

Hall County history

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Descendants of Mary Foster live in Hall

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The biography of Mary Elizabeth Fields Foster was compiled and written by her son, Edmund L. Foster, in 1923. The biographical sketch is the story of the life of a very courageous woman and gives an insight in the way of life during the Civil War. Grandchildren and great-grandchildren of "Bettie" Foster are present-day residents of Hall County.

"Mary Elizabeth, or Bettie, was the daughter of Jesse and Catherin Fields. She was born enroute from Pickens County, S.C., to Union County, Ga., where her parents were emigrating to a new homeplace. It is unknown as to the actual state or county as would be her

birthplace, but she was born the six of February, 1837, and the family arrived in Union County soon after her birth and located in the little town of Blairsville.

The Fields family became residents of Union County and Blairsville four years after the county was created and their home was just a stone's throw from the Courthouse. Jesse Fields helped cut the logs and aided in the construction of the Courthouse which building later burned and today is replaced with a \$30,000 brick building.

"Mary Elizabeth's father soon rented a small farm near town and the family moved from town. Bettie Fields grew up like most other poor girls of that day and time with little education since her father was unable to pay for the schooling.

It was before the day of free schools. However, by diligent study at home in her leisure time, when not helping in the fields, she learned to read and write which proved a source of great pleasure to her throughout her life.

"When Bettie was 17 years old she married George Smith, the 14 of June, 1855. Bettie and George became parents of four children, three boys and one girl. The daughter and one son died in infancy. The other two sons were: Louis W. Smith, born 1858, and Joseph W. Smith, born 1860, both born in Union County. The family moved to Tennessee about the time there was much agitation in the country about the Civil War discussion.

"George Fields, although a southerner, believed that the South would be better off to remain in the Union, and left his

wife and children to join the Union army. He never returned to his home and evidently was killed in the war; however, Bettie lived in hopes of his return and fought poverty and hunger to keep the family together.

Her two brothers, John and Thomas Fields, were confederate soldiers; therefore, there was the added burden of knowing that her loved ones were fighting against one another. Too, she was in a strange place and without kindred or friends upon whom she could rely for help or comfort. Several neighbors, after they noticed her distress of poverty and her faithful devotion, did eventually lend assistance and some of the hardships were lifted.

"In 1901, 37 years after the related incidents, five sons of Bettie visited the old homeplace

in Tennessee. The little log house was still intact; however, it was in ill repair.

"After the Civil War was over Bettie became acquainted with Charles Edmund Foster, a dashing young soldier who had served as a non-commissioned officer in the Union Army and in 1866, they were married.

"The first son of this marriage was Ulysses Grant Foster, born 28 February, 1867. The family moved soon thereafter to Union County, where Edmund Foster engaged in farming. Charles Edmund Foster was elected to the office of clerk of the superior court which office he held at intervals until his death in 1887. Two other sons were born to the couple: William Robert Foster,

Oct. 11, 1869, and Edmund Lee Foster, Oct. 26, 1873. In 1877 the first daughter, Eva Eldorado Foster, was born and two years later the last child, Fleta Jane Foster, was born.

"In 1884 the husband and oldest son made a trip to Texas with the expectation of locating there, but after six months stay returned to Georgia. Charles Edmund Foster died the 16 of October 1887 leaving Bettie Fields Smith Foster with four younger children to rear. In almost destitute circumstances she again faced what seemed almost an impossible task, especially at her age and since women in that day did not engage in outside employment.

"The later years of Bettie were made easier since in 1880

she was allowed a United States Pension as the Widow of Charles E. Foster. She bought a small house on the banks of the Notla River in Union County, 2½ miles south of Blairsville and lived there until her death the 6 of May, 1908. Bettie Fields Foster died at the age of 72 years and was buried in the Harmony Grove Church Cemetery alongside her husband and near her father and other kindred. She knew the agonies and hardships of war; she was twice widowed; she lost two children in death; she became both father and mother to her children; yet, her faith in the Lord remained strong."

As written by her son, Edmund L. Foster: "Blessed are they that die in the Lord."