

He and his wife, Elizabeth, joined the Gapway Baptist Church which was organized in 1875 near Sparling Station, southeast of Lakeland at the present Gapway Cemetery site. In 1887 he was elected Church clerk and on several occasions served as moderator of Church conferences (business sessions). The next year, January 1888 he was elected unanimously by the Church as a deacon. About three years later the good relations between him and the membership deteriorated as disclosed in the Church minutes and described in the Church history "As a storm developed -- as so often happens in Churches. Mr. John L. McClelland, who had served as clerk, brought some accusation against the pastor (Rev. R. T. Caddin)." The specific nature of the accusation was not recorded in the minutes, except this general reference, "Bro. Caddin stated that Bro. John McClelland and Brother Shade Reynolds said he had not preached the gospel this year (1890)." It appears in the minutes after several "heated" Church conferences the differences between the parties was not resolved as minutes on January 1891 read: "Fellowship was withdrawn from Bro. J. L. McClelland because he brought false accusation against the pastor and failed to prove it." Minutes continue, "Sister (Elizabeth) McClelland called for her letter which was granted." Also at this time, "Bro. Caddin resigned the pastoral care of the Church." The Church records do not show how time "healed" the feelings or resolved the differences, but the McClellands rejoined the Church prior to 1895, and he again resumed a leadership role as a clerk and a deacon. He was proud of the fact that later, on 16 Nov. 1907 his son, Steven W. McClelland, was ordained a minister by this Church. Rev. McClelland was pastor of this Church three times, 1909-10, 1928-29 and 1934-43 and became a widely known circuit-rider evangelist in both Polk and Hillsborough Counties.

The following statements from his obituary describe, the compiler believes fairly accurately, the kind of pioneer citizen John Lane McClelland was: "He was keenly interested in the progress of his community and was president of the Good Roads Association formed ten years ago (1912) to secure good roads for triangle between Lakeland, Mulberry and Bartow."

"His keen intelligence and native oratorical ability were sources of delight to his friends while his straightforwardness and upright character won sincere admiration and affection of all who knew him."

The compiler would like to relate this story which was told about John. It was his practice while driving his horse and buggy through the countryside, on seeing a friend to stand up and wave at him or her. Afterwards while learning to drive a Model T Ford car, he forgot and did the same thing again and ran into the road ditch -- ending his car driving.

In the twilight years of his life he made a will, 8 Oct. 1918, leaving all his property to his five sons except a bedstead, feather bed, two pillows and two sheets which he bequeathed to his foster daughter, Mittie (McClelland) English. He named his oldest son, Steven, as executor of the estate.

John Lane McClelland died on 12 July 1922 and was buried beside his first wife, Elizabeth, in the Gapway Cemetery.

REFERENCES: Marriage licenses, Clerk of Court, Polk County; death cert., Dept. of HRS, Jacksonville, Fl.; Hills. Co. marriages; Soldiers Pension Claim (1090) #5234, Fla. Archives, Tallahassee, Fl.; Soldiers of Florida, 1903, page 314-5; land patent, USA, #11378, Registrar Land Office, Gainesville, Fl., 15 July 1891, recorded Vol 20, p. 406, Clerk