

### Some Biographical Sketches Of Grandma Beach's Life Is Told

(By Howard Hall)

The writer was present at Bethel Church Christmas eve and heard a very interesting sermon by Rev. Mahan, a native of Madison County, N. C. At the close of his message he gave a cordial invitation to the Christians to join hands in a warm handshake. Grandma Beach stood up at her seat as the congregation passed to the front and gave the preacher and her their hands, placing themselves to live closer to our Great Creator during the ensuing year. At the final close we were rejoicing in spirit, and Grandma stood still just a few moments, and the preacher gave her the opportunity to speak. Grandma said, "I have been lifted up in spirit, and this makes me think of the olden times when we used to meet here for services."

I was privileged to walk part of the way home along side of Grandma, when I questioned her about a few things to which I knew she would pleasantly respond. She told me I had read preceding the sermon the story of the birth of Christ which was the second reading she learned to read. She started in telling me about the building of Bethel church, and I had to leave her at her turning off place. I agreed to come and spend some time at her home, and hear her talk concerning olden times and how she lived and got along in those days. So Thursday night, December 27, I went to her home and gathered a few interesting things which I shall record briefly.

**Spells, "Old Blue Back"**

Grandma began telling me she had been thinking of her girlhood days in Macon County, and could draw in her imagination the trials she used to go over when she lived there many years ago. She told about going to school during the Civil War to Burning Town school house, a distance of two miles from home. She had to cross Burning Town creek seven times before she got to school, and the creek was real dangerous when it was swollen. I asked her if she studied the "Old Blue Back Speller," and to my question she replied, "Yes, I reckon I did, and I brought two of those books to this country when we moved here." I then told her I had one of those spelling books I had given to my grandmother. In reading the Bible she had read the New Testament through. The first book she ever owned was one she purchased from a cousin. This was a book containing a few stories of our early adventurers and the birth of Our Saviour.

Mrs. Beach was born in Macon County 36 years ago, and is the oldest child in the family of eight children. Her father was a Ray, a relative of Miss Mary Ray, of Hayesville, N. C. Her mother was a Deweese and an aunt of Mr. T. D. Deweese, former merchant and citizen of Hayesville, N. C. Her grandfather died in Ashe County. Her father Deweese was a Baptist

preacher, and a "powerful" hunter. It was her grandfather Deweese who gave her the wise counsel she received at a time when she was so much in need of it.

**Father Killed In War**

Grandma states that her father was shot by a Yankee soldier during the Civil War, just three weeks before her youngest sister was born. Upon her (Mrs. Beach) fell the duties and responsibilities of house-keeping. Her grandfather was present at her father's funeral, and he told the children he all five close to the Lord. Grandma said that these words sank deep into her heart, and she began to seek divine guidance all along in her daily tasks. She relates an instance when she was praying for her mother's recovery and for her brothers and sisters and herself.

"I was down in the grove a short distance from the house praying and confessing my sins when suddenly there shone a great light around me from heaven. Such marvelous love as I had never experienced was in my bosom!" says Grandma. "But I did not tell my people of it on my return to the house," she said. I asked her if she dated this experience to her conversion, and she said that she did, but was not quite sure of it for a number of years afterward.

Mrs. Beach has been married twice—the first time to John Jones, a brother of Jack and Richard Jones, of Shooting Creek, N. C. She was married to Isaac Beach the second time, and to them were born five children—two boys, John and Wade, three girls, Mrs. Iowa Green, Postmaster of Brassstown, Mrs. Arizona Sales, of Ellijay, Ga., and Mrs. Essie McGary, of El Paso, Texas.

**First Husband's Death**

Grandma told of her first husband's death, which was caused by pneumonia. He seems to have been weary of his death from what she related. He told his wife he would not be with her much longer. Mrs. Beach told him she guessed he was probably mistaken, but he insisted that he was right. On Sunday about a week before his death he wanted to go to Mrs. Beach's cousin for dinner, although he had not been feeling well for several days. She told her husband that she didn't think it best to go, but he kept on insisting that they go.

