

Butler Beattie's stories of Green Spring Farm -- Annandale, VA

I, Butler Beattie, the second son of Charles Walter Beattie and Josephine Ada Butler Beattie and the grandson of Fountain Claibourne Beattie and Ann Hathaway Beattie am writing the things my father told me about Green Springs Farm.

My grandfather met my grandmother when her father, James Hatheway hid him (and John Mosby's family) from the Yankees during the Civil War. They hid at Western View, just north of The Plains, in Fauquier County. My grandparents married as soon as the war was over. When I visited my grandmother's sister, my Great Aunt Molly, in 1933, she showed me an old newspaper clipping that had a short poem about their marriage. I remember it as "There stands Captain Beattie, so gallant and gay, to rival Shakespeare for the hand of Ann Hathaway." My grandfolks did not buy and move to Green Spring Farm until after my Aunt Mary, who we called Aunt Janie, was born. The farm was about 330 acres. It had an orchard and was also a dairy farm.

My father, Charles Walter Beattie, was born at Green Springs Farm in 1880. At that time there were only two stories to the home. My grandfather later enlarged it for his growing family. My father spent his early days working on the farm along with his five brothers and five sisters. He often told his four sons how hard he worked on the farm. His day started early. He got up at four o'clock in the morning to milk the cows. Afterwards he ate breakfast and then he rode a horse to a country school taught by his older sister, Lelia. In the afternoon, he had to milk the cows again. When I used to see him split wood, I knew that he had worked on a farm. The earliest story I heard was from Aunt Molly, my grandmother's sister, who said that Walter and his brother had been caught eating plaster and had been punished for it. She was very sorry for the poor little boys. To celebrate the Fourth of July they would blow up pig bladders and break them in place of fireworks. My mother told me that my grandmother Beattie had the reputation of making the best ice cream in the county.

My grandfather never discussed anything concerning the Civil War. He was very forward looking and not interested in the past. The John Mosby family and the Beattie family remained lifelong friends, and John Mosby did like to recall the war years. He used to talk to my grandfather about them, and my grandfather would just nod and listen, not being really interested. In fact one time John Mosby told a story and asked my grandfather "Fount, do you remember that?" and my grandfather, trying to be agreeable said he did. "Well," John Mosby said, "It never happened!"

President Grant appointed John Mosby consul to Hong Kong. Through Mosby's connection to Grant my grandfather was appointed a revenue officer. One time when my grandfather was out looking for illegal stills someone burned his barn down.

Apparently my grandfather was a pretty good shot. One day my father's friends were talking about how the moving picture cowboys could throw a silver dollar up in the air and put a hole in it with a revolver. His friends were convinced it was all faked, but my father said that he had watched his father do it.

My grandfather was much more interested in the future than in the past. He used concrete in the spring house at Green Spring Farm. I heard that was the first use of concrete in that way in Fairfax, Co and possibly in all of Virginia. He predicted that in the future band music would be played in the home. Also, he predicated that carriages would be pulled without horses. When Langley flew over the Potomac my grandfather ran out of the house on Peyton Street, where he and the aunts moved, after selling Green Spring Farm, and told everyone around, "I told you; I knew he could do it. Men can fly!"

By the time my grandfather died all his predictions had come true with the development of radio, automobiles and aviation. When I first became interested in amateur radio my father helped me construct radio receivers and transmitters out of junk parts. He said that his father would have really enjoyed ham radio. That is when he told me things he remembered about his father.

Although Captain Beattie was treated like a king by his family, he was not too practical when it came to money matters. Later in life he went into the real estate business. He traded Green Spring farm for about 1000 acres in North Florida, where he hoped to grow oranges. Unfortunately it was too far north for that and the land proved to be worth very little.

When my father, completed the country school he attended an academy. He said that the only things he remembered from the academy was "Amo, amas, amat." He had a job winding coils on armatures for Westinghouse Electric Company. His next job was as motorman on the interurban that ran between Washington, D.C. and Mount Vernon. He lost that job because of a head-on collision in a fog. John Mosby's political connections helped my father get a job with the Army Corps of Engineers. In 1904 he began work for them building the Panama Canal. He came home on leave and met and married Ada Butler soon after they had met at a barn dance. They went back to Panama where their first child was born and died in two days. They then returned to Virginia where my father bought a sawmill from his older brother, Fount. He cut ties for the Southern Railway. Eventually the engine wore out. At that time he heard from a coworker from Panama, Frank Masters, that there was a job as civil engineer at the Illinois Steel Company. Since he now had three boys to feed and another child on the way, he went out to Illinois and took the job. He was called Colonel because of his southern accent and some referred to him as the last of the southern gentlemen. His wife, Ada, sons John, Bob, and Walt and their Aunt Sal followed him to Illinois where their fourth son, Frank Masters Beattie was born.

I, Butler Beattie (Bob), 88 years old and my brother, Charles Walter Beattie, 85 will not be able to attend the 1999 Beattie reunion at Green Spring Farm, unless we could find a way to speed up our walkers. So I will end with the old radio sign of ...

73 and 88 old bob