

George Foster Biography

George Foster is believed to have been born in Ashe County, North Carolina, on November 30, 1804. No middle name has been established, but some sources use “Adam.” His parents are unknown, but some sources suggest “James” and “Eve Lineberry”. Family lore has his mother’s given name as “Sarah.”

Ashe County was formed from Wilkes County in 1799. Watauga County (1849, and also from parts of Caldwell, Wilkes and Yancy Counties) and Allegheny County (1859) appear to have been formed from Ashe County. Research is hampered by the facts that the Ashe County Courthouse burned in 1865 and the Watauga County Courthouse burned in 1873.

By DNA analysis and contacts with many “cousins” through “<http://FosterDNA.org>”, we believe, but have not confirmed, that George was a descendent of **James Foster**, the first immigrant for this Foster chain, who came to the Colonies by the good ship America in 1635. We need to span the gap from 1635 to 1804 and suspect we should be looking in the Charlottesville, Virginia, area.¹

We find no Fosters indexed in the 1800, 1810 or 1820 U.S. Censuses for Ashe County, North Carolina, possibly indicating that George may not have been born in Ashe County. (See endnote ¹.) If not, then we might look to nearby Virginia or Tennessee for his parentage.

The 1830 U.S. Census shows George, at about 26, to have been living alone in (the Valle Crucis District of) Ashe County, North Carolina. His nearest neighbors were Nancy Johnson, Joseph Mast, Joel Mast, (George Foster), Jane Calloway, Benjamin Moody and John Mast. The Masts, and that other neighbors included the Shulls, indicate the Valle Crucis area. Mast General Store is still there and operating since about 1875. I purchased a history of Valle Crucis² at the Mast General Store in 2007 but it contains no mention of any Fosters or Walkers.

¹ Excellent Foster web sites are: by Dr. Billy Glen Foster, “www.drbgfoster.com”; by Gary Lee Foster, “fosterfamily.surnames.com/foster.htm”; and by Terry Foster, “<http://www.electricfoster.info>.” If those sites do not work then Google the names or “Foster Genealogy.” This writer is a 37/37 DNA marker match to Gary Lee Foster and we continue to attempt to find our most recent common ancestor. **Anyone with corrections or additional information is urged to contact the undersigned at JerryLFoster@HotMail.com!**

² I. Harding Hughes, Jr., *Valle Crucis, A History of an Uncommon Place*, distributed by Mast General Store (1995). See also the pictorial history by Yates and Bake, *Valle Crucis* (1997).

The copy we have of the 1840 U.S. Census for North Carolina is difficult to read but appears to show George, at 36, to have been living alone. His nearest neighbors appear to have been Stephen Milrod, Mose Fox, Reuben Lay, (George Foster), Frances Dosset, John Bradford and Elisha Self. No Masts, Shulls or similar Valle Crucis names appear on the page we have.

George married **Mary Elizabeth “Polly” Walker** (born July 10, 1821, place unknown, parents unknown) in Ashe County, North Carolina, on August 4, 1842. Witnesses were Golston Davis and G.M. Bingham. I did not find any Walkers indexed in the 1800, 1810, 1820 or 1830 censuses for Ashe County. (See endnote ².)

The 1850 U.S. Census dated October 3, 1850, is the first to show names of each family member and shows George (reported age 44, not 45 or 46) to have been living with Mary (age 28), **William Lowery Foster** (age 7, born May 20, 1843), **Mary S. Foster**³ (age 3, born October 29, 1846) and **George Thomas “Tom” Foster** (1 year, thus born about 1849) in “Watauga, Watauga, North Carolina.” His nearest neighbors were Mary Donner, D.C. McCanless and Canada Shull. At that time he owned land worth \$300.00.

The 1860 U.S. Census shows George to have been living with Polly, William, Mary, Tom and **Sarah Elizabeth Foster** (born June 10, 1851) in Valle Crucis, North Carolina. He no longer owned land but then owned \$500.00 in personal property.

While some family members believed that George had fought for the Confederacy, I have been unable to confirm that and now doubt that he served. At 56 with minor children, he probably stayed home.

