

Caroline Swain Again

By Charles R. Haller

Swain
Family

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Introduction

In the May issue of *ALOB*, 2006, we asked the theoretical question "Why Was Caroline Swain Buried at Sandy Mush?" Since the time of that publication, records have shown that Caroline Swain (1761-1842) was a most unique individual. Caroline Swain was born as Caroline Lane, probably near Raleigh, NC. She married twice, first to David Lowery, Jr., who was killed by the Indians on the frontiers of Georgia. By David Lowery, she had four children.

Carolyn married second to George Swain in Oglethorpe, GA, and moved to Buncombe County, NC, where she remained for the rest of her life. By George Swain, she had another seven children, including David Lowry Swain (1801-1868) who eventually became Governor of North Carolina, from 1832 to 1835, and President of the University of North Carolina from 1835 to 1868.

The Gudger Papers

The best known early history of the Swain family is taken from an untitled and undated manuscript purported to have been written about 1946-1950 by local historian Owen Gudger (1880-1959). Gudger states:

"In 1795 or 1795, Mr. and Mrs. (George) Swain moved here (Asheville) from Georgia. Mrs. Swain's first husband, Captain David Lowry, had been killed by the Indians in 1787 in Oglethorpe County, Georgia, leaving her with three (actually four) small children."

"Mrs. Swain, who before her marriage was Caroline Lane, had two brothers, John and Charles Lane, who had already moved from Wake County, North Carolina, to prospect for minerals, particularly iron."

"The State at that time, to encourage production of iron to make implements, was offering great inducements in the way of land grants to those who would find this ore and set up smelters and work it into metal."

"These brothers opened a mine in what is known as Nine Hole Gap, between Asheville and Fairview, another on Lane's Pinnacle, and one on Rice's Knob at the head of Beaverdam Creek. They also operated a smelter on Reems Creek and Gash's Creek."

"The grants issued by the States in such cases were called forge grants and there is still a mountain in Henderson County called 'Forge Mountain.'"

"The Swains bought the block on Biltmore Avenue between (what is now) Pack Square and Eagle Street. They opened a brickyard on what is now known as McDowell Street, and soon made sufficient brick to build on their lot a pretentious dwelling, the first brick structure west of the Blue Ridge, and it was called the 'Brick Mansion.' This mansion was built with a room in it large enough to hold church services and tradition has it that the First Presbyterian Church was organized in this room about 1796 by the Rev. George Newton. Some early letters and private writings refer to George Swain, William Moore and David Vance as elders of the First Presbyterian Church."

"The church was later moved to a log structure on the south side of (what is now) Pack Square. Still later, the church was moved to a lot where the present church (on Church St.) now stands, though the original frame building faced (east) toward Biltmore Avenue."

"Most of the religious and social activities of this growing village at that time revolved around the Swain House, as Mrs. Swain delighted in both activities, while Mr. Swain devoted his time to the manufacture of hats, something new and in great demand, as most of the hats around here up to that time had been of the coonskin variety. The drinking, gambling, and other vices of this typical



frontier town were too much for Christian people like the Swains, so very early in 1798, Mrs. Swain bought 3,000 acres on the headwaters of Beaverdam Creek, and built a two story log house about four miles from Asheville on this property, and moved into same." (Editor's note: Buncombe Co. deed records indicate that the Swain's had a maximum of 550 acres on Beaverdam Creek, all in George Swain's name; the cabin apparently was a joint effort between the Lanes and the Swains.)

"The home on Biltmore Avenue was not closed however, as Mr. Swain remained in town most of the week to look after his hat factory and to run the post office, to which he had been appointed Postmaster about 1807. Until the log church was built on the Square, the large room was still open on Sundays for church services, and certain of the slaves were left on duty to keep the house open and running, and to prepare a great dinner to be served just after church services every Sunday, as many who had come from distant spots expected to, and did remain for dinner."

"During this period a great minister, preaching a new faith, came into the community. His name was Francis Asbury, later known as Bishop Asbury."

"Up to that time, Presbyterians were about all that were known in this section, but the work of this great man, Asbury, was soon to be heard from, as he had been sent over from England to found a new church, the Methodist. His greatness was impressed on everyone who came under his influence, and he was welcomed into all the homes, particularly the Swain Home on Biltmore Avenue, and later on Beaverdam Creek. He was particularly fond of the Killian family, on Beaverdam Creek."

"One Sunday, Bishop Asbury appeared at the Swain home just as a great dinner was being served. Seeing the number of slaves employed and the amount of work involved in preparing the meal, he ordered all roast turkey and other fine foods and drinks to be thrown out, and nothing served by what had been prepared the day previously."

"Mr. Swain and his two sons did not approve (Asbury's) interfering in private family matters like that, but Mrs. Swain and her daughters and the other ladies present heartily approved. Consequently, Mrs. Swain, her daughters, and most of the ladies present swung off into the Methodist Church, but George Swain and his two sons stuck to their Presbyterianism."

