

The Founders Tour May 22, 2021

Stage Manager 1 (Kathy Daughety)

Welcome to The Founders Tour. This morning, Maplewood Cemetery is actually a theater stage for a short play, and you are the audience. On these grounds, we will meet our play's main characters – the 17 Founders of First Christian Church, eight who rest here and nine whose graves sit near and far.

Stage Manager 2 (Jeannette Etheridge)

Our Town is a 1938 Pulitzer Prize-winning play by American playwright Thornton Wilder. In high school, maybe we all read it. The play tells the story of the fictional American small town of Grover's Corners through the everyday lives of its citizens. We're about to hear a similar story capturing the small Town of Wilson in 1871 and its new Disciples congregation through the lives of 17 extraordinary people.

As we gather here, we know each other by name. We are not strangers. Our Founders were not strangers either. Their lives were tightly interwoven ... just like ours.

Stage Manager 1

As we walk, I want us to remember what it is like to be alive. Remember days vibrating with joy and hours trembling with sorrow. Remember days so busy that a full breath was a blessing and days so empty that the prospect of another was a lonely idea. Remember when we were surprised by the gifts of today and fearful of the shadows of tomorrow. Remember when we woke up to mornings like this and retreated to sleep with snow in the air. The lives we are about to meet were fashioned just the same, and those who lived them had similar days to remember.

Stage Manager 2

There is something eternal. Deep in our bones, we know it, and they did, too. How else may we explain what they joined together to do in 1871? What is eternal about every human being is what makes us all the same. What is eternal about the Founders is not gone. It is still here, right now, if we will receive it.

Stage Manager 1

Research produced our script. Much of what you will hear comes without footnotes directly from ancient obituaries, from documents discovered on Ancestry.com, from books in the Genealogy and Local History Room at the Wilson County Public Library, from local and distant newspaper archives and from resources in our First Christian library.

Stage Manager 2

And still we don't know enough. Some life stories are longer than others. A few are very short. That is the fault of our discovery. It is not a measure of how fully and completely the Founders lived their lives. We will applaud each as equal, which they surely are. At each

stop, an elder will pray a common prayer and leave a red rose as a remembrance from one First Christian congregation to another.

Stage Manager 1

The main character in *Our Town* is the stage manager of the theater. Jeannette and I are playing that role for your visit this morning to our small Town of Wilson, 1871. Population 1,036. Let's start our little play. Our first stop is the grave of Amos Johnston Battle.

Stop #1: the grave of Amos Battle

Stage Manager 2

Disciples of Christ members were living and active in Wilson as early as 1853. Dr. John Tomline Walsh, a Disciples preacher, organized the first Disciples church in 1853 with the assistance of Rev. Amos Johnston Battle. The new church, which met in the lower room of the Masonic Hall, did not grow and was removed from the denomination's roll of churches in 1857. The next attempt to found a congregation in Wilson came in 1871.

So Amos Battle is the place to begin our visit with the Founders. This will be our longest stop because the stories of six people rest here.

Amos Battle died in September 1870, seven months before the church charter was signed and, therefore, by definition, he is not a Founder. But by his actions and his spirit, he certainly is.

Stage Manager 1

Amos Battle was born in 1805 in Edgecombe County, the 2nd of 10 surviving children, six boys and four girls, to the prominent and wealthy mill owner, Col. Joel Battle and his wife, Mary Palmer Johnston.

He is a direct descendant of this family's patriarch, J. John Battle of Yorkshire, England, who emigrated from England and settled on the Nansemond River in Virginia in 1654.

Stage Manager 2

Amos was well educated for a man of his time and station. At age 23, traveling on horseback,, he stopped at Mount Zion Church, a small, country congregation in Georgia. It was there that he gave his heart to God, united with the church and was baptized by the Rev. Jesse Mercer, founder of Mercer University in Georgia. Three years later, he was ordained to the ministry at a convention held with the Baptist church at "Rogers' Cross Roads" in Wake County, North Carolina.

Stage Manager 1

Amos would become pastor of the Baptist Church in Nashville, North Carolina, 1838-39. For the next dozen years, he would be instrumental in raising funds to build Wake Forest College and the Baptist Church in Raleigh. From Raleigh he would go to Wilmington, North Carolina,

and pastor First Baptist Church there. Around 1844, he once again turned his attention to Baptist education, raising funds to establish the Chowan Baptist Female Academy in Murfreesboro, Hertford County, North Carolina.

