

Essay for Parish Life

Miss Laura Lemly: St Paul's Charter Member

By Cathy Boyer, Archives Team

Miss Lemly has always been known as one of the six persons who attended Rev. Bynum's first service of the Episcopal Church at the Court House in Winston in the summer of 1876, and who became an active and much-loved member of the St Paul's Church finally consecrated in Feb 1879. The story goes that on her death (in a cooking accident) in Sept 1901 the Vestry ordered that black cloth be placed over the pew she always used, so no one could sit there for a month; and the Ladies Aid Society commissioned a stained-glass memorial window in honor of her (now mounted in the hallway in front of the choir practice room). But there is a lot more to her life experience and value to St Paul's than just that—why was she so loved? What did she do?

Laura was born in August of 1843, in Bethania, and the (relatively) privileged daughter of 3 generations of prominent Moravian businessmen in Bethania. She inherited a good brain from them; skills in organization, multi-tasking, mathematics and handling money. On her father's side, she inherited skill in motivating people, and being a leader who "led from the front" to reach goals that enriched those who believed in her. Get comfortable and I will tell her story. . .



Laura's great grandfather was Christian Loesch (Lash) [born 1758- died 1844, buried at Bethania Gods Acre] who ran the store (only store at the time) that sat on the corner of Main St and Loesch Lane. It is gone now, but his house still stands next door. He was a hard-working and enterprising man, and kept a lot of people employed. He also, along with most of his neighbors in Bethania, had enslaved workers. He had 39 slaves, working in

agriculture, commerce and manufacturing on the 1840 census.

Christian had many business interests, including the store, a hide tanning yard, a large farm with negro slaves working it, a saw mill, a grist mill, and a cigar factory that was started in 1841 and continued by his youngest sons. He was married 3 times, and had 3 sets of children, which put their ages over a wide range of years. The 2nd wife produced Elizabeth, in 1791, who went on to be Laura's grandmother. And the 3rd wife produced Israel George Lash, in 1810, who was 19

years younger than Elizabeth, but who was always close to her and helped 3 of her Lemly grandchildren in their careers.

Elizabeth [born 1791- died 1858, buried in Salem Gods Acre] must have learned store keeping and farm running at her father's knee, and would have been a valuable helpmeet to the next storekeeper to move to the area. Jacob Conrad [born 1782 - died 1839, buried in Bethania Gods Acre] who was born in Pennsylvania, moved to Bethania and opened a store and bought a farm that covered 430 acres, with 100 of them being cultivated, and had 41 slaves when his estate was probated in 1839. The farm supported the family, allowing them to sell corn, oats, and wool, plus butter and slaughtered pigs. The store was described by Salem Academy schoolteacher Emma Lehman as large, brick, next to a large brick house, beside the road, and with outbuildings behind. Elizabeth married Jacob in 1811, and produced 4 daughters that lived until their father died (plus other children who did not live that long) so were mentioned in his estate papers. The 2 oldest had married already, at that point, and moved to their own homes.

Elizabeth's 3rd daughter, Amanda [born 1816- died 1910, buried in Salem Gods Acre] had married Henry Augustus Lemly from Salisbury, in 1837, so Elizabeth invited them to settle on the farm with her and help run the businesses. This worked well for about 13 years. Jacob



Conrad's brother Abraham came to Bethania with Jacob and set up his own farm next door. His daughter Julia had married the physician Beverly Jones (born 1815 in VA), and the couple were living on the farm with Abraham. I like to think that Henry Lemly was able to visit and be friends with this very well-respected local doctor and keep his own love of medicine alive.

Henry's father was Samuel Lemly [born 1790 in Salisbury-- died 1848 in Jackson Mississippi], who was a master carpenter and building contractor with apprentices, and in 1840 had 10 slaves. Some of his big projects were Ithiel Town's patented lattice truss bridge across the South Yadkin River at Salisbury in 1825, and 8 buildings at Davidson College in 1836-38. [Samuel named one of his sons for Ithiel Town] Samuel and work crew moved to Mississippi in 1841. Son Henry was already married by then, and 2 sisters were also and stayed in Salisbury. When Samuel died in Jan 1848 his Presbyterian church in Salisbury passed a resolution calling him "a zealous and faithful officer" of the church and Sunday school, and president of the Rowan County Temperance Society.

