

Swindell, Florence: WWI Women's War Record Collector For The NC Historical Commission ^[1]

Florence Swindell: WWI Women's War Record Collector for the NC Historical Commission

by Matthew M. Peek, State Archives of North Carolina, 2015

8 Aug. 1879-28 Feb. 1964

See also: [Support from the Home Front \(WWI\)](#) ^[2]

Florence Mary Tankard Swindell was born on August 8, 1879, in the town of Washington in Beaufort County, North Carolina, to William Macon and Laura Davis Tankard. Florence married Lewis Dixon Swindell of Hyde County, North Carolina (a member of Hyde County's well-known families). Little is known about Florence's life prior to [World War I](#). ^[3]

On September 22, 1917, Kathrine S. Reynolds, state chairman for the North Carolina Division of the [Woman's Liberty Loan Committee](#) ^[2], appointed Florence Swindell as the Woman's Liberty Loan Committee Chairman for Hyde County. However, due an unspecified, prolonged health issue, Swindell turned down the position by October 1917, though she recommended as her replacement a "Mrs. Noe" (believed to be Sarah Elizabeth Barber Noe). Swindell would remark in a handwritten note that "Giving this work up was one of the [hardest things] ever had to do. God understands. I turned this work over to Mrs. Noe."

Still, Swindell worked for the Woman's Liberty Loan Committee through correspondence, and she would organize, promote, and keep the financial records of the various Liberty Loan campaign drives and war savings stamp sales in the county. She would write reports about the Hyde County women's Liberty Loan work for various local and state officials, including the Hyde County Superintendent of Public Instruction. By this time, Swindell was living with her husband in Lake Landing, North Carolina, on the Atlantic coast of the state.

Florence Swindell was an alumnus of the North Carolina State Normal and Industrial College (later the [North Carolina College for Women](#)) ^[4] in Greensboro, North Carolina. After the United States officially joined the war in 1917, the college began an "undertaking to collect for permanent preservation all the materials within the State relating to the work of women in the present war." They asked Florence in a letter dated September 25, 1917, to serve as Hyde County's women's war records collector. She appears to have accepted that role, which would be enhanced by a future commitment to the [North Carolina Historical Commission](#) ^[5].

Florence Swindell volunteered sometime after 1917 to be the Hyde County war records collector for the North Carolina Historical Commission's World War I war records collection project, utilizing her experience with the State Normal and Industrial College and the head of Hyde County's Liberty Loan campaigns. Shortly after becoming the war records collector, she was stricken with some long-term medical problems, and often could not leave her house to collect the records. Swindell would write from home, though, attempting to obtain records through the post. In his 1920 North Carolina Historical Commission Biennial Report progress report on war records collection efforts, [Robert B. House](#) ^[6], War Records Collector for North Carolina, noted that Swindell of Hyde County was one of the eight best North Carolina county war records collectors. It is because of Swindell that North Carolina has as much about Hyde County's role in World War I as it does.

By 1920, the Swindells had three children: Jessie (a daughter); Harvey; and Davis. Florence's husband died in 1952, after the family had moved to the town of Engelhard in Hyde County. Florence M. Tankard Swindell died at the age of 84 on February 28, 1964, in Engelhard, North Carolina. She was buried with her husband in Saint Georges Episcopal Church Cemetery in Lake Landing, North Carolina.

Resources:

Florence Swindell Papers, WWI 21, Military Collection, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh, N.C.

North Carolina Council of Defense Records, WWI 1, Military Collection, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh, N.C.

North Carolina County War Records, WWI 2, Military Collection, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh, N.C.

St. Clair, Labert. 1919. The story of the liberty loans; being a record of the volunteer liberty loan army, its personnel, mobilization and methods. How America at home backed her armies and allies in the world war. Washington, D.C.: James William Bryan Press. <https://archive.org/details/storylibertyloan00stcl/page/n9/mode/2up?view...> ^[7] (accessed June 21, 2016).

Subjects:

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Authors:

Peek, Matthew M. ^[12]

Origin - location:

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Washington ^[14]

Hyde County ^[15]

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