In 1852, he united with the Disciples. He died seven months before his wife, Margaret, signed the founding charter for First Christian Church.

Stage Manager 2

Our tour's first Founder is **Margaret Hearne Battle**. Margaret was born on January 19, 1811, and died on January 6, 1888, in St. Louis, Missouri, where she is buried.

In 1830, 19-year old Margaret Hearne Parker, daughter of Weeks Parker and Sabra Irwin Hearn of Tarboro, married 25-year old Amos Johnston Battle. The couple would become parents of nine children. Among them is Founder Jesse Mercer Battle.

Stage Manager 1

In 1843, the family moved to Wilson, where Amos Battle remained until his death. They opened the Battle Hotel at the corner of Lodge and Barnes Streets, actually run by Margaret and later managed by son-in-law, Archibald Rhodes.

Margaret outlived her husband, who died in 1870, by 18 years. She moved to St. Louis in 1878 to live with her son Jesse, where she died a decade later.

Stage Manager 2

Sons George and Walter are buried here with their father. Their lives are an important part of our journey with this family through 1871.

George Battle was born in 1845 in Wilson, the 7th of 9 surviving children. George's life was cut short by the Civil War. At the outbreak of the war, he left school and enlisted in the 4th Infantry Regiment State Troops with his older brother, Walter. He was 16 years old. His father would try without success to have him released because of his age, but George felt compelled to stay and fight for the cause.

Stage Manager 1

The 4th Infantry Regiment was ordered to Virginia following training. One of the first major battles the unit fought was the Battle of Seven Pines. George was mortally wounded in the battle and died in a Richmond hospital on June 6, 1862.

Upon receiving the news of his son's death, Amos Battle journeyed to Richmond to retrieve George's body and return him to Wilson where he was laid to rest in the spot before us.

Stage Manager 2

Walter Battle suffered greatly over George's death. He remained with the North Carolina 4th, barely surviving the war as a POW at the notorious Point Lookout prison in Delaware. He suffered poor health following the war, died at home in 1869 and rests next to his brother.

Letters written home by George and Walter were later contained in the book *As You May Never See Us Again, The Civil War Letters of George and Walter Battle, 4th North Carolina Infantry*. George's letters are mainly reassurances to his mother that he is well. In them, he expresses an almost child-like concern for his dog.

Stage Manager 1

Two other Founders are extensions of the Battle family story.

Born in Wilson on November 10, 1850, Founder **Jesse Mercer Battle** was a son of Amos and Margaret Battle. He was an inventive chemist and an author. With his brother, Cullen, and friend Joseph Joshua Lawrence, another Founder, he operated a Wilson pharmacy. In 1875, he moved to St. Louis and became a pharmaceutical capitalist manufacturing proprietary and patented drugs, including the lucrative elixir Bromidia, promoted in the United States and Europe as a sedative and hypnotic.

Stage Manager 2

In partnership with Dr. Joseph Joshua Lawrence, who also relocated to St. Louis, his work rapidly expanded into the corporation which bore his name, Battle and Company Chemists' Corporaton. Among his writings were *Why I Am Not a Roman Catholic*, *Tributes To My Father and Mother* and *Some Stories of My Life*.

Jesse Battle died on September 16, 1914, in St. Louis and is buried there.

Stage Manager 1

Our third Founder this morning was born in Edgecombe County. **Joseph Joshua Lawrence** could trace his English ancestry back to 1642 when his fourth-removed paternal grandfather arrived in the colonies. During the Civil War, Joseph Lawrence commanded a Confederate cavalry unit. Later, after studying medicine, he opened a practice in Wilson, a contemporary of Founder Dr. Robert W. King, whom we'll meet shortly. As you've heard, he operated a pharmacy in Wilson with Jesse and Cullen Battle.

In 1873, Dr. Lawrence moved to St. Louis and established and edited the highly profitable medical journal, *The Medical Brief*. In 1879, he invented a disinfectant for surgical procedures and named it after Joseph Lister, British surgeon and a pioneer of antiseptic surgery.