Son Henry A Lemly [born 1812 in Salisbury- died 1886 in Salem, buried in Salem Moravian Gods Acre] was raised as a Presbyterian, and was baptized at age 16 in Salisbury. At age 17 he

went to UNC-Chapel Hill to begin the study of Medicine. He was a student there for 2 years, 1829 and 30, until he realized his eyesight was too poor to keep up with his studies and he had to drop out and go back to Salisbury. There he went into mercantile sales. This is probably how he crossed paths with Amanda in Bethania. On Jan 20, 1837 a marriage bond reads “Henry A Lemly (25) of Salisbury to Amanda S Conrad (20) of Stokes Co”, and on 30 Jan the same wording appears in the Raleigh Register & Gazette. So a city boy with hopes to heal people becomes a farmer and slave holder, and raises 6 children with people skills and humane values.



When Jacob's estate went to probate in 1839, Elizabeth got to stay in the house by Dower Law of the time, and her 2 oldest daughters being married by then, were not interested in running a store. The farm acreage stayed with Elizabeth too, but the slaves were divided by the Court appointed committee, into 5 lots: one for each of the 4 daughters including Laura Conrad then age 13, and the widow. The committee priced the slave mothers in a package with their very young children, but children 5 and up plus grown men and women had values assigned to them and were not necessarily kept in relationship groups. The committee's duty was to make each lot come out as nearly as possible to the same money value, for the heirs to choose a lot to inherit. We do have their names and ages at the time, so I have passed this to the Old Salem Hidden Town project, as some of them ended up in Salem, and now know a lot more about them. The total value of the slaves was put at \$15,663. So Elizabeth had a farm and a store, but had just lost 2/ 5ths of her work force. (Laura Conrad at 13 stayed at home, and Henry stayed too, so their newly inherited slaves stayed on the farm as well.)

In the 1840 census Henry Lemly is recorded with a wife, one child under 5 (Elizabeth Conrad Lemly, called Bettie, born May 1840) and 12 slaves—7 of whom, plus Henry, worked in agriculture. Elizabeth Conrad in the entry next door (actually the same house) has daughter Laura age under 15, and 16 slaves, 7 of whom work in agriculture. The store is not mentioned in the count. In 1850 Henry is still a farmer, now with 4 children [Bettie, plus Laura Eliza. born Aug 1843, Ithiel Townley born Apr 1845, William Augustus born Aug 1846, and a wife. (plus a 5th child that was on the Mortality Schedule as dying in Nov 1849 of measles at age 1 month—called Samuel—they used the name again later for their 6th child). Henry's Real Estate is valued at \$4000. and he owns 7 slaves. Elizabeth Conrad is still next door, now alone in her part of the house as Laura Conrad died in 1841 at the age of 14. But in 1851 everything changed.

Miss Emma Lehman (1841- 1922) was born in Bethania, graduated from Salem Academy in the class of 1857, and became a teacher there in 1864. She was a contemporary of Laura Lemly's as a student and as an Alumnae Assoc member, as well as being a neighbor in Salem. She wrote a description of Bethania years later. Note that she would have been 10 years old at the time of this story, and already in Salem in school, so her info was secondhand.

Miss Emma Lehman's diary contains this information about the Conrad home in Bethania:

" A large brick house and a large brick store owned by Jacob Conrad, and later lived in by his widow and her married daughter, Mrs. W.A. Lemly and family. The house was set on fire and burned to the ground by one of the negroes, the two large buildings and some outhouses, then the Lemleys moved to Salem and Mr. Stamber bought the place."

"The Tavern came next, built by George Hauser..... some years ago it was torn down."

The Salem Church Records 1851: April 16. In the afternoon two houses, namely those belonging to Sr. Conrad or the Lemlys, caught fire. Most of their belongings, it is true, could be saved. However, the houses—of 2 stories—burned to the ground. One was a log house covered with weatherboard; the other, a large fine frame house that had been repainted quite recently. How the fire started is unknown. It began in the old house, though no fire was lit in it any longer. It is thought that perhaps a cat caught fire at the bake oven and ran with a living ember into the old house and set it on fire. The belongings which had been saved were stored in the Ort (a tavern). The family, however, stayed at Dr. Jones'.



April 23: Elizabeth Conrad asks permission of the Conference of Elders to move to Salem. No objection is made. Then she tells them she wants to take her son-in-law Henry Lemly and his family into her house. That caused discussion because Henry was Presbyterian, but his wife and children were all members of the Bethania Community and



"knowing him as an honorable man, the Conference does not object to Sr Conrad's plan."