George’s son, William Lowery, enlisted for the Civil War in Company E, 37th Infantry, North Carolina Infantry, on April 12, 1862. He became a sergeant but was demoted to private after being court martialed for insubordination. He fought at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg and was wounded in the right shoulder at Petersburg. He was with Lee at Appomattox when they surrendered on April 9, 1865. He did pledge allegiance to the United States Government. He was immediately paroled without going to prison.⁴ After the war William married **Mary Elizabeth “Molly” Justice** (born May 20, 1846) at Lenoir, Caldwell

³ Could Mary’s middle name have been “Shull?” Later, Bennett Payne and Mary had one son whose given middle name was “Shull.” I don’t see any family connection but the Shulls and Masts were and are prominent families and probably close friends to George and Polly in Valle Crucis.

⁴ This was by William’s and Molly’s accounts in seeking pensions. Other documentation fails to show him as a prisoner or parolee at Appomattox.

County, North Carolina, on September 12, 1866 (Marriage Book 2, Page 126). A separate biography has been prepared for William and Molly.

George's future son-in-law, **Thomas Newton Justice**, enlisted in Company I, 26th Regiment, North Carolina Infantry, on November 30, 1861. Under the command of Pettigrew at Gettysburg, he was a part of Pickett's charge and his Company actually outdistanced Pickett's toward the wall. Thomas was taken prisoner shortly before Appomattox and was sent to Harts Island, New York. Despite deplorable conditions, he refused to secure his release by pledging allegiance to the United States of America, and remained a prisoner until June 20, 1865. After the War he married Sarah at Lenoir, Caldwell County, North Carolina, on October 25, 1866 (Marriage Book 3, Page 173). They stayed in North Carolina a little longer than George, William, Bennett Payne and families as at least their three oldest children were born there.

George's future son-in-law, **Thomas Benton "Bennett" Payne**, also fought in the War, enlisting in Company A, 22nd Regiment, North Carolina Infantry, on April 30, 1861. Bennett was also at Gettysburg. He was taken prisoner at Appomattox on April 2, 1865, and taken to Harts Island. He was paroled on June 20, 1865, after pledging allegiance. He married Mary S. Foster at Lawrenceburg, Anderson County, Kentucky, on February 26, 1867. This may indicate that the extended families did not come directly to Casey County from North Carolina; i.e., Casey County may not have been their original destination and they may have still been looking for a place to settle.⁵

At the end of the war, the Fosters, the Justices (including parents **Elijah Justice**, born 1808, and **Mary Catherine Watson Justice**, born about 1803-1806⁶ and their minor children) and Bennett Payne pulled up roots in North Carolina and moved to "Tennessee Ridge," Casey County, Kentucky, where George and Polly, William and Mary, Bennett and Mary, and Tom Foster and **Clemenza Ann Combs** stayed until their deaths.

The Elijah "Jestus" family (Elijah, 67; Catherine, 64; and Elvira, 28), the Thomas Justice family (Thomas, 26; Sarah, 23; Sarah B., 4; William, 5m), and the William

⁵ Interestingly, by DNA we are "close" cousins to Gary Lee Foster whose family migrated from Virginia to Texas through Pulaski County, Kentucky, in the 1830's or 1840's. I have looked for a connection to explain why our ancestors came to Casey County. A few Kentuckians may have served in the North Carolina regiments during the war and lied about how great it is here.

⁶ We originally believed that she had been born in the Indian Lands of North Carolina and was presumably part Indian and probably Cherokee, but we have been corrected on this by Pat Klusman whose DNA tests show no American Indian traits but suggest that we have a Scandanavian origin.

Lowery Foster family (William, 27; Mary, 24; George, 2; Robert J., 3m) first stopped in the Big South Rolling Fork area of Casey County, according to the 1870 census.

Clemenza Ann Combs was born June 13, 1851, in Fentress County, Tennessee. She and George Thomas Foster were married in Casey County, Kentucky, on November 16, 1869. In the 1870 census they were living on Tennessee Ridge next to her parents. In the 1880 census they were living on Tennessee Ridge next to George and Polly. (After the death of Clemenza's mother, it appears that her father, who may have been married several times, married Elvira Justice.)

