

Beach, Charles Maynard ^[1]

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by C. Sylvester Green ^[2], 1979

1 Jan. 1876–18 Aug. 1959

Charles Maynard Beach, educator, was born in Caldwell County ^[3], near Lenoir, the son of Joseph Lawson and Anne Shuford Beach. He attended schools in the community, including Hibriten Academy, and was graduated from Taylorsville Collegiate Institute in 1897. For two years he taught in a small, local school known as Beach School; in 1899 he entered Wake Forest College ^[4], from which he was graduated with both the B.A. and the M.A. degrees in 1902.

In the summer of 1902 he went to Delway to organize a projected elementary and high school. Although he was encouraged by many community leaders, he performed an indescribable amount of hard work in order to bring into being the Dell School. He became the first principal, responsible not only for administration but for soliciting students and raising money to erect needed buildings, both of which he did with marked success.

Beach left Dell School in 1914 to become principal of the reopened Leaksville-Spray Institute, Leaksville. The school closed again after two years. He then became principal of the Spray High School and superintendent of the Spray graded school system, where he served with effectiveness and efficiency for three years.

Beach accepted a call to become head of the Wingate School, Wingate, in the summer of 1919. In early 1923 the Wingate School became Wingate Junior College, and Beach became its first president. Later that year, his health had so deteriorated that he asked to be relieved of administrative responsibilities. In early manhood, he had developed an extreme nervous condition, sometimes described as palsy, and although he did not allow his condition to deter him in his work, he became increasingly conscious of the affliction. He remained at Wingate until 1934, teaching Bible and related subjects in the college. He lived in Cary for three years and then in 1937 returned to Leaksville, where he built a home and lived out his years in fruitful service to the community through many avenues of interest and responsibility, limited only by his health.

Although not an ordained minister, Beach was always active as a lay preacher and speaker at all kinds of religious groups. For a time he served as religious activities director of the Spray YMCA ^[5]. He was active in his local church as a deacon, Sunday school teacher, and for a time interim pastor of the Spray Baptist Church. An article in the Biblical Recorder ^[6] in early 1953 noted affectionately that he was "Mr. Chips" to hundreds of his former students, many of whom had recently attended a celebration in his honor.

In 1938, Beach proposed a vast program of supplementary education, of which he became the director, under the aegis of the Leaksville Township public schools. This attack on adult illiteracy was highly successful, so much so that he was described as having "banished illiteracy from Rockingham County ^[7]." At its peak, the program had twelve teachers and offered a wide range of subjects to more than nine hundred adults each year.

On 23 Dec. 1902, Beach married Bessie Claudine Hagwood of Wake County ^[8], daughter of William Henry and Charity Helen Mitchell Hagwood. The Beaches had three sons: Joseph W. of Raleigh ^[9], James L. of Sarasota, Fla., and Clarence M. of Eden. Beach died at Leaksville and was interred in the Leaksville cemetery.

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Rockingham County ^[14]

From:

Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press.^[15]

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