

Christine Williams Holds The Key To County History

For three decades, Christine Whaley Williams, Duplin County register of deeds, has held local history in her capable hands. This December, Mrs. Williams completes 30 years as register of deeds.

This exceptional public servant was honored at the Duplin County Courthouse for her outstanding record of public service. Judge Henry L. Stevens, III, presided at the ceremonies marking the occasion.

"Duplin," said Judge Stevens in his salute to Mrs. Williams, "is a rich county in the quality of its citizens and in the good life that it affords them. During the past 30

years, Duplin has also become known for its rich heritage in records dating back to 1749. It stands second to none in the modernization of its records systems. Christine Williams sparked this modernization."

Judge Stevens went on to survey the history of the establishment of Duplin from the time it was cut off from New Hanover County and covered the area now known as Sampson and Duplin counties. He told how tradition has it that Duplin folks expected the eight Duplin deed books to be transferred to the new courthouse in Kenansville when Sampson was cut off from Duplin.

"But it was almost 200 years later when Mrs. Williams was able to arrange with the Sampson register of deeds and Board of County Commissioners for Duplin to get a copy of the eight valuable books," said Judge Stevens. "In a county so steeped in history," he said, "it seems appropriate that the recorder of deeds be of historical note herself. With her 30 years of service as Duplin's register, Mrs. Williams has served longer than any other Duplin register since the county was formed. James Dickson came closest to her service record when he served for 27 years (1784-1811)."

"She is the 22nd person to serve as register, and the first woman ever to be elected to public office in Duplin County."

"She is respected among the area residents and registers of deeds throughout the State, having helped to organize the N.C. Association of Registers of Deeds one week after taking office in December 1952, and having served in every office in the Association including the presidency. She is currently serving on the board of directors of the National Association of County Recorders and Clerks," said Judge Stevens.

Duties of the Register
"Record-keeping," said

the judge, "is one of the main responsibilities of county government. Public record-keeping in Duplin County is a public trust of the highest degree."

The Duplin register supervises the keeping of land records, including the probate of land documents to be recorded. She handles corporation and partnership records, notary public commissions, and records of personal property encumbrances.

The registry also keeps military discharges; birth, death and marriage records; and, because the early Duplin birth records are not good, the Duplin registry has on loan from the county Board of Education 70,000 Duplin County school census cards which show date of birth for use by persons whose birth certificates were not recorded.

"In a number of counties, it is often difficult to find what one needs. Thanks to Mrs. Williams and her dedicated staff, Duplin records are instantly available," said Judge Stevens.

Stevens saluted a number of special projects that Mrs. Williams initiated. "In all vital events in the lives of Duplinites, this grandmother is our proprietor of history," he said. "Lawyers and laymen benefit from her help. The Duplin registry with its 233 years of records is a gold mine for the family history searchers from many states whose ancestors once lived in Duplin."

"During office hours," said Judge Stevens, "Mrs. Williams and her splendid staff assist family history searchers. As a personal service, and on her own time, Mrs. Williams often lectures to genealogy classes and conducts private tours of the registry."

He explained that Mrs. Williams is one of only ten county recorders to collect and index all available birth and death records for Duplin citizens when the events occur in other counties in North Carolina.

Many of the Duplin records had to be restored and typed for easier reading. Of particular note is the 1868 to 1929 marriage index.

Upon taking office in 1953, Mrs. Williams gave first priority to perfecting instant recording of documents. She is still one of the few recording officers in the country to provide this service, so useful to Duplin merchants and farmers.

Her concern for security protection of Duplin records got next priority. (More than one-third of North Carolina county courthouses have suffered record-destroying fires.) Thanks to the efforts of Mrs. Williams, Duplin records are microfilmed daily and certain copies of records are even stored out of state.

She served on the State advisory committee on county records under the leadership of then Duplin Representative Hugh S. Johnson. Their work resulted in laws which allow the state archives to microfilm permanent county records and store microfilm in the archives.

Duplin's microfilm program is so good that the state archivists have studied it with a view of implementing

a similar program.

Mrs. Williams served on the study commission in 1965 with Rep. Johnson for development of the Uniform Commercial Code which replaced the chattel mortgages and crop liens.

She was the only register of deeds in the state who sponsored a school for banks, merchants and lending agencies to acquaint them with the provisions of the revolutionary and complicated law when it became effective in the state on July 1, 1967.

Her advice is often sought by lenders and other registers on matters pertaining to the code which was adopted by every state in the union except Louisiana.

In 1976, she helped to create a state uniform forms committee and while serving as its co-chairman, she led the designing of the deed and deed of trust forms now being used widely throughout North Carolina.

"During the past 30 years, Duplin County and its register of deeds have aged well," said Judge Stevens. "Under the leadership of Christine Williams, its records have had almost every advantage technology available. Mrs. Williams looks forward to more years of service."

She has attended two world conferences to study the new parcel identifier method of keeping land records so she can be prepared when Duplin will use this method.

Five years ago she arranged with the state geodetic team to install the additional geodetic markers needed in the county so when the county decides to get a county tax map, the parcels can be tied to the geodetic markers. The fact that Duplin County already has computerized microfilm of all land records available to county mappers will reduce the cost of mapping to the county.

While often saying that she "is just glad to be here at age 67," this lady who graduated as valedictorian of her class at the Kenansville High School at the peak of the great depression in 1932 and sat at home and took a correspondence business course, paying two cents postage to mail all lessons away for grading, and who has devoted her life to public service and her family, presents a pleasant facade and cheerful outlook as she looks to the future.

"My main concern, as always," she says, "is what is best for Duplin County and in the public interest."

"And like Secretary of State Thad Eure," she smiles, "I enjoy serving the public so much, I hope to make a career of it."

Public Health News

Toys May Be Hazardous... Choose Wisely

Play is the work of children. Children view play as a very serious business. It is serious because it is the major way children learn about life.

Play is the natural way for children to grow, learn and to become productive grown-ups. Play allows your child to go one step at a time. As your child plays, he learns. His creative abilities are being developed.

Your child enjoys play, and play is an important part of your child's life. It is his first step toward adulthood.

Toys are the tools of play. Children must be ready to learn from their toys. Stringing beads is too complicated and dangerous for very young children. However, as your child grows older, stringing beads becomes an important activity. It is important for a toy to match what the child is able to do. A child is discouraged by a toy that is too complicated and bored with a toy that is too easy. He needs toys for varying experiences. Toys are made for fun. Different toys are appropriate for different age levels. A toy is a good toy if it adequately meets the needs of your child.

As parents, we must help guide our child's play by providing time, a safe place and materials. What can a parent do to see that his child's toys will be safe? He can select toys that fit the child's age, development, interest and ability. Inspect toys carefully for cutting, piercing and other hazards. Look for non-toxic labels on children's art supplies and painted toys. Try to determine if a toy is filled with hazardous substances.

A parent should be certain that electrical toys carry the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) mark on both the toy and the plug. For young children, you should buy only battery-operated toys. Because of the low voltage, the child is not likely to receive a shock.

Finally, a parent should be prepared to supervise the play activities of his children, especially if they are using cooking, melting-molding electrical toys, chemistry and laboratory sets, disc-throwing items that require skill and practice or the most sophisticated target-toss sports games.

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