

Joanna Foushee's Gift to the Pittsboro Baptist Church

By Kathy Shaffer, June 2023

Back in the 1840s, several families felt the Lord's call to start a Baptist Church in Pittsboro. In 1847, a meeting house was built on the corner of Salisbury and Fayetteville Streets where a congregation began to worship together as Pittsboro Baptist Church. Sometime afterwards, a large storm tore the roof off the building. With limited funds, it went without repair. There were reports that sheep had been seen grazing inside the sanctuary.

By 1878, a few families had banded together to build a new roof and refurbish the building at their own expense. According to a report in the September 17, 1879 *Biblical Recorder*, the Baptist ladies held a festival to help with the cause, raising \$175, equaling \$5200 in today's dollars. After new paint inside and out as well new blinds, the *Biblical Recorder* article described the building as "one of the neatest church edifices in the village." An 1880 *Biblical Recorder* article credits the efforts of Mrs. W.L. (Joanna) Foushee and Mrs. Stephen Henley, along with their spouses and a few other families with making the "waste places... 'to blossom like a rose.'"



Pittsboro Baptist Church Meeting House built in 1847. The congregation worshiped in the building until 1948, when it was torn down to build the current sanctuary.



Joanna (Mrs. W. L.) Foushee

In the spring of 1880, after a church conference and a deacon ordination, Brother Lawhon, on behalf of Joanna Foushee, presented a gift to the church which included a silver communion service of a pitcher, two goblets, and two plates, along with two linen table cloths and a marble top table. Mrs. Foushee was unable to attend the meeting as she was confined to her bed with what was described as the "last stages of consumption, just waiting to be with Jesus." The communion set was purchased with the "sacrifice of personal property which most parents would desire to be handed down in their families." From her sick bed, Joanna had sent a message to be delivered to her church family at the meeting, "Sisters, work for Jesus."

Since Mrs. Foushee was unable to attend services at the Meeting House, the church came to her to observe the Lord's Supper in her bedroom. Rev. A.D. Cohen, the pastor, described the scene thus: *The occasion was so heavenly! You can imagine the scene and the effects. The dear sister, with her pure white dress, her hectic flush, her sparkling eye, her emaciated hands clasped as in an ecstasy of joy, her faithful husband and daughters, there in the same church to commune for the first time with the new church, the solemn service, the delightful associations, the mind dwelling upon the comforting words of the blessed Savior, "Let not your heart be troubled." No wonder she tried to and did shout and as loud as her feeble voice would let her, "Oh praise the Lord! The Lord be praised! O why don't some of you praise the Lord for me!"*

Joanna Foushee died May 25, 1880, at the age of 38 and is buried in the Pittsboro Baptist Church cemetery. In recognition of Pittsboro Baptist Church's 175th Anniversary, the communion set was used for the Lord's Supper on October 2, 2022. It was placed on the same marble top table given by Joanna Foushee one hundred forty-two years earlier.



Silver communion service and marble-top table given to the Pittsboro Baptist Church by Joanna Foushee.