Stage Manager 2

While he was perfecting the formula, now known as Listerine, he befriended Jordon Wheat Lambert, a clerk at Mellier Brothers drug store in St. Louis. They formed the Lambert Pharmaceutical Company. Dr. Lawrence eventually sold most of his interest and moved to New York. By 1915, Listerine was a public staple, and the company delivered Dr. Lawrence great wealth.

In 1955, Lambert Company merged with a pharmaceutical company founded in 1856 by William R. Warner to form Warner-Lambert. In the late 1990s, Warner-Lambert formed an alliance with Pfizer to bring its drug Lipitor to market. In February 2000, Pfizer bought

Warner-Lambert along with all of its subsidiary companies. In 2020, Pfizer developed a Covid vaccine. Dr. Joseph Joshua Lawrence is in the Pfizer bloodline. He died on March 14, 1909, and is buried in St. Louis.

Elder's Prayer (Gilda Cauley)

Oh Great and Awesome God, our Divine Creator, may Founders Margaret Battle, Jesse Battle and Dr. Joseph Joshua Lawrence be aware of our presence this morning and may we be aware of theirs. From this sacred spot, in Your holy name and with their guiding spirit, may we take mindful steps in the years ahead for our church. With gratitude for their lives of awe, wonder and love, and for ours, we are fully present in prayer as we say, Amen.

Stage Manager 2

We've met three Founders here at our longest stop. Our next stop is Charles J. Rountree.

Stop #2: the grave of Charles J. Rountree

Stage Manager 1

Charles J. Rountree carries a family name dating back to Yorkshire, England, in 1301. The name was probably familiar to anyone who lived near a rowan tree, which is a species of the U.S. Mountain Ashe. Charles Rountree's parents, Lewis Rountree and Elizabeth Daniel Rountree, were Edgecombe County farmers. Charles was born in January 18, 1833, and had 13 brothers and sisters. He married Theresa Rountree on October 18, 1858. After her death in 1862, he married Elizabeth Bynum Rountree in 1865. Both wives rest here.

Stage Manager 2

Wilson Mount Lebanon Lodge 117 of the Ancient Free and Accepted Masons published the following memorial in the June 3, 1881, edition of the *Wilson Advance*, following Charles Rountree's death on May 12, 1881.

"Past Master Charles Rountree, our brother, well-beloved, is no more of this earth. We shall no more see him on earth, never more give to, or receive from him the strong grip of fraternal greeting. Never again have whispered in our ear by him the word of good counsel and friendly admonition which he was wont to do while traveling with us on the level of time. But his faith was in God – his life was a beautiful exemplification of a living faith. We have hope that through that faith in the redeeming merits of Judah's Lion, his pure spirit is now basking in the sunlight of the redeemed fast by the throne of God."

Elder's Prayer (Patsy Ferrell)

Oh Great and Awesome God, our Divine Creator, may Founder Charles J. Rountree be aware of our presence this morning and may we be aware of his. From this sacred spot, in Your holy name and with his guiding spirit, may we take mindful steps in the years ahead for our church. With gratitude for his life of awe, wonder and love, and for ours, we are fully present in prayer as we say, Amen.

Stage Manager 2

Charles Rountree is our fourth Founder. Our next stop is Willis Napoleon Hackney.

Stop #3: the graves of Willis Napoleon Hackney and Orpah Brown Hackney

Stage Manager 1

Founder **Willis Napoleon Hackney** was born on January 26, 1823, and came to Wilson as a wheelright in 1852, when the town was a tiny hamlet – the 1850 census counted 89 residents. He made wheels in his small shop. During the Civil War, he made wagons. And his business grew. In 1878, his three sons joined him as Hackney and Sons, one of the largest manufacturers of buggies and wagons in the South, building 200 buggies and 100 wagons annually. The Hackney Brothers Body Company was formed in 1914, and formally incorporated in 1920. During the years that followed, that the company pioneered the manufacture of school bus bodies and refrigerated truck bodies.

Stage Manager 2

Hackney Brothers Body Company was dissolved in 1996, the first and longest-lasting manufacturing business in Wilson. The company's records were given to Barton College. Company presidents Thomas J. Hackney, Sr., and Thomas J. Hackney, Jr., were both chairmen of the Board of Trustees at Barton College during their presidencies at Hackney Brothers Body Company.

