

## **Remembering Lyle Moore Moffett November 10, 1999**

The question has arisen in some quarters as to who was the man for whom the Moffett Fund was named.

The opportunity to answer this question may have been referred to me because I happen to be a nephew of the man in question. It is more likely, however, that it was referred to me because of the time constraint of ten minutes. Somebody knew that it was unlikely that this could be done by a preacher within that time restriction.

Lyle Moore Moffett was born in 1882 on the family farm eight miles southwest of Staunton at Christians Creek. He, along with his four brothers and two sisters, were children of a Confederate Civil War veteran. That post war era was not an easy time for people living in the Shenandoah Valley.

Lyle went to college at V.P.I. (today's Virginia Tech), and received degrees from Washington and Lee University in Lexington and from Union Theological Seminary in Richmond.

Upon graduation from seminary, he went to a brief pastorate at Stony Run and Beulah Presbyterian churches in Highland County. He served there in 1908 and 1909 and was ordained to the ministry by Lexington Presbytery in 1909. As far as I know he was never a member of any other presbytery.

Lyle then went to the foreign mission field in 1910, serving in China for six years. He developed some health problems there and returned to the United States in 1916. After a few months of recuperation, he went back to Highland County where he was a pastor to four churches. Those were McDowell, Headwaters, Bethlehem, and Clover Creek.

He lived at the manse adjacent to the McDowell church as a bachelor for twenty-two years until he married Edna Campbell from Churchville in 1938, when he was fifty-six years old and she was forty-two years old.

In the summer of 1943, I spent two weeks at McDowell with Edna and Lyle. One of the things that I remember was that Lyle conducted a Bible school daily for one of those weeks at Palo Alto. For those of you who have never heard of Palo Alto, Virginia, it is located about ten miles north of Headwaters near the West Virginia line going toward Sugar Grove. The thing which I remember most vividly was that Lyle always took the short-cut from McDowell to Headwaters across the Bull Pasture Mountain. He always took the inside of the curves no matter whether they were right or left. I remember that on left hand curves I could look out the right hand window and see the center line marker to my right. At the time I was just learning to drive and had some concerns about Lyle driving on the left side of the center line, but I kept my reservations to myself.

Lyle Moffett grew up in this church and went to the mission field from this church. He served as moderator of Lexington Presbytery right here at his home church of Tinkling Spring on April 19, 1927 and again at the New Providence Church near Brownsburg on April 23, 1946.

Lyle had a stroke in 1947 and had to give up his ministry. He was in his thirty-first year of serving those four churches in Highland County. For many years the four churches combined paid Lyle fifty dollars per month and there was no travel allowance. Even from that he managed to save. He invested in Planters Bank and Trust Company of Staunton (today's Stellar One), the E.I. DuPont Company, and General Motors Corporation.

Lyle died in 1962 and the trustee of his estate took care of his widow for the next twenty-seven years and eight months until her death at Sunnyside in 1989. They are both buried here at Tinkling Spring as are his father and grandfather. Upon Edna's death, after all expenses and small bequests were paid, the residue of the estate was to be divided one-half to Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church U.S. and one-half to the Central Treasurer of Lexington Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church U.S. That residue of the estate amounted to over five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000).

Lyle Moffett's mission was evangelism. His passion was for the youth in the church and for the unchurched of all ages. He dearly loved the extremely rural area which he served and the wonderfully compassionate people who lived there. I think he had the conviction that the mission field right here in western Virginia was just as important as anywhere in the world and that we all need to be nurtured in our faith.

Fortunately, Lyle Moffett had the wisdom not to attach restrictions to his gift to this Presbytery. It is my hope and prayer that those responsible for disbursing or using funds from his gift will have the wisdom to do so for projects that will continue the work which was so dear to the heart of the donor.

I thank you for the opportunity to address this court.

Henry H. Moffett, Jr.  
Elder Emeritus  
Tinkling Spring Church