Elizabeth leases the Jacob Siewers house built in 1844 on lot 21., and Elizabeth and the Lemlys move in. Both of them brought their slaves with them, (about 15 people) and house them in a building on the lot as required by Salem Elders' ruling of 1847.

Lot 21 ran from Main St to Church St. beside Walnut St, so there was a bit more room in the yard than it looks like now. They used the Siewers cabinetmakers' shop (now empty) next to the house in the front yard. It was still there in 1891 for the Birds Eye map (done only 5 years after the Lemlys moved out) so we know what it looked like:

In 1856 the Village of Salem voted to abolish the lease system that had operated since the founding of the village: in which the Moravian church owned all the land and people could only lease a house, not own it, plus only approved members of the church could live there. Now people would be able to own a house in fee simple, and non-Moravians could buy them; plus the town meeting Minutes would now be written in English. Streets were added and named, including Belews Creek St where the Lemlys built a house after Henry died in 1886. Lots were measured off and valued, and on 23 Feb 1857 they were sold and deeded. Elizabeth was able to buy her house and lot, and in Sept 1858 she willed it to her daughter Amanda. She was very specific about "my house and lot in Salem" as that really was a new thing for the town.

So this is where our Laura lived from age 8 to age 43 years old, 1851 to 1886.

The censuses of 1860, 70 and 80 each show that 7-8 people lived in the house at the same time. Not always the same people—as the sons moved out, Amanda took in orphaned grandchildren. In 1870 and 80 there is an additional servant in the house: Emanuel Lemly (black, born 1808) who had been Elizabeth's slave until Henry bought him at her estate sale in 1859 for \$200. He had already been part of the household before names were listed in the census. He died in 1888, and had an obit in the Peoples Press "Old Uncle Man, the faithful colored servant of Mrs. H. A. Lemly of Salem, died 20 Jan 1888 at the ripe old age of 80 years." Laura would have known him for at least 32 years.

I consulted with Old Salem archeologist Martha Hartley about the slaves in general and which Lot Elizabeth bought, and got a lot of info on Emanuel from their Hidden Town project. He was the son of Budney and Phoebe, owned by the Wachovia Administration (the Moravian Church), who were founders of St. Phillip's congregation from their house in the Quarter in May 1822. The log church was started by them. They had both died by 1861 when the brick church was built. Emanuel was sent to Bethania by age 18, probably still owned by the Wachovia Admin and hired out. He married a woman named Silvey and had 8 children with her between 1827 and 1839 (and are the people listed on Henry Lemly and Elizabeth Conrad's assigned slave inheritances in 1839). When the families came to Salem, they became part of the genealogy database project done by Mel White for Old Salem in 2002, using the records of St. Phillips' Church. Emanuel and Silvey's son Ned is recorded as buying the first Lot sold in the Happy Hill development in 1872 for \$10.00. By emancipation in 1864 those 8 children had several different owners, but they knew who they were, and all took their father's chosen last name of Lemly. They are recorded in censuses, marriage licenses and deeds after 1866 using that name.

Henry becomes a Merchant (1860 census), and then an "assessor of revenue" (1870). The move



was a great benefit to all of them, as the slaves had their own church and freedom of movement in the village, Amanda had a social life, Henry had working peers and Laura had education—they even had a piano-- which she put to good use. The 4 boys went to the Moravian Boys School, and then on to professional careers, The Lemly's put Laura in school at Salem Female Academy as

a day student, starting Sept 1852, age 9. But the years Laura spent at the Academy were all she was allowed. She managed to stay 8 years, graduating at age 17 in the class of 1860.

The years that Laura was a student at Salem Academy were growth ones for the school: in 1854 the “New Building” was finished (now known as Main Hall), and became classrooms and more dorms for the over 200 girls who attended. There were also 50 town girls listed in the catalogue, including Laura and Bettie. Then in 1857 the Rev Maximilian E. Grunert became the principal. He is known to local genealogists with affection because he kept a “birthday book” and recorded a whole generation of Salem students (including some of my own Boyer connections) as well as their local families and the Salem citizens he interacted with. This included the whole Lemly family, and even their banker uncle Israel Lash.