Stage Manager 1

Founder **Orpah Brown Hackney** was Willis Hackney's third wife. Orpah, born on February 16, 1835, was from Tuckahoe Church in Jones County. In 1870, she lived in the Wilson home of Robert Hines, a farmer, and Sallie R. Hines. Orpah and Willis Hackney were married November 5, 1873. Orpah was 40 years old. In 1880, the Hackneys lived on Nash Street. Orpah gave the first President's Home at Atlantic Christian College. She died in 1902.

Stage Manager 2

Also resting here are Penelope Dickerson Hackney, Willis Hackney's second wife, January 1, 1835, to February 25, 1872, and Martha Douglas Hackney, his first wife, February 11, 1823, to February 16, 1866.

Elder's Prayer (Pat Campbell)

Oh Great and Awesome God, our Divine Creator, may Founders Willis Napoleon Hackney and Orpah Brown Hackney be aware of our presence this morning and may we be aware of theirs. From this sacred spot, in Your holy name and with their guiding spirit, may we take mindful steps in the years ahead for our church. With gratitude for their lives of awe, wonder and love, and for ours, we are fully present in prayer as we say, Amen.

Stage Manager 2

Willis and Orpah Hackney are Founders five and six. Let's meet Robert J. Taylor next, Founder 7.

Stop #4: the grave of Robert J. Taylor

Stage Manager 1

On March 12, 1871, Evangelist Virgil Angelo Wilson began a three-month crusade in eastern North Carolina. The first stop was Wilson. He exhorted from Bible passages as he walked up and down the aisles. Reports noted that his personalized presentation of the Gospel was impressive and powerful in its effects. Among those it won were Founder **Robert J. Taylor**, born on the 4th of July 1833, and Willis Hackney, both of whom Rev. Wilson baptised. They were the deacons among the 17 Founders.

Stage Manager 2

Robert and his wife, Sallie Drake, were married on February 12, 1861. The 1910 federal census reports that he and Sallie, to whom he had been married for 47 years, lived at 206 Tarboro Street. They had four children. His occupations were listed as farming and milling. Robert Taylor was a Confederate Army veteran. He was one of two Founders still living in Wilson in 1910. Mary Pearce was the other. He died on July 5, 1912. Sallie died six years later.

Elder's Prayer (Wanda Sutton)

Oh Great and Awesome God, our Divine Creator, may Founder Robert J. Taylor be aware of our presence this morning and may we be aware of his. From this sacred spot, in Your holy name and with his guiding spirit, may we take mindful steps in the years ahead for our church. With gratitude for his life of awe, wonder and love, and for ours, we are fully present in prayer as we say, Amen.

Stage Manager 2

Now let's greet Peter Edmond Hines, Founder 8.

Stop #5: the grave of Peter Edmund Hines

Stage Manager 2

Peter Edmund Hines was born on January 5, 1812, in Edgecombe County, the son of Prudence Johnston and Peter Hines. A Disciples minister, Peter came to Wilson from Marlboro, North Carolina, in 1865. A leader in his church, he presided at four of their state conventions. His home was on the west side of Goldsborso Street, between Greene and Vance.

On January 24, 1865, Peter Hines married Fannie Bynum Barnes, the widow of Jacob S. Barnes, who'd died three years before. Peter's first wife, Marietta, died in 1847, at the age of 29, in the same year that their daughter Marietta Delia Hines was born.

Stage Manager 1

Fannie had no children by either marriage. At her death on July 28, 1885, she was remembered as a woman "blessed with great strength and perseverance. As a neighbor, she was especially kind to the poor and to all persons in sickness and distress." In 1871, Fannie, donated the lot on which the initial First Christian Church stood.

Peter Hines served as the mayor of Wilson from 1878 to 1885 and did much to establish the first permanent Christian church in Wilson. He died on October 29, 1891.

Here Fannie rests between husbands Jacob Barnes and Peter Hines.

Elder's Prayer (Gilda Cauley)

Oh Great and Awesome God, our Divine Creator, may Founder Peter Edmund Hines be aware of our presence this morning and may we be aware of his. From this sacred spot, in Your holy name and with his guiding spirit, may we take mindful steps in the years ahead for our church. With gratitude for his life of awe, wonder and love, and for ours, we are fully present in prayer as we say, Amen.