The Census Records

1800 Census

Charles Lane, 6 males, 2 females

John Lane, 2 males, 1 female

Lowry - none

George "Swain", 5 males, 6 females, 3 slaves

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1810 Census

Charles "Lain", 7 males, 3 females, 7 slaves

John Lane - none

James "Lowrie" 2 males, 3 females, 6 slaves

George Swain, 9 males, 6 females, 1 slave

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1820 Census

Lane - none

James Lowry, 3 males, 6 females

George Swain, 3 males, 4 females

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1830 Census

James Lowry, 4 males, 9 females

Swain - none

The Land Records

Between 1795 and 1802, Charles Lane acquired 3,840 acres scattered around Buncombe County, on Gashes Creek (1795), Beaverdam Creek (1798), Reems Creek (1798 and 1799), Hominy Creek (1799) and the French Broad River (1798). The seven parcels included four State land grants. In the same era, his brother acquired three parcels totaling 700 acres.

Among the early generations of the Swain family, the Buncombe County deed book records two principal owners. The name of George Swain is recorded as the principal on twenty-one deeds, the earliest being 1798, located on Beaverdam. In 1796, he acquired two lots from Charles Lane in Morristown (subsequently renamed Asheville). His last deed as grantee was in 1820. The largest

of the parcels was for 250 acres dated 1799 and located on Beaverdam Creek; George Swain's total purchase on the north and south sides of Beaverdam Creek was 550 acres. In late 1823, George Swain sold 450 acres on Beaverdam Creek to Daniel Killian (Jr.); this property reverted to David L. Swain in 1833 in a trade agreement for land in Haywood Co.

On the other hand, the name of David L. Swain is recorded on seventeen deeds dating from 1824 to 1866. The larger tracts included plots of 1,240, 1,700, 5,000, and 10,000 acres. In the 1830s, he acquired 740 acres on Beaverdam Creek.

The name of Carolyn Swain is not mentioned in the index to Buncombe County deed records.

The name of James Lowery (also Lowry) appears in on eight deed records dating from 1804 to 1840. When he bought 200 acres from John Lane at Turkey Creek in 1804, he apparently established residence there. Beginning in 1806, he acquired 780 acres at Sandy Mush and apparently relocated there. In 1858, J(ames) M(adison) Lowery (also Lowry) acquired 4,000 acres at Sandy Mush. As events were soon to prove, the timing was not good.

Sandy Mush

Sometime in the early 1820s, Caroline Swain apparently moved to Sandy Mush to live with her son James Lowry (1783-1857), and his family which included his son James Marion Lowry (1820-1901). Her daughter, Mary Swain (1803-1829), also made the move to Sandy Mush, dying a few years after the move.

Carolyn Swain lived until 1842. Her marble gravestone is among the early stones in the cemetery of the Big Sandy (Mush) Methodist Church graveyard, the church having been established about 1812. Early principals included the Palmers and the Lowrys.

Editor's Notes

Francis Asbury (1745-1816) made some eight trips to Buncombe County in the years 1800 to 1813. As a result, the church now called the Asbury Memorial United Methodist Church was formed about 1801, the Killians and the Swains being among early principals.

George Swain died in 1829 and is buried, apparently alone, in the Newton Academy Cemetery. Buncombe County will records are recorded for James Lowery (1854), David L. Swain (1868), and Eleanor H. Swain (1888, 1891)

Selected References

Brower, Fisk P., 1870, *Memoir of Hon. David Swain, L.L.D.*: Boston, David Clapp & Son, 8 p.

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Reid, Elizabeth D., 1991, Joel Lane: in *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*: Chapel Hill, NC, Univ. NC Press, vol. 3, p. 12 (editor's note: the Joel Lane House in Raleigh is on the National Register of Historic Places)

Redmond, Rex H., 2000, *Bits of Beaverdam*: Greenville, SC, privately publ., 72 p. + numerous xerox copies

Vance, Zebulon B., 1878, *Life & Character of Hon. David L. Swain*: Durham, NC, W. T. Blackwell Co., 20 p.

Wallace, Carolyn A.(nee Daniel), 1994, David Lowry Swain: in *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*: Chapel Hill, NC, Univ. NC Press, vol. 5, p. 483-486.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Cemetery</u>
1. Carolyn Lane (1761-1842) (11 children) + 1 st David Lowery, Jr. (?-1787)	Sandy Mush Meth. (Georgia)
2. Mary Lowry (1781-1819) + unknown Hansen	
2. James Lowry (1783-1857) + 1 st Esther Siler (1786-1849) (12 child.)	Sandy Mush Meth. Sandy Mush Meth.
3. Elizabeth Siler Lowry (1810-1888)(8 ch.) + Samuel Bell Gudger (1808-1888)	Samuel B. Gudger Samuel B. Gudger
3. James Marion Lowry (1820-1901) + Harriet F. McKee (1827-1915)	Samuel B. Gudger Samuel B. Gudger
+ 2 nd Hannah E. Patton McKee (1788-1867)	Sandy Mush Meth.
2. Charles Lowry (1784-	
2. Patience Lowry (1787-1867) + unknown Erwin	
+ 2 nd George Swain, Sr. (1763-1829)	Newton Academy
2. Caroline Swain 1789-1792)	
2. Cynthia Swain (1791- + William Coleman	
2. George Swain, Jr. (1792- + Frances Taylor	(Georgia)
2. Caroline Swain (1795- + John Hall	
2. Mathilda Swain (1797-1858) + Jacob Siler	(Macon Co., NC) (Macon Co., NC)
2. Althea Swain (1798-1848) + William Siler	(Macon Co., NC) (Macon Co., NC)
2. David Lowry Swain (1801-1868) + Eleanor Hope White (5 child.)	(Raleigh, NC) (Raleigh, NC)
2. Mary Swain (1803-1829)	Sandy Mush Meth.