Elizabeth Conrad dies in Sept 1858, and her brother Israel Lash is her executor. Israel had taken over his father's cigar factory, moved it to Salem in 1845 and in 1850 he had 2 clerks, 2 Germans working as cigar makers, plus 37 slaves working in farming. In addition, in 1847 he became cashier for the Bank of Cape Fear in Salem. He was described as sagacious and diligent, and had a reputation for integrity and sound judgement. He was actually the Lemly boys' ½ great uncle, as ½ brother to their grandmother, but they called him Uncle. He was about the same age as Henry Lemly. Israel will show up again in this story. Elizabeth's estate closed out worth over \$20,000. which is quite respectable in those days. However, it was divided between 3 daughters, and then Amanda's part was shared by 6 children, with the instruction that the money be paid with interest as annual allotments. This translated to about \$200. a year for each of Amanda's children, and explains where Laura got the \$100. she put toward paying on the 1879 deed for the St. Paul's church lot on the day in Feb that it was to be consecrated.

The 1860 census finally lists all of Henry and Amanda Lemly's children; Bettie, Laura, Ithiel, William, and now add Henry Rowan born Jan 1851, and Samuel Conrad born Mar 1853. Henry's Real Estate is valued \$2500. (Including the house on Lot 21, Main St) and personal property of \$25,000. (10 slaves). After emancipation 1864, his personal property in the 1870

census is just \$600. He bought a carriage and harness, plus a wagon and a milk cow from his mother-in-law's estate in 1859, so that should be part of it.

Laura's mother Amanda was described in her 1910 obit as providing "a home where free-hearted hospitality of the past generation was ever in evidence. Sons and daughters and grandchildren grew up in one big happy family; in wartime, likewise, the Confederate soldiers never failed to find an open door and spread table" She was also known for gathering with other ladies of the town to sew for the soldiers. She was a thoughtful neighbor, always found where there was sorrow or illness or need, and providing deeds of love as well as words of



sympathy. Amanda lived till age 94, continuing to house her relatives even after her husband died, because Banker son William was Henry's executor and he covered the housing costs for the whole family group, seemingly in exchange for taking ownership of all the property Henry left to heirs. Laura was 19 when the war started, and would have been helping her mother and learning these hospitatliy skills from her.

Two of Laura's brothers served in the Civil War: Ithiel turned 17 in 1862, and enlisted as a Private on 11 July. On 12 Nov 1863 he was transferred to the Co K 10th NC Artillerary where he served thru Feb 1865. He made his way home to Salem after that, not wounded or capatured. William turned 17 in 1863, and enlisted on 5 Mar 1864 at the Orange Co courthouse in VA. He joined the famous Salem 26th Infantry Regiment as a musician. He was captured on

4 Apr 1865 in VA and sent to prisoner of war camp at Point Lookout, Maryland. He survived a year there, being given the oath on 14 Jun 1866 before he was released to make his way back to Salem.

Israel George Lash [born Aug 1810,- died Apr 1878] was the youngest of Elizabeth Lash Conrad's half brothers, and her favorite. In 1866, in the midst of the financial crash occasioned by the Civil War, he was able to found the First National Bank of Salem, and served as its President until his death in 1878. When William got home from the war, Israel gave him his first job, as cashier at that bank. On NC's re-admission to the Union in 1868 he was elected to the 40th Congress and served until 1871 when poor health forced him to retire. But as Congressman he was allowed to appoint a candidate to the U.S, Military Academy at West Point, and he chose his nephew Henry Rowan Lemly. He also wrote a letter of recommendation for nephew Samuel



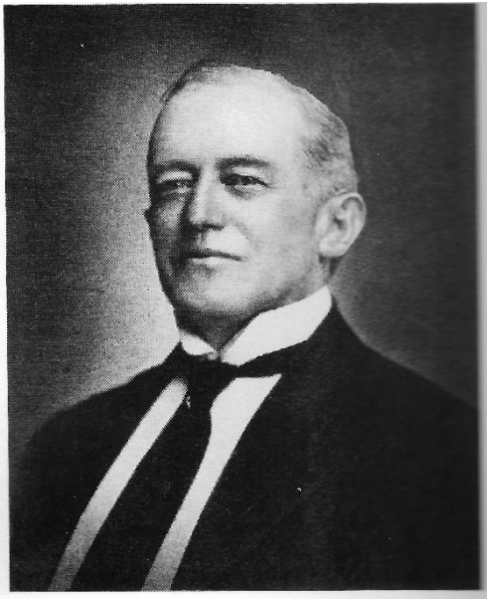
Conrad to assure his acceptance at the Naval Academy at Annapolis, so he was a direct benefit to all three of those boys' careers.

Israel George Lash lived in Salem, but when he died in Apr 1878 he was buried in the Bethania God's Acre with his relatives. He never married. He never made a will, so his Salem relatives did not inherit anything from him.