Stage Manager 1

Let's take our longest walk of the morning to the graves of Moses and Penelope Moye, Founders 9 and 10.

Stop #6: the graves of Moses Tyson and Penelope Moye

Stage Manager 2

Moses Tyson Moye, born on October 27, 1827, was the son of Alfred Moye of Pitt County, who served as a State Representative and a State Senator, and who established Corinth Church, the first Disciples congregation in Pitt County. During the War Between the States, Moses Moye first served as a Second Lieutenant in Company H, 7th North Carolina Volunteer Regiment. He was captured at the Battle of Hatteras and imprisoned at Fort Columbus for three months. In 1862, he was released in a prisoner exchange and became a First Lieutenant in the Wilson Partisan Rangers under the command of Captain Joseph Joshua Lawrence, a Founder whom we've already met this morning.

Stage Manager 1

Moses Moye participated in the Battle of Little Washington and afterward served as a Major in the Home Guard of Pitt County. He located to Wilson in December 1865. He graduated from Wake Forest College and later from Bethany College on July 4, 1858, as a Disciples minister,

specializing in Biblical Literature, Classical Literature and Latin and Greek. On October 9, 1870, he was ordained at Oak Grove Christian Church in Greene County. In addition to First Christian in Wilson, he served many other churches: Bethany in Edgecombe County, Antioch at Farmville, Corinth in Pitt County, Plymouth in Washington County and Bowling Green in Virginia.

Stage Manager 2

On January 6, 1863, in Wilson, Moses Moye married **Penelope Whitehead** of Pitt County. Born on February 7, 1842, she was known as Nellie. They settled permanently in Wilson in 1865, at the southeast corner of Tarboro and Greene Streets. Like most women of the era, Nellie was keeper of the home. The Foyes had six children.

From 1875 to 1883, he was a druggist in the firm of Moye and Nadal. Later, he established M.T. Moye and Company, dealers in Havana and domestic cigars. He was a grade school trustee, a town commissioner and regarded as one of Wilson's most successful citizens. Nellie died on August 20, 1899. Moses died a year later on October 1, 1900.

Elder's Prayer (Patsy Ferrell)

Oh Great and Awesome God, our Divine Creator, may Founders Moses and Penelope Moye be aware of our presence this morning and may we be aware of theirs. From this sacred spot, in Your holy name and with their guiding spirit, may we take mindful steps in the years ahead for our church. With gratitude for their lives of awe, wonder and love, and for ours, we are fully present in prayer as we say, Amen.

Stage Manager 2

Our tour's final stop is the grave of Dr. Robert E. King, Founder 11.

Stop #7: the grave of Dr. Robert W. King

Stage Manager 1

Robert W. King, age 24, married Caroline J. Bynum on November 8, 1859, in the home of Jacob S. Barnes of Wilson, who was the first husband of Fannie Bynum Barnes Hines. Caroline was the daughter of Gideon Bynum of Pitt County, a member of the North Carolina legislature for many years. The Kings lived in the Saratoga District. By 1870, the Kings lived in the Town of Wilson on Green Street with daughters Minerva and Ida; Julia Keck, age 9, a housekeeper apprentice; and Sarah Grant, age 27, a domestic servant. Caroline died 15 years after her husband in 1906 and is buried in Sumter, South Carolina.

Stage Manager 2

Dr. King was one of six physicians in Wilson in 1867. In 1850, at age 14, he lived in Falkland, in Pitt County. He was educated at the Franklin Institute in Franklinton, North Carolina, and at the University of Virginia. Dr. King graduated with first honors from the Medical College of Cincinnati in 1858. In 1862, he entered the Confederate Army as a field and hospital surgeon.

Stage Manager 1

An article in the *Wilson Advance* on October 25, 1888, following a Democratic caucus in Nashville, called him "a physician of wide practice and a heart that has made him ride many miles to do for the sick and suffering when his remuneration was not expected or received." According to the *Advance*, in 1878, he'd been chosen to represent his district in the state legislature. A Democrat and one of his community's most popular citizens, he was known as a speaker of "fire and vim" and a "campaigner of unusual effectiveness."

Dr. King died on January 19, 1891. He moved his Disciples membership to Wilson by letter from Corinth, in Pitt County.