The 1870 census taken on July 9, 1870, showed George (67) and Polly (50) living in Lee Precinct of Casey County, Kentucky, with an eleven year old boy named **Robert Foster** in their household. Endnote 1, *supra*

The 1880 Census shows George (76, not 66) and Polly (58) living with an eight year old boy named Enoch Green, designated as their "granson," and an unrelated woman named Jane Mason (39) in their household.

I do not see how Enoch Green could have been a grandson unless he is the illegitimate son of either William Lowery or George Thomas; we have not been able to identify any further reference to him. The 1850 Census for Watauga County, North Carolina, shows an inordinate number of Greens; it is not inconceivable that Enoch could have had an illegitimate child or grandchild through a Green in North Carolina.

Mary Elizabeth "Polly" Walker Foster died on April 7, 1886, at the young age of 64. She is buried in the Rainey Cemetery on Tennessee Ridge in Casey County, Kentucky.

There is no 1890 Census to show where or how George lived after Polly's death, and we sorely miss this census. Nor does George appear in the Casey County 1890 Census of Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Widows, etc., further indicating that he probably did not serve in the Civil War.

We have now transcribed the 1890 Casey County Tax Rolls and this George Foster does not appear even though, as we presently understand it, every male over twenty-one should have been listed to pay a poll tax; the two George Fosters who do appear are: George Foster, Jr., probably George Thomas "Tom" Foster; and George W. Foster, probably Tom's son who would have been only 17 in 1890.

The 1890 Casey County Tax Rolls also list a landowner by the name of Mary J. Mason, and an actual resident (near Salina Mason) named Jane Mason. The household of

Mary J. Mason shows one male over twenty-one years of age, and four (nine?) children between six and twenty.

In 1890 there were five taxpayers surnamed Green (Thomas S.; Ann E.; David; Milton; Walter G.), but no Enoch.

George Foster died on March 12, 1898, at age 94. He is buried in the Rainey Cemetery. His stone is broken and this descendant intends to replace it and Polly's as soon as possible.

After drawing a Confederate war and widows' pension from the Commonwealth of Kentucky beginning in 1912, William Lowery Foster died on July 13, 1927, and Mary Elizabeth "Molly" Justice Foster died on April 23, 1932. They are buried in the Rainey Cemetery.⁷

Thomas Benton "Bennett" Payne died on November 30, 1922, and Mary S. Foster Payne died on February 25, 1925. They are buried in Rainey Cemetery.

Clemenza Ann Combs Foster died March 17, 1914, in Casey County, Kentucky, and is buried in the Fisher (Combs) Cemetery on or near Tennessee Ridge. We do not have a death date or cemetery for George Thomas "Tom" Foster. It is very likely that Tom is also in the Combs Cemetery in an unmarked grave.

Thomas Newton Justice and Sarah moved to the Northern Kentucky area (Dayton, Campbell County, Kentucky, near Cincinnati) where Thomas died on September 7, 1924, and Sarah died on December 20, 1929. They were both brought back to Casey County for burial in Salem Cemetery near Tennessee Ridge, although no marker for Sarah now exists near the crude marker for "Tom Justice."

Respectfully submitted this March 5, 2015.⁸

Jerry L. Foster

⁷ See their separate biography filed with the Casey County Public Library.

⁸ This biography will be filed with the Casey County Public Library, 238 Middleburg Street, Liberty, Kentucky 42539 {Office [1](606) 787-9381; Facsimile [1](606) 787-7720} for their genealogy section which already contains other documentation regarding the Foster family, including the pension applications referred to herein. This and related material will also be offered to the Ashe, Caldwell and Watauga Counties Public Libraries in North Carolina.

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1. Endnote regarding other Fosters in Ashe/Watauga County: This material needs to be checked against “original” copies of the censuses because the Internet search engines appear to be unreliable in identifying all Fosters in a given area.