This is a surprise, as he was an intelligent, professional man with wealth and had been

executor of several wills in the past. However, most of his assets were tied up in loans to people, which meant his heirs would not have seen any

payment for years until the loans were paid, and had to keep up with interest owed, so the responsibility for that would not have been a benefit to heirs hoping for cash.



Henry and Amanda Lemly had 6 children, who inherited business brains and people skills, and succeeded in their life goals.

Ithiel Townley Lemly (born 1845 in Bethania—died 1920 in Ashe Co NC, buried in Todd) was named for Henry's brother who died young in 1844; he had been

named for Ithiel Town, the architect that Henry's father worked with building the Yadkin River Bridge in 1825.

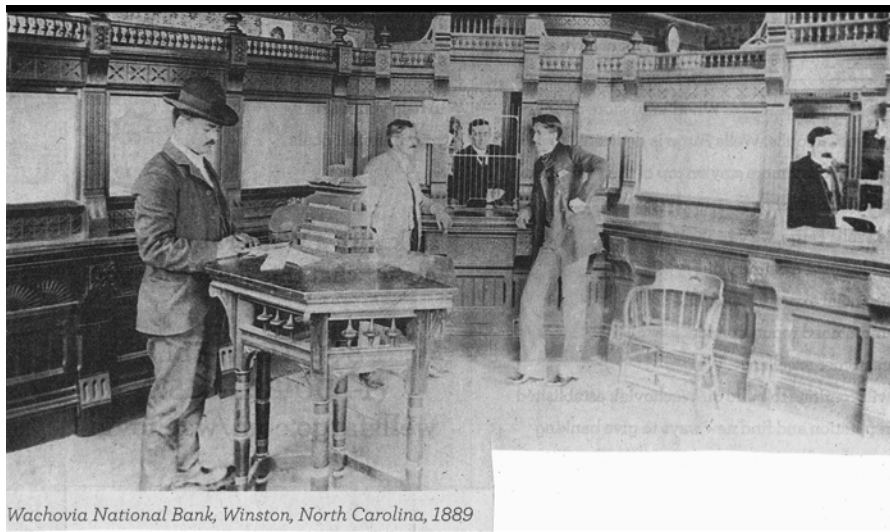
Ithiel was able to fulfill his father's dream of a medical career; after the war he went to Patrick Co VA and got an allopathic medical degree (that is scientific western medicine that required a 4- year study and a



license afterwards—as opposed to “homeopathic”) which is also what Dr. Beverly Jones had. Ithiel moved to Ashe Co NC, and practiced medicine there for 40 plus years. He had 2 wives and 10 children.

William Augustus Lemly (born 1846 in Bethania—died 1928 at Johns Hopkins Hosp in Baltimore, buried in Salem Moravian God’s Acre). He went to work as a bank cashier in 1866 and after his Uncle Israel Lash died in 1878 stayed on as it was reorganized as the National Bank of Winston. Later it became Wachovia Bank when he succeeded its President. He had 2 wives and several children who died very young: his obit mentions only 2 sons who were still alive in 1928. His first wife was Bertha Belo, sister of Agnes who married J. Cameron Buxton.

William was the executor of Henry (his father’s) will in 1886, but did not close probate on it until his mother died in 1910. In the meantime, he took over the estate assets and managed them as he thought best. He sold the Main St house back to the Salem church and moved the rest of the family to a new house on Belews Creek Rd and Church St, just around the corner from his house on Main and Cemetery where he had lived since he married in 1874. The new house had porches all round, and would have been more comfortable than the 50-year-old house they left.



Wachovia Bank lobby in 1889, James A. Gray (with mustache) is his cashier.

Henry Rowan Lemly (born 1851 in Bethania—died 1925 in Washington DC and buried in Arlington Nat’l Cem) was appointed to a free 4 year education at West Point in 1868 by his Uncle Israel Lash who was NC Congressman at that time. He graduated in 1872 in a class of 57, as 2nd Lieutenant of Cavalry and served in the frontier military (Sioux War.) Then in 1880 he



second time in 1920.

Samuel Conrad Lemly (born 1853 in Salem—died 1909 in Washington DC, buried in Arlington Nat'l Cem). Samuel joined the Navy and graduated from the US Naval Academy at Annapolis in the class of Dec 1872 at the age of 20.

