

Death of John Henry Williams

Written by [Rev. J. D. Bailey](#) in Feb., 1926

John Henry Williams, long and well known in Spartanburg and Union counties as a citizen and public official, passed away at the home of his son, J. B. Williams, in Graniteville, S.C., at 11 o'clock, Friday, Feb. 5.

He was a son of Ulysses Williams and Nancy Smith, born at Colearine, Union County, S.C., April 19, 1841. He received a fair education in the common schools of that day and became an honest, upright and loyal citizen of his country. At the age of 18 years he joined the Baptist church at Putman and was baptized into its fellowship by the Rev. John Gibbs, his future father-in-law.

The War Between the States coming on, he became a member of Company B, 15th South Carolina Regiment, Connor's Brigade. He was wounded in the battle of Chancellorsville May 3, 1863. In the latter part of 1864, he was honorably retired because a gunshot wound in the right elbow had incapacitated him for future duties as a soldier. In his permit for retirement his superior officers say: "He is a good soldier, always at his post and willing to do his duties." While we write, the following faded copy of an order lies before us:

"Headquarters, Army of Northern Va., 20th Dec. 1864.

Pickets, Guards, pass Sergt. J. H. Williams, courier for
Lieut. Col Corley, Chief Q.M., within the lines of the army until further orders.

By order of Gen. R. E. Lee."

His family has in possession one of the few, perhaps the only, copy of the original General Order No.9, or Lee's farewell order, signed by the General himself.

On December 8th, 1863, Mr. Williams was married to Miss Ellen Elizabeth Gibbs, daughter of Rev. John Gibbs, a Baptist preacher of more than ordinary note; hence, they walked together for more than 62 years. The writer has been acquainted with this good woman for more than 40 years, and a truer and more devoted helper we have never known. Nine children were born unto this union, five sons and four daughters. One son and the four daughters are dead. the living sons are: J. Bothwell Williams of Lott, Texas, planter and merchant; Robert C. Williams, Union, S.C., clerk of the county court; J. Broadus Williams, Graniteville, S.C., superintendent of the Graniteville and Hickman Textile Mills; Rufus H. Williams, Kannapolis, N.C., mill official. There are 30 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.

Mr. Williams was a Master Mason. He spent 50 years of his life in his native section of Union County, being principally engaged in farming. In 1892 he moved to [Glendale](#), Spartanburg county, where, with the exception of a brief period, he resided until January 11, 1925, when he removed to the home of his son in Graniteville.

For many years he served as magistrate at [Glendale](#), where he was familiarly known as "Judge". It goes without saying that but few, if any, ever discharged the duties of the office better than he. His good stock of common sense, his careful study of human nature and of law and order enabled him to deal wisely and impartially with all, and his rulings were seldom, if ever, reversed by the county courts. While he believed in and stood for real law enforcement, yet whenever possible, he assumed the role of peace-maker and succeeded in adjusting many matters and reconciling the parties, when if allowed to proceed, trouble and hatred would have followed. But it was in the capacity of a soldier of the Cross that he excelled. None was more loyal to his church, his pastor and the cause of Christ than he. Whether serving in the office of deacon, Sunday school superintendent, or teacher, he was ever at his post. All this was the more brilliant because of his fine and unblemished character. In his conduct and conversation he was as chaste as a most modest woman. In the forty years of our acquaintance we never heard a smutty story fall from his lips. In hospitality he and his good wife were par excellent. In the wake of his long journey through life, he has left a train of helpful memories, and the sweet aroma of a life dedicated to God and humanity - an heritage of which any posterity should be proud.

The burial will be at Putman church tomorrow at 12 o'clock, or as near that time as possible, since the funeral procession will come from Graniteville by automobiles.

(Editors Note: This obituary was furnished by Mr. Jay Adams, the great grandson of Mr. Williams. Rev. J. D. Bailey who wrote the obituary was a noted Baptist Minister and local historian in the South Carolina Upcountry. You can read his full story at [Rev. James D. Bailey](#).)

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