was remarkably good for one of his years. Up to a few weeks ago, he walked about the streets, conversed with his friends up on the current topics of the day and appeared to enjoy life with a relish that is characteristic of animal vigor. For the last two weeks of his life, he was confined to his room, and it soon became evident that the old wheels of life, which had run so long almost without a jar, were nearly worn out. During his last illness, and indeed, for several years past, he had expressed himself ready to go whenever it should please the Great Judge to send the summons. Many called to see him just to hear his strong, full expressions of faith and trust in the Lord, and never left him without feeling elevated by the contact of Christian thought in to a nobler walk and conversation. Sometime, with tears rolling down his aged cheeks, he would tell of that Hope which, in the flower and pride of his young manhood, dawned upon him, filling his heart with peace, and joy, and love, how it had lit up many dark and gloomy places in his life, a lamp to his feet and a light to his pathway. And that Hope, coming as it did from him who said "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee", did not fail him when the time-worn feet had reached the river, and full of a faith, strong as the weight of trusting years could make it, he lay down at last, like a weary child that cries for rest, to "sleep in Jesus". At

the house of Judge Stokely, a large number of friends and acquaintances met to pay the last said honors to the deceased. After prayer by Rev. R. B. Headden, Rev. P.M. Rybyrn read the burial service, and, after singing an appropriate hymn, Rev. Messrs. Ryburn and T. E. Smith made filling remarks to an assemblage deeply impressed with solemnity of the occasion. The body, followed by a long procession of people who felt honored in honoring the dead, was carried to the city cemetery and laid away, till the centuries are all numbered. A wonderful life, this. Wonderful for its length; wonderful for all it had seen; wonderful, because it lasted so long in the most wonderful part of yet-made history. Think of it! He was a prattling babe while Washington's sword, unsheathed, was dripping in blood of foes hostile to colonial independence. When this wonderful 19th century was a baby, he was a grown man. At the time, when this country was thrown into a fever heat of excitement by the duel between Burr and Hamilton, he was just old enough to feel the enthusiasm of that dueling spirit so prevalent in that day. In War of 1812, he was just verging into manhood's prime. When he was a half century old, he was living in this section of the country, surrounded by native Indians. He was over fifty years old before an engine's whistle ever startled a rural populace. Fifty five years of his life passed away before ? the world thought enough of the woman to begin to ? them. Almost three quarters of a century had stamped his brow with wrinkles before man claimed the lightning, and made it obey their ?. He was an old, old man when Sumter fell. He has seen great men flourish, die and be forgotten. He engaged in youthful sport with men whose grandsons are in their graves. Where will he find a more eventful life? But the "inevitable hour" has come at last. The heart that beat so long is still. The grain, full ripe and golden, has fallen at the reaper's hand. It would be idle to offer consolation to the bereaved relatives. That must come from the loving hand of that God, who was the rock and fortress of the good old man.

Contributed by Patti Andrews

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