

CLIFTON LEONARD SNIDOW, SR.
(1874-1971)

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by Mary French Boswell*

Snidow Chapel - Hebb Music Center stands on the campus of Lynchburg College in Lynchburg, VA, a monument to the devotion of one couple to their college in their home city, Mr. and Mrs. Clifton Leonard Snidow, Sr.

Clifton Leonard Snidow, Sr. (Nov. 25, 1874-June 15, 1971) was a civic leader, a dedicated churchman, a successful businessman, an enthusiastic patron of higher education, a man loved and highly respected by all who knew him for his integrity and unfailing devotion to Christian principles which carried through his entire life. A beautiful tribute to him is given in the biography, The Man Who Took God at His Word, C. L. Snidow, Christian Gentleman by Dorothy M. Ferguson, 1969, pub. by Lynchburg College.



Born in the family home (William Benton Snidow, his father; Mary Virginia (Molly) Williams, his mother) near the farm road outside of Pembroke which led to the George Snidow, Sr. home later known as Aunt Mag Wilson's Place (as described in Snidow Newsletter, Spring 1980), Clifton Leonard Snidow, Sr. was the grandson of John M. Snidow and great grandson of Geo. Snidow, Sr. He attended first a one-room log school house at Hoge's Chapel, then the new school built in Pembroke, then on the Tazewell College 50 miles away. He was a devoted member of Pembroke Methodist Church.

His business career began in a casual way when as a teenager he was asked to help out in his uncle's general store in Pembroke. Salary of 50¢ a day he walked the 2 miles to Pembroke each morning arriving at 6 A.M., the time the store opened. Not only successful as a clerk he became the bookkeeper and improved the bookkeeping system for his uncle, John F. Williams, father of Mr. Mervin Williams, present day owner of Williams Dept. Store in Pembroke. John F. Williams, not ungrateful to his talented and energetic nephew, raised his salary to \$20 a month beginning Jan. 1, 1893. (Also he used quarters in the back of the store.) Soon, however, a representative of a Lynchburg wholesale dry goods firm while calling on the Williams emporium and noting Clif Snidow as the most alert and "best salesman he had ever seen in any store" offered him a job as a traveling salesman (called drummer in those day) for his firm with a salary 5 times that of his salary in the Pembroke store.

He and his wife (*Sallie*), having been members of the First Christian (Disciples of Christ) Church since 1903, they were particularly interested in Lynchburg College, sponsored by the Christian church. Knowing the need for a chapel for the college and through the generosity of them, as well as a Fla. couple, Mr. and Mrs. Leon Hebb, also financial support from the Christian Church in many parts of the East, the Snidow Chapel - Hebb Music center became a reality and the Dedication was held on April 29, 1967.

Among other philanthropies of the Snidows were the Snidow Endowment Scholarship Fund set up to further the education of ministerial students or students who needed financial assistance and the Snidow Lecture, an annual lecture at the college emphasizing the Christian Life.

Theodore Roosevelt said in a speech, "The first requisite of a good citizen in this Republic of ours is that he shall be able and willing to pull his weight". C. L. Snidow, Christian Gentleman, was always able and willing to pull his weight--in his business, church, community affiliations or a college in a crisis.

He was a good citizen of the city which he chose as his own before the turn of the century and for whose material and spiritual prosperity he never ceased to work. (M.F.B.)

(I am grateful to Lynchburg College for allowing me to quote freely from the book, The Man Who Took God at His Word, C. L. Snidow, Christian Gentleman by Dorothy M. Ferguson.)

M.F.B.



(also see another article on the Chapel in the 2004 Snidow Newsletter)