Uncle Israel Lash may have recommended him for the Naval Academy even tho they didn't require nominations at the time, as he entered during the years Israel was in Congress. Samuel progressed thru the ranks Master in 1880 and Lieutenant in 1886. In 1892, while Captain, he was appointed Judge Advocate General by President Harrison and served in that capacity for 12 years until he retired in 1904. He was part of the Greely (polar exploration) Relief expedition of Sept 1884, and came to Salem on leave afterwards and gave a talk to the Salem Academy students on his experience, which was reported in the Academy newspaper. Of the 26 men who went out on the Lady Gray Bay in 1880, only 7 were rescued as the rest starved to death.

He was involved in trials and inquiries of the USS Jeanette, the USS Lady Gray Bay 1880--1883 artic exploration, and Admiral Schley trial in 1901.

was promoted to 1st Lieutenant of Artillery, and taught at the National Military School in Bogota, Columbia, for 3 years. He was Captain during the Spanish-American War, serving in Washington DC as aid-de-camp to Major General Henry. He retired in 1899, moved to NY and became a representative for American businesses in Europe and even Russia. He got a passport in 1905 and a visa in 1907 in St Petersburg that lists his wife and children by names and birth places. With the entry of the Americans in the World War in 1917 he was recalled to duty as Major for the Quartermaster-General in Washington DC, retiring a





far right: Samuel C. Lemly

Lemly age 31

Caption: USN 900732: Greely Relief Expedition, May-August 1884. Officers of the steamer, USS Thetis, Commanding Officer, Commander Winfeld Scott Schley, is fourth from the left. NHHC Photograph Collection.

Laura Eliza Lemly [born 1843 in Bethania—died 1901 in Salem, buried in Salem (public) Cem]. In addition to the organization, multi-tasking, business brain and people skills that all the Lemlys inherited, Laura had

another valued skill: she was a fundraiser of impressive ability because people actually liked her.

She never held a paying job, always lived with her parents, with her expenses (clothes, travel, board) being paid by her father and after 1886, by her brother William. She had a lot of freedom of movement, but I doubt her Moravian father and brother actually gave her money to donate to a different denomination. So the yearly interest payment on her grandmother's estate is the only money I have found that was actually hers, and she could have given to St. Paul's.

She seemed to be able to be a social butterfly at the same time as being seen as mature and dependable: (Western Sentinel newspaper social column quotes)

15 May 1879 Confederate Memorial Day celebrations: Miss Laura Lemly decorates soldiers' graves with flowers, and then leads the procession of white clad girls to the cemetery for the program. (age 36)

5 Aug 1886 The Pleasure Club of Salem held a Sociable at the Old Salem Hotel—chaperones are 5 married ladies and Miss Laura Lemly (age 43).

Laura Knew a lot of people, and really paid attention to them:

5 Apr 1894 the Ladies' Club holds an evening party at the Phoenix Hotel, winner of guessing game of identifying people by their baby pictures is Miss Laura Lemly. (age 51). She matched up 43 of the 45 pictures.

She kept in touch with people she knew:

1 Dec 1881 Miss Laura Lemly is visiting friends and relatives in Jackson Mississippi.

15 Jun 1882 Miss Mollie Murphy of Salisbury is visiting Miss Laura Lemly.

1883 Miss Laura Lemly is visiting in Yadkin Co and Farmington.

20 Mar 1884 Mrs. Gales of Raleigh is guest of Miss Laura Lemly.

29 Dec 1893 Miss Katherine Evans of the National Conservatory of Music in NY is visiting Miss Laura Lemly. She had taught at the Salem Academy for 3 years.

Laura attended Salem Academy Reunions every summer, and in June 1886 the Academy newspaper reports that an Alumnae Assoc has been formed, with 10 ladies in the core group— Laura, class of 1860 is one. Agnes Belo Buxton, class of 1870 is another. Laura continues on the Board in one officer position or another until her death in 1901. Yearly newspaper reports confirm which. The last project worked on during her lifetime is the building of Memorial Hall for music classrooms and auditorium. 5 Dec 1901 Salem Academy celebrates its centennial (established 1802) and the Academy Centennial Executive Comm gave dinner for 125 guests. Lists of plans for the to-be Memorial Hall; Officers listed including “Miss Laura Lemly (deceased)”.