Robert Foster: An eleven year old white boy named “Robert Foster” appears with George and Polly in the 1870 Census in Casey County, Kentucky, but Robert does not appear with them either before or thereafter. This may become important in identifying George.

A twenty-one year old Robert appears as a son in the household of “Levi Foster” and “Annie Foster” back in Valle Crucis, North Carolina, in the 1880 Census. This may indicate that Levi is George’s brother, or other close kin, and furnish a lead to their parents. Levi was born in about 1822 when George was 18, or less, so Levi could even be George’s child, and Robert therefore his grandchild, but this is felt to be unlikely.

In the 1850 census we find a “Levi F. Foster” (28) living with an “Annie Hughes” (30) and a plethora of Hughes children (Lucinda, 14; Anna, 4; Joseph, 3; Newton or Huston, 1), in Watauga, Watauga, North Carolina, and only about twelve houses away from George and Polly. We cannot locate Levi and Annie in any other censuses (i.e., except 1850, **1860?** and 1880). A Levi Foster was a soldier in Company A, 2nd North Carolina Infantry, and Company B, 1st North Carolina Infantry, but it is not yet possible to say it is the same person.

There was no 1890 Census and Robert B. Foster (40, born October 1859) next appears (*assuming it to be the same person*) in the 1900 Census in Crook County, Oregon, with wife Laura (39), and children Ada F. (18), Anna L. (17), Mary M. (15), Roy N. (13), Linnie W. (11) and Irvin M. (6).

Robert is not located in the 1910 Census (when he may have been in Canada) but in 1920 he is listed as Robert Foster (60) in the same area of Oregon with wife Laura (59). In 1930 he is listed as Robert B. Foster (70) in Marion County, Oregon, living with wife Laura Foster (69) and son Nathan R. Foster (38), divorced. All three listed their birthplaces and the birthplaces of their parents as North Carolina.

In the 1830 census we find a household for Benjamin Foster (30-40) with a wife (30-40), one male under 5, one male 5-10, one male 10-15, and one female 5-10, in Ashe County, North Carolina.

In the 1830 census we also find a Samuel Foster (20-30) as head of household with one male (10-15), one male (15-20), one female (10-15), one female (15-20), and one female (20-30) in Ashe County, North Carolina. This family unit is unusual so some or all could be siblings.

In the 1840 census we find a "William Foster" (30-40) heading a household with a woman (20-30) and a male child under 5. This is indexed under "William" but the Internet copy is very difficult to read.

In the 1850 census, we also find an Edmund Foster (50) living in the household of L. Triplet (?; 41; Fanny, 35; Ambrose, 16; ?, 11; Mary, 8; Lucinda Swetin ?, 13; and Nancy, 11) in Watauga, Watauga, NC. Lucinda and Nancy were mulattos.

In the 1880 census we have a James Foster (35) married to Francis (30) with children William N. (10, farm worker) and Mary C. (3).

2. Endnote regarding other Walkers in Ashe/Watauga County: We did not identify any Walkers in Ashe County in 1800, 1810, 1820, 1830 or 1840.

In the 1850 census we find a Martha Walker (11 or 17) living in the household of Joseph Shull (49), Elizabeth Shull (34), William Shull (13), Caroline Shull (11), Noah Shull (9), Philip Shull (7), B? Shull (5), William Davis (? , 18), and Adeline Johnson (21). The connections to the Shulls is not yet fully understood.

In 1850 we also find a **Sarah** Walker (24) living with Allen Mitchell (30), Hiram (Walker?, 7), Andrew (Walker?, 5), **Elizabeth** (Walker, 4), Joseph (Walker?, 3) and **Mary** (Walker?, 2m). Highlighted names were used by George and Polly for their children.

In the 1860 census we find living in Valle Crucis District the household of John Walker (41) and Rebecca Walker (34) with their children **William** H. (19), **Sarah** E. (11), John J. (9), James N. (8), Rebecca E. (6), Martha L. (5), and Millard F (2). William and Sarah are highlighted because these are also names of George and Polly's children.