Mr. Jones saddled the horse, and Mrs. Beach got on him. They had to ford Nantahala river or cross on a canoe. So they hitched the horse up at the shore, and took the canoe across. It was just a little ways to her cousin's then. They had not been there long when her husband wanted to go back home. She told him that they had not been there but a short while, and she thought they ought to say until after dinner, as they were going to have chicken. Mr. Jones replied that he was very sick, and would have to go to bed there if he didn't go back home. They went back home at once, and Grandma stated that Mr. Jones was never out after he took his bed. They tried to get a doctor, but the rivers were swollen, and doctors lived a long ways off. They were contemplating on getting old Doctor Killian at Hayesville the night of Mr. Jones' death which came unexpectedly.

Mrs. Beach says, "I was in great trouble for many days, but I didn't fail to pray on. One evening when I had been out working and was very tired, I was overtaken with much grief. That night for supper I could scarcely eat anything, and sat up a while. About an hour before day I lay back down to see if I could sleep, and I was apparently in a trance before I could realize anything," continued Grandma. "I dreamed that I was carried to heaven, and there I saw people passing out and in the gates around the throne of heaven, and the Son of Man sitting on His throne. I felt at the feet of my Saviour, and He had compassion on me." Grandma thought, "But those saints they told me I would have to go barefooted into the world and endure tribulation and troubles for a little while until then I could come back," she said pathetically. She has never the least regretted her conversion after the time of her death.

**Plenty of Wild Meat**

They had plenty of wild meat when Grandma was growing up. She told the writer that there were without wild meat around. They had plenty of

venison meat. One morning when she was going to mill she came upon three deer in the road. They ran into the nearby forest. One wonders how Uncle Johnnie Crawford could kill so many wild turkey, deer and other wild animals, but it becomes easy for us to understand when we consider the plenty of wild game we used to have in those days. And how we young people long to have days like those to go over, do we? Yes, as far as the hunting and sporting is concerned we would like to have those good old days back. But those old panthers screaming and roaring around our houses would keep us closer at night I am sure.

Grandma told of her father and grandfather Deweese killing bear above their home on the mountain side. The dog tamed the old mother bear and two cubs. Her father shot the old bear, but did not kill her, and her grandfather took out after one of the cubs as it ran off. While he was gone after it her father had to load and re-load his old flint lock rifle and keep the old mother bear from eating him or his dog. He would first punch the bear to get it to turn on the dog while he would have a chance to finish loading, then start in the other direction for a step or two, but the bear would presently turn toward him, the dog nailing at the bear's feet every jump. Finally he put a heavy load in his gun, and fired a deadly shot into the bear and killed it. Her grandfather got the cub bear which did not run. Grandma stated the old bear weighed between four and five hundred pounds, and the cub about two hundred pounds.

**Saw Panther Killed**

Again, her grandfather had started to the mill one morning when his little dog ran a panther up a locust tree above the road, but he did not have his gun this time, and he could not imagine what he would do to

keep from being eaten up. He hurried to his wife to bring his gun. She misunderstood him and started with the axe. He again told her to bring the gun and come the road all the way. As she came on there was another panther ran across the road and took to the mountain side. When she got there Mr. Deweese told his wife to go above him on the mountain side and watch him kill the panther. Grandma said her grandmother got behind a large tree away on top of the ridge and watched the killing of the panther. Her grandfather took aim at the panther's head, and at the crack of the gun out it came. They measured it from the tip of its tail to the end of its nose and it was eleven feet long.

Grandma was well acquainted with old Uncle George Crawford, Uncle Johnnie Crawford's father. She also knows Jimmie Crawford, a brother to Uncle Johnnie. He was drowned in his fish pond, but they never knew how he came to go into the water. She said his clothes were found on the bank of the fish pond.

Grandma is kind and good to all, and loves for people to come and see her. We should go more often and hear her talk. I am sure we shall not always have our old people to visit, and we should go every chance we have. There may be personal acquaintances in Clay and Cherokee Counties who ought to pay Mrs. Beach a visit and comfort her in her last days here on earth.

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