She also supported the new Twin City Hospital:

24 Oct 1895 List of donations in kind to the new Twin City Hospital : Laura Lemly & her mother: 1 bucket of sugar. Mrs. William Lemly: pkg coffee & 2 pkgs rolled oats. Other familiar names include Mrs. Boggs, Mrs. J.C. Buxton, Rev Mr. George, Mrs. Frank Miller, 2 full newspaper columns of names, including some from Philadelphia and Bethlehem PA. This is the 2nd hospital, opened in 1895 after the 1887 rented house became too small.

Laura loved her church, and was willing to put herself out to make sure her knowledge of events and policy were first hand: 31 May 1883 Miss Laura Lemly of Winston attended the Episcopal Convention in Charlotte last week.

Laura worked with the St. Paul's Ladies' Aid Society to hold public events to raise money for the church expenses: they came up with creative parties every year.

Jan 1878 Ladies Aid holds concert at Tice Hall to benefit the Episcopal church; a large crowd attended and much money collected.

May 1886 Ladies of St Paul's hold a Festival and Bazaar in Bitting Hall. An enjoyable evening and good cooks promised to those who will aid the Ladies in their church.

Feb 1889 Ladies of St. Paul's will give an oyster supper this evening

Nov 1890 Ladies Aid Auxiliary is formally organized.

May 1891 The Ladies Aid Soc of the Episcopal church holds a Festival & supper at the Orinoco Warehouse, and raised \$126.

Sept 1893 The Ladies of St. Paul's hold an evening party with very gratifying receipts. Prizes were given for a baby contest and Samuel Lemly (from DC) is recorded as attending

Laura is appointed the Treasurer of the Debt Fund (collecting pledges) sometime before Minutes are recorded in the books we have, possibly ever since Vestry is formed in 1879.

Sept 1896 Vestry minutes: “many pledges are not being paid; church running out of money and bills not paid.” Vestry decides to extend the pledge payment deadline by 12 mos. Secretary writes to Miss Lemly as Treas of debt fund and collector of pledges, notifying her of this and

requesting that she send no more notices. Dec 1896 Laura resigns by letter, and next ladies asked to take the position decline.

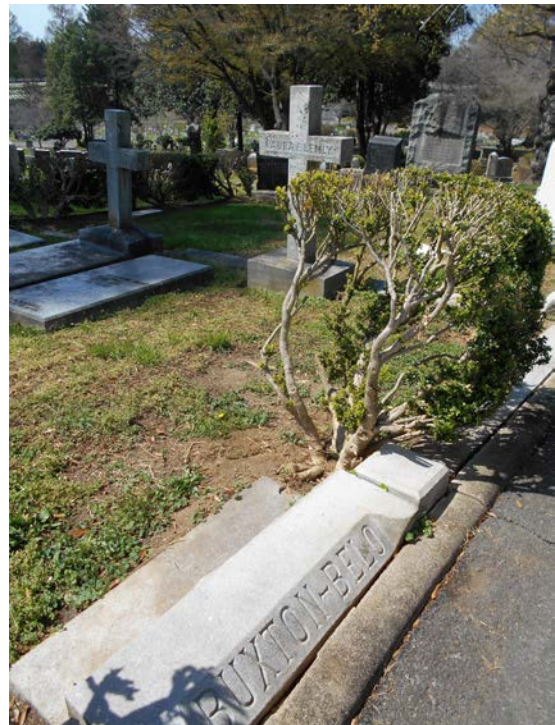
Dec 1898 Vestry member Walter R Leak is asked “to take list of unpaid pledges and do the best he can with them.”

May 1899 Walter Leak, who had been commissioned to collect pledges on Rectory debt—reports that he has collected nothing. [If times were so hard that Laura couldn’t collect the promised money, nobody else was able to either.]

This next part is hard to write. In 1900 home ovens were metal, uninsulated fire boxes that had to be tended with small tinder constantly to maintain a specific heat. And ladies’ fashions were floor length, with ruffles and wide sleeves, made of cotton muslin and gauze, with a profile at least 18 ins away from the wearer’s legs. Highly flammable. The Mortality Schedule in the censuses list 3-4 people each year who die from being burned—mostly women. Professional cooks wore jumper like tightly woven linen aprons to hold the wearer’s skirts close to the body and not let them flap. So here is Laura, baking a cake to send to a Bake Sale at church, and wearing her wrap house dress and her hair still down. She is planning to dress for outdoors, and take the train to Greensboro for a visit as soon as she is finished, and she is alone in the house. The family has had a live -in cook and housekeeper for the past 30 years, and her kitchen skills are probably not up to date. At 11 am on Sept 30th, 1901, she catches her clothes on fire, and within seconds she is engulfed. Someone wraps her in a blanket, and the Doctor comes, but all her clothes and hair are burned off and she has 3rd degree burns over her whole body. This is beyond medical skill of the time, and the Doctor gives her morphine until she is unconscious. It takes her till 4 pm to die. She was 58 years old.

