

Fox, Michael Leonard ^[1]

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by Charlesanna L. Fox, 1986

12 Jan. 1825–22 July 1888

Michael Leonard Fox, physician, teacher, Lutheran minister, legislator, and farmer, was born in Liberty Township, [Randolph County](#) ^[2], the eldest son of Christian and Charity Moser Fox. After reading medicine with a local doctor, he attended Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia, in 1852. He then returned to the Sandy Creek community where he practiced medicine and, to a lesser extent, engaged in farming and other activities. In 1867 he became a [Lutheran](#) ^[3] minister and for the remainder of his life served three churches: Melanchthon, near his home; Coble, in [Guilford County](#) ^[4]; and Mt. Pleasant, in [Alamance County](#) ^[5].

In 1853 he had married Sarah Lutterloh, the daughter of Lewis and Julianna Rives Lutterloh of [Chatham County](#) ^[6]. They had six sons and three daughters: William Alexander, Lewis Michael, Dennis Luther, Thomas Israel, Junius Claudius, Charles, Julia, Sarah, and Cora. Charles and Julia died in infancy. The first four sons became physicians and practiced in Randolph County. From 1883 to 1885 the family lived in Conover so that the younger children could receive parochial schooling at the Concordia Lutheran Academy. While there, Fox continued his medical practice and served several nearby churches.

Fox was a pioneer in methods of medical treatment. He also laid the foundation for the careers of several young men, including two of his four sons, by preparing them for entry to medical school. A little house on his farm served as a classroom and was known as the "school." Perhaps his greatest achievement as physician was to save the life of his son Dennis, whose feet were almost severed by a large mower on the farm in 1873 when the boy was six years old. The left ankle was cut through both bones and the right one through the tibia. Fox placed the feet in their proper position and successfully restored their usefulness. As a result, Dennis was able to walk most of his life. Although the left foot finally was amputated when he was sixty-three, he practiced medicine until he was eighty.

From 1876 to 1877, Fox served in the North Carolina [General Assembly](#) ^[7] but discovered that he had no desire for a life of politics. An early private conservationist, he provided his farm with ponds for water storage and fishing. He arranged the ponds on three levels so that fish traps could be set where water from the top ponds flowed to the lower ones.

Fox and his family, including the four physician sons, were buried in the cemetery of Melanchthon Church, near Liberty, where he had been a pastor for twenty-one years.

References:

John L. Cheney, Jr., ed., *North Carolina Government, 1585–1974* (1975).

Michael Leonard Fox Papers and related items (Archives, North Carolina Synod, Lutheran Church of America, Salisbury).

Jacob L. Morgan and others, *History of the Lutheran Church in North Carolina, 1803–1953* (1953).

North Carolina Biography, vol. 4 (1941).

Additional Resources:

Biographical Sketch, NC Lutheran Church: http://nclutheran.org/historical_sketches/fox_michael.pdf ^[8]

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