

**Fayette Newspaper:
Winding Trails
Column by Sharlene McGee Foster
November 3, 1977**

One of the first families to plant their roots in early Fayette County was the Poe family. The Poes settled around the Newtonville area in 1825.

These early Poes were the descendants of the Simon Poe whose will was filed in Chatham County, North Carolina in 1793. After Simon's death the Poes moved Southward into Anson County, North Carolina¹. They are found here on the 1810 and 1820 census.

In 1825 the Poes began the long rugged journey into Alabama's wilderness. The oldest member of this group was major James Poe, the son of the older Simon Poe. Major James Poe fought in the Revolutionary War². His wife died before the move to Alabama. With Major Poe were his two known sons, their families, and the children of Major Poe's deceased brother, Stephen Poe³.

Major Poe died in 1827 at the age of 76 years⁴. He was buried on the Poe land thus beginning the Poe Family Cemetery near Newtonville. Shortly after 1900 this cemetery was destroyed and turned into a cow pasture.

Major Poe's two known sons were Simon Poe born (1782-1875) and James Poe, Jr. (born 1797)⁵. These sons both married McMillians, one being the aunt of the other.

In 1826 Simon Poe entered the first Poe land grant at Newtonville. This grant was for a large sum of land. In fact Simon became the largest land owner of that area. Simon and his first wife, Margaret McMillian, were the parents of two sons and five daughters. Both son and three of the girls moved on to Arkansas⁶. One girl remained in Alabama and

¹ James Poe acquired land in Anson County, NC in 1790, at the same time deeding his Chatham County lands to his brother-in-law Robert Thompson.

² This is probably not accurate. There is a Wake County, NC record that a "James Poe" was compensated for providing service. While this is likely the same James Poe who moved to Alabama, there is no evidence this James Poe lived in Wake County or fought in the war, much less he earned the rank of major.

³ At least one other branch of the Poe family migrated just before, that of George Poe, probable descendant of Simon Poe's likely brother, William Poe (who married Lydia and moved from Essex County, VA to the area soon known as Culpeper County, VA (now Warren County, VA). This family known through Jonathan Poe of Culpeper County, VA, then Caswell County, NC moved into Tennessee and south into Fayette County. Descendants then moved to Choctaw County, MS. These families left descendants in the Fayette County area and may be confused in genealogies.

⁴ James Poe was likely closer to 86. There is a 1761 Chatham County record of James Poe performing roadwork.

⁵ Though nearly certain that Simon Poe (1782-1875) was a son of James, it is less likely that this James Poe, Jr b. 1797 was a son, based on DNA of a descendant as well as evidence that James Poe's wife, Mary, died before 1790 and none that he married again. Likely, this James Poe, Jr belongs to the George Poe family who was related.

⁶ Simon Poe estate papers indicate only daughters. The one known son, Burton Allen Poe, seems to died prior to 1875. Simon Poe had at least one brother, John Poe (d. 1859), whose family moved to Arkansas and likely this researcher has conflated some of the stories about the two brothers' families.

moved to Pickens County⁷. Simon's second child, Mary Ann, married Edward Lowery. After living in the Newtonville area for several years with their family of seven children Mary Ann and Edward disappeared. They left their children with relatives saying that they were going to search for a safer place to live. Newtonville at this time was a rough place to live. Murders and robbery were common events. It was never known what fate prevented Mary Ann and Edward's return to their family.

James Poe, Jr. married Mary E. McMillian on January 13, 1819. They became the parents of eight children including George Washington Poe. George Washington Poe married Louisa Caroline Hocutt. They were the parents of three well known Fayette Residents. Their sons were William Newton Poe who died last year and Theron Agrippa Poe who died this past summer. Their daughter is alive today and is Mrs. Stella Poe Moore Evans.

In 1852 several families of Poes left Newtonville heading for California and the gold rush. Most stopped in Saline County, Arkansas.(see footnote 7) Three families did go on as far west as Texas. One from one of these families was with Pat Garrett in Lincoln, New Mexico when he shot and killed Billy the Kid.⁸

The Poes were very active in the Civil War. At least five from Fayette and Tuscaloosa counties gave their lives for the south. Several others were known to have also fought but survived the many hardships of war. A James T. Poe, who was a great-grandson of Major James Poe, became a Major during the Civil War. At this time though he was already living in Arkansas. He later became a State Legislator there.⁹ This Poe like many others left his early roots in Fayette County, Alabama.

Families that these early Poes married into were those of the Nalls, Shepherds, Lowery, Joneses, Rogers, Kimbrells, Randolphs, McDonalds, Pendleys, Prices, Willinghams, Lucases, Wrights, Hardins and others.

⁷ My ancestor, William Threet Poe (b. 1817) can be found in Pickens County, AL in the 1840 and 1850 census. The "Gold Rush" idea often is used to explain instances of migrations. It is not sound. This 1850s was a period of vast migration. The population of Arkansas more than doubled in the decade from 1850 to 1860. Warren Holiman and others went from Fayette Alabama to Saline County as early as the 1840s. Based on their reports and their desire to bring family to Arkansas, a wagon train of settlers was put together and a journey of many families, not just Poe, began. They had Saline as a destination when they embarked. This group founded the Belfast Community. Descendants of this pioneer group erected a monument in the 1970s in order to commemorate their spirit. Belfast was a stage coach stop from the city of Camden in the south part of Arkansas to Little Rock. A woman named Bertha Byrd wrote quite a few commentaries on the Saline County families. This information about Warren Holiman and the migration from Alabama is from her writings as well as often told tales still alive in that area (I also descend from Warren Holiman, whose granddaughter, Sarah Elizabeth, married William Elkin Poe, son of William Threet Poe.

⁸ Actually, this was more likely the Poe family out of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, who claim Irish descent. They settled in Mason County, where John Thomas Poe, the man spoken about here, is said to have been born. See file in Notes for KY.

⁹ Major James Thomas Poe was the son of Calvin C Poe (1805-1883) who married Mary Ann Willingham (1805-1847) of Augusta, GA. So far it has not been possible to place Calvin C Poe. There is one hint that Calvin's father was a "John Poe of Virginia of English descent." James Thomas Poe was a Treasurer for Saline County, AR as well as a county Judge and wrote a memoir called "The Raving Foe." In his biography printed in Goodspeed's History of Central Arkansas, James T. Poe claims to be a second cousin of the writer, Edgar Allan Poe, but that is unlikely.