

Battle, Winslow have extended roots in Rocky Mount history

The recent coverage of a 100th anniversary celebration by the Battle, Winslow, Scott & Wiley law firm provided us with only a small taste of the history of the two founding partners.

The legendary Kemp D. Battle and Frances E. Winslow partnership deserves further consideration.

Battle was the scion of an accomplished extended Nash County family. The Battle name is linked with one of the first cotton mills in North Carolina, a facility that still dominates the falls in Rocky Mount.

Visitors to Battle Park are on Tuscarora hunting ground that saw the first permanent colonizing settlements in the area, a rocky rise that commands a view of the industrial mill structure across Tar River.

Battle's forebearers included an N.C. Supreme Court Justice and a president of the University of North

Carolina. He married into the family of the first mayor of the city of Rocky Mount, and his brick-fenced residence on Hunter Hill Road near the Bunn estate still anchors that drive.

Winslow, by contrast, was from Perquimans County, the son of a Hertford horse dealer. The youngest child, with three sisters, he was sent for his secondary schooling to Warrenton Male Academy in Warren County.

Battle and Winslow came together as freshmen in Chapel Hill. They were friends and classmates with Golden Fleece and Phi Beta Kappa honors, and were frequent Di-Phi debate competitors with Frank Porter Graham, another notable Carolina legacy who was to become the first president of the consolidated university.

Winslow took on the best and finished as valedictorian in the Class of 1909. Graham was second. Battle was third.

They had their first year at UNC Law School together and lived in the residence of Graham's grandfather, a professor who also was later to serve as the university's president.

Battle, who had begun legal training as an undergraduate, started a solo practice in Rocky Mount in 1910. Winslow finished his degree at Columbia University Law School in 1911. A letter from Battle brought them together again.

In a 1974 newspaper interview, Winslow said: "Kemp had come down with tuberculosis and needed help, so I picked up and came to Rocky Mount."

One of the first jobs handled by the law firm was preparation of a deed from Bennett Bunn to Rocky Mount Mills for the Stone-wall mansion. The charge was \$5.

Battle subsequently spent time at a tuberculosis sani-

tarium in upstate New York and in Denver, where he had more time in law school.

Winslow continued his scholarly commitment and became known as a "lawyer's lawyer" due to his publications and his often cited legal briefs.

Battle spoke out opposing the "Monkey Bill" debated in the 1925 state legislature, gave the address at Graham's inauguration in 1931, and was an outspoken leader against the Speaker Ban Law that was repealed in 1963.

Both men served as presidents of the N.C. Bar Association, Battle in 1932-33 and Winslow in 1937-38. They were both presidents of the Rocky Mount Kiwanis Club, Battle in 1925 and Winslow in 1931.

"We remained together for 62 years, until his death in 1973," said Winslow, "longer than any other two lawyers in the state." Winslow died in 1976. They were both born in

1888.

The 1909 Yackety Yack, UNC's annual yearbook, shows that Winslow had a dorm roommate from Goldsboro named Robert McArthur Wilson. R.M. Wilson later came to Rocky Mount, was a principal and a superintendent of schools, lived on Tarboro Street near Winslow, and had a junior high school named after him.

We are who we are because of those who have gone before. As the Nobel-winning Southern novelist William Faulkner reminded us, the past is never dead and it is still with us everyday.

Not all of our history needs to be rewritten. More of it, however, needs to be remembered and honored. Each year is a centennial for someone or some group, and there are many of our community's builders and shapers who deserve celebration.

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