Elder's Prayer (Pat Campbell)

Oh Great and Awesome God, our Divine Creator, may Founder Dr. Robert E. King be aware of our presence this morning and may we be aware of his. From this sacred spot, in Your holy name and with his guiding spirit, may we take mindful steps in the years ahead for our church. With gratitude for his life of awe, wonder and love, and for ours, we are fully present in prayer as we say, Amen.

Stage Manager 2

In our walk so far, we've met eight Founders who rest here and three who rest in St. Louis. Six more important stories remain.

Founder **Joseph J. Bynum**, May 17, 1832 to May 24, 1909, married Susan M. Bynum on May 11, 1857. In 1860, Joseph, a farmer, age 27, and Susan, age 20, and son, Robert, age 1, lived in the Saratoga District. By 1870, the family had added Florence, age 8, Benjamin, age 5, and a farm laborer, James Owne, age 19.

Joseph Bynum was received by letter from Antioch Church, Farmville, Pitt County. Joseph rests in Forest Hills Cemetery, Farmville, North Carolina.

Stage Manager 1

Founder **Sarah (Sallie) Roxanna Jarman Hines**, April 20, 1836 to June 2, 1906, was from a Tuckahoe Christian Church family, Jones County, North Carolina. Her uncle, John Jarman, was a Disciple pioneer preacher who founded the church at Tuckahoe. On October 27, 1853, she married Robert William Hines. Their son James William Hines was a benefactor of Atlantic Christian College. Sarah rests in Forest Hills Cemetery, Farmville, North Carolina.

Stage Manager 2

The grave of Founder **Mary M. Hearne** and much of her story is yet beyond our research.

Mary M. Phillips married John Hearne, a bondsman, on December 4, 1859. In 1870, Mary was a widow and lived in Wilson with Margaret Hearne. John wrote his will on August 25, 1861, and it was probated two months later. Mary came by letter from Antioch Church, Farmville, Pitt County.

Stage Manager 1

The graves of Founders **John and Lucy Kitchin** are also beyond our research. John, a machinist, was 45 in 1870. His wife, Lucy, was 34. They arrived by letter from Antioch Church, Farmville, Pitt County.

Stage Manager 2

Of the 17, Founder **Mary J. Pearce** is almost impossibly reclusive 150 years later. Charles C. Ware in his history of First Christian Church provides scant clues. Mary came to the congregation by baptism, he reports; she was married to William A. Pearce; and she was one of two Founders still living in Wilson in 1910. Robert Taylor was the other. A search of 1910 federal census data finds a Mary J. Pearce, age 58, living on Lee Street in Wilson, and for 43 years married to William A. Pearce, age 74 and 16 years her elder. His occupation is listed as upholsterer. No other evidence confirms this is the match for which we are searching. Whatever her story and wherever she remains, her name is engraved among the 17.

Elder's Prayer (Wanda Sutton)

Oh Great and Awesome God, our Divine Creator, may Founders Joseph J. Bynum, Sarah Roxanna Jarman Hines, Mary M. Hearne, John and Lucy Kitchin and Mary J. Pearce be aware of our presence this morning and may we be aware of theirs. From this sacred spot, in Your holy name and with their guiding spirit, may we take mindful steps in the years ahead for our church. With gratitude for their lives of awe, wonder and love, and for ours, we are fully present in prayer as we say, Amen.

At departure

Stage Manager 1

We've met all 17, and our little play comes to its end. Surely another group will gather here again when 50 more years have passed. Maybe some of us will return again many times, alone. After all, this is part of our church home.

In Maplewood and beyond also rest those who bridged the 150 years between the Founders and this moment. Some are unknown to us. Many we can call by name. Fondly. Their stories are remarkable and unique, too. What is eternal about them is not gone. It is still here, right now, if we will receive it. As we leave, for them, there is one more prayer. And there are roses for a place of special remembrance during worship tomorrow.

Elder's Prayer (Carol Steffa)

Oh Great and Awesome God, our Divine Creator, may our brothers and sisters in Christ from First Christian Church who are at rest feel our presence, and may we feel theirs. From this sacred spot, in Your holy name and with their guiding spirit, may we take mindful steps in the years ahead for our church. With gratitude for their lives of awe, wonder and love, and for ours, we are fully present in prayer as we say, Amen.