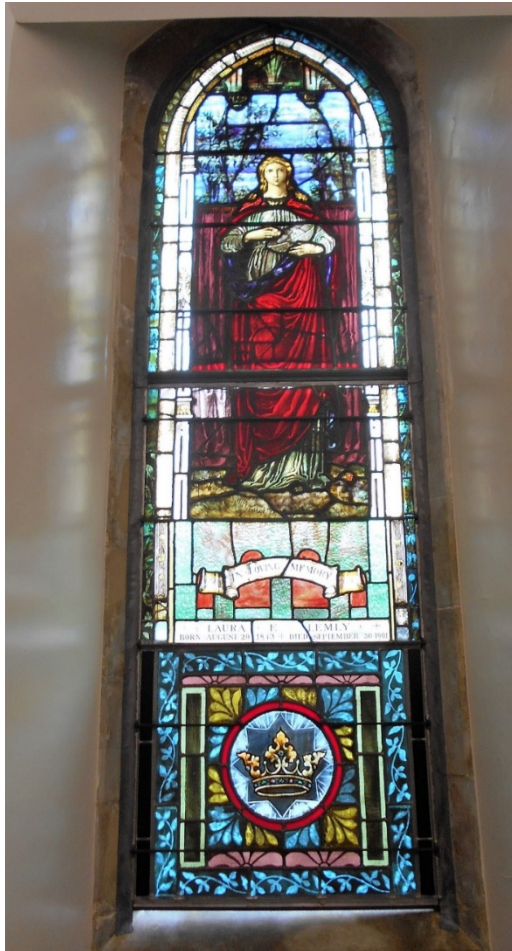


Her death is a great loss to the church, but also, she would not have been able to have a wake or viewing in that condition and needs to be buried as soon as possible. She does not



have a will or a grave plot prepared.

Oct 1, 1901 a called Vestry meeting was held about Laura's sudden death. 8 vestrymen attend; J.C. Buxton is not there. They create the Resolution to be sent to the Churchman – who doesn't



print it. "Miss Laura Lemly contributed to the parish and work of St. Paul's for more than 20 years. She was one of the founders of the parish. Her thoughtfulness and love, loyalty and devotion to duty & church work forever spurred us on to renewed efforts; her means have always been at our command and indeed her endeavors to aid our dear church consummated in her death. Her exalted Christian character and conscience . . . consistent living. . . her humility, her kindness and charity. . .

The Ladies Aid also meets, and more practically, secures a grave plot for Laura as she was buried that same day. Laura is buried in the Buxton-Belo family 12 space plot in Salem Cem the Buxton family bought when their small son died in 1892. Laura's brother William was married to Agnes Belo Buxton's sister from 1874 to 1883, and Agnes and Laura were in the Salem Alumnae Assoc together, and had been neighbors since Agnes was born; in addition to both being in the Ladies Aid Soc. She could not have refused to help Laura even if her husband didn't want to. The rest of Laura's family were all Moravians, and are buried in Gods Acre. Laura was no longer eligible to be buried there as an

Episcopalian.

1 Oct 1901 The Ladies Auxiliary have ordered a special memorial window in her honor to be installed next to the pew row she sat in, and the Vestry passed resolution in acknowledgement of her help and caring: that pew to be draped with fabric for a month so no one can use it.

3 April 1903 the Winston-Salem Journal reported that the Ladies Aid Society commissioned and had installed in the church, a beautiful memorial window, as a token of the love and high esteem in which Miss Laura Lemley was held by them. This window will be right by her seat, which was never vacant when she was well. The window represents a benevolent woman bestowing gifts. The memorial window donated by J.C Buxton in honor of his little son Jarvis in 1892 is to be removed to make place for Laura's window, and it will be held by the Buxton's at home until it can be re-installed in the new church.

[This means the Buxton's held that window for 7 years until the new church was consecrated in 1910. The issue of the window may be explained by the position of the church building on its lot—the altar faced South, and the Western wall was right on the property line. Houses were built next to that property line after the church was opened in 1879, and probably blocked the light on that side. The only window spaces that would allow stained glass to sparkle were on the East side, and there may have only been one, as the entrance lobby covered ½ of that side.]

