

DR. OSCAR E. SAMS

Mars Hill.--Dr. Oscar E. Sams, beloved minister and educator of Mars Hill, died Saturday, March 1, in an Asheville nursing home at the age of 75.

Although Dr. Sams has not been active for the past few years because of a partial paralysis, he was for many years an outstanding figure among Southern Baptists, as a pastor of important churches and as a college president. He was pastor of the Baptist church at Harrisonburg, Va., from 1902 to 1906; pastor of the Rivermont Avenue Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Virginia, from 1906 to 1917; and pastor of the Central Baptist Church, Johnson City, Tennessee, from 1917 to 1920.

He became president of Carson-Newman College in 1920 and his seven-year tenure was a period of expansion and growth. The enrollment increased from 257 to 440; the academic standards were raised; a gymnasium, a men's dormitory, and a president's home were built; and \$500,000 was added in endowment and equipment. In 1927 he became president of Bluefield College. He resigned at Bluefield in 1930 to return to Mars Hill where he became vice-president of Mars Hill College, a position which he held until his death.

He was born in Flag Pond, Tennessee, on February 5, 1877, the son of Jacob Patterson Sams and Clarissa Elizabeth Blackstock Sams. He grew up in the Mars Hill community, where his family moved when he was a child.

He was a lifelong friend of the college, which he attended in his youth. As a boy he helped to make the brick for the Music Building still standing on the campus. While pastor of the Rivermont Avenue Baptist Church he led his congregation to provide money for the building of a boy's dormitory. After returning to the college in 1930, he devoted his time to its promotion. He gave especial attention to the young ministers of the college and for several years taught a course in Pastoral Problems. The ministerial conference at Mars Hill was named in his honor. While vice-president of the college he also served nearby churches in the community in which he grew up and led in the

Beeah Glen Baptist Church, near which his father's farm is located.

Although he gained prominence as a minister and as an educator, he never forgot the mountains in which he grew up. Once he was invited to Boston, Massachusetts, to speak at Tremont Temple, internationally famous Baptist church. Visiting in the home of a Bostonian, after his address, he was asked by his hostess, "How is it that you are able to know so much about those poor, ignorant, depraved mountain people?"

An Dr. Sams replied, "Madam, I happen to have the privilege of being one of them."

He received his A.B. degree from Wake Forest College in 1898 and his B.D. degree from Rochester Theological Seminary in 1902. He was rewarded a D.D. degree by Carson-Newman College, in 1919, and an LL.D. degree from Wake Forest College in 1921.

On May 8, 1906, he was married to Miss Pauline Lacy Cone, member of a prominent family of Riverton, Virginia, who survives him. They have two sons, Oscar E. Samr, Jr. of the Film Division of the Encyclopedia Britannica, Chicago, Illinois, and Conway Sams, professor of mathematics at West Michigan College, Kalamazoo, Michigan. He is also survived by four grandchildren, and a brother, Dr. Bruce Sams of Mars Hill.

His funeral was conducted Monday afternoon at the Mars Hill Baptist Church, with the Rev. Lowell F. Sodeman, pastor, officiating, assisted by Dr. Hoyt Blackwell, president of Mars Hill College, and Dr. Albert S. Hale, pastor of the First Baptist Church of High Point and lifelong friend of Dr. Sams. Representatives from the colleges and churches which he had served were present for the service. Interment was made in the family plot of the Mars Hill cemetery.

OSCAR ERNEST SAMS

Vice president, Mars Hill College, Mars Hill, N. C.; born, Flag Pond, Tenn., Feb. 5, 1877; son of Elizabeth Blackstock, Stocksville, N. C., and Jacob Pattison Sams of Flag Pond, Tenn.; education, B.A. and LL.D., Wake Forest College, B.D., Rochester Seminary, and D.D., Carson-Newman College; ordained Mars Hill, N. C., 1902; married Pauline Lacey Cone of Riverton, Va., May 8, 1906, daughter of Geo. Wm. and Cora Holmes Cone; children, Oscar Ernest, Jr., Knoxville, Tenn., and Conway Cone, New York City; pastor, First Baptist Church, Harrisonburg, Va., 1902-1906, pastor, Rivermond Avenue Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Va., 1906-1918; pastor, Central Baptist Church, Johnson City, Tenn., 1918-1920; president, Carson and Newman College, 1920-1927; president Bluefield College, 1927-1930; vice president, Mars Hill College, 1930 to date. Address: Mars Hill, N. C.

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By: John S. Ramond

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