

## **Frank Emmett and Martha Emerelda Pender Fry**

By: Jean Sandlin Douthit

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Seven members of the Fry family are interred in Bryson City Cemetery: Frank Emmett Fry and his wife Martha Emerelda Pender Fry; their son Harold Eugene Fry and his infant son; their great-grandson, Richard Armand Brown; and Frank Emmett's sister Virginia Alma Fry Wheeler and her husband Willard Wheeler.



**Frank Emmet Fry, ca. 1898  
Spanish American War**



**Martha Pender Fry, ca. 1902**

Andrew Jackson Fry (11/20/1834--1/16/1919) was born in Ohio, the son of John (1802--1888) and Mary (1805--1874) Fry. He had three wives, two of which predeceased him. He married his first wife Fannie Markem in 1858. They had a daughter, Ida (b. 10/15/1862); also a son, James Andrew, who died at the age of five years. In 1870 he married Catherine Kemper (1839--8/26/1890). There were three children from this union: Virginia Alma Fry (5/8/1876--2/12/1938), Frank Emmett Fry (12/13/1877--2/12/1939), and Chester Fry (9/18/1881--9/26/1882). In 1899, when he was 65, he married 16-year old Olivine Christopher (b. 1881). They had six children: Andrew McKinley (b. 1901), Kenneth Wilson (b. 1903), Cora E (b. 1905), Rosa Mae (b. 1907), Nellie E. (b. 1909), and Lee Woodard (b. 1912). Andrew's occupation was that of a sawyer, and he operated a sawmill in Ohio. Andrew died in Gaston County and was buried in Gastonia, N.C.



**Alma Fry Wheeler, Andrew Jackson Fry      Alma Fry Wheeler (l), Martha Pender Fry (r)  
Fry family members at Hewitt on the Nantahala River in Swain County, ca. 1900**

Andrew and his son Frank Emmett came to western North Carolina about 1895 and set up a sawmill in Aquone in Macon County, N.C. During the Spanish-American War, Frank served as a sergeant with Company L, Second Regiment of the volunteers. Later they moved to Hewitt N.C. Andrew then went to Gaston County, and Frank Emmett became Superintendent of the North Carolina Talc and Mining Company<sup>1</sup>. There he met a young teacher, Martha Pender (2/24/1879--10/31/1958). Martha, known as Mattie, was the daughter of Robert Henry Pender (1850 - 1908) and Mary Rowena Smithwick (1860 - 1927) of Rowan County. Robert Henry was the second editor of the Bryson City Times. As Superintendent, Frank managed the commissary, did the accounting, operated the store, and acted as postmaster and paymaster. He also continued in the lumber business.

Frank, a Methodist, and Mattie, an Episcopalian, were married at the Bryson City First Baptist Church on March 14, 1900 by Methodist minister Rev. W.L. Nicholson. They made their home at Hewitt from 1900 until 1914. During those years they had seven children: Frank Emmett II, Harold Eugene, Hazel Pender, Mary Catherine, William Taft, Robert Hewitt, and Martha Louise. The first born, Frank Emmett II, was born in Murphy, N.C. because there was no medical presence in Hewitt. Mattie went to Murphy and stayed at the home of her physician until the birth of her son. The other six children were born at Hewitt.

On December 5, 1906, Frank and Mattie bought the Entella Hotel from A. H. Elmore and wife. Until they moved to Bryson City in 1914, Frank's sister Virginia Alma Fry Wheeler managed the hotel. Also helping with this was Mattie's sister, Roberta Henrietta Pender (4/7/1881--1955). E.J. Wheeler, the father of Alma's husband Willard (12/29/1876--4/3/1919), was one of the founding incorporators of Bryson City Pump Works along with Jeremiah Shank<sup>2</sup> and three others. Willard's brother Hugh also worked for Bryson City Pump Works for a period. Wheeler Street in Bryson City was named for Willard, who together with J.L. Gibson, R.M. Waldroup and their spouses acquired and sold lots in the Yona Spring addition –from the foot of Black Hill to the railroad.

In 1918, during WWI, after the North Carolina National Guard was called into active service, a "reserve militia" was commissioned to protect the homeland. Frank Fry Sr. was commissioned Captain of the militia on July 18, 1918. In February, 1919, by act of the North Carolina General Assembly, Frank Fry Sr., A. S. Patterson, J. L.

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<sup>1</sup> The Hewitt community was likely named for one of the owners of NC Talc and Mining Company, F.R. Hewitt. It was also referred to as Hewitts (with an "s" on the end); the latter was the Postal Service designation while the US Geological Survey uses Hewitt.

<sup>2</sup> Shank had been president of Consolidated Pump Works of Millington, TN and Toledo, OH prior to coming to Bryson City in 1903. Both E.J. and Willard Wheeler had worked at the Millington Plant, and both were heavily involved in early operations of the Bryson City Pump Works.

Coburn<sup>3</sup>, T. M. Jenkins and A. M. Bennett were appointed to serve a two-year term as commissioners for the newly created Swain Special Road District. Frank Fry served as chairman of this board. It was during their term in office that the first roads were paved in Swain County. Fry Street was named for Frank Emmett Fry.

In 1926 Frank and Mattie went to Waynesville N. C. Frank was the office manager and accountant for Dicus Brothers Construction Company. Mattie operated the Bonnie Castle, a boarding house on Pigeon Street. Alma Wheeler, with the assistance of John Thomas (6/7/1881--11/15/1964) and Kate (8/19/1885--1/18/1964) Sandlin, operated the hotel. Frank and Mattie returned to the Entella Hotel in 1935.

Frank was a devotee of classical books, and left an extensive collection of them. He and all his children were avid bridge players. Frank and Mattie were both very active in civic affairs. Frank was a 32nd degree Mason, a Shriner, and a member of the Methodist Church. Mattie belonged to the Order of the Eastern Star, The Daughters of the American Revolution, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, the Spanish-American Auxiliary, the American Legion Auxiliary, and the Episcopal Church. She attended every meeting she possibly could, even to the extent of keeping an extra suitcase packed so there would be no delay in getting from one meeting to another. She was very patriotic and would never agree to the fact that the South lost the Civil War. She was proud of the fact that she could trace her ancestors back to Thomas Jefferson.

### The Entella Hotel



**The Entella Hotel, ca. 1916**

According to a letter to the editor<sup>4</sup> of the Asheville Citizen-Times by James H. Cathey, the word Entella derives from a Cherokee word meaning "lake"; Cathey suggested that the Cherokee pronunciation was oontulah.

The Entella Hotel was built on Everett Street opposite the depot about 1888. The hotel operated a lively business for many years, with a wide reputation for excellent meals. Trains coming from Asheville made a thirty minute stop for lunch or supper so the passengers could enjoy the bountiful table. On weekends the hotel was a center for much social activity.

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<sup>3</sup> Editor's note: although the published act specified "J.L. Coburn," the reference was clearly to J.E. (Jack) Coburn, who – along with the other four commissioners, had been part of a larger group (of nine), per an April 3, 1915 Asheville Citizen article.

<sup>4</sup> Asheville Citizen-Times, September 4, 1899

### HOTEL ENTELLA.

Hotel Entella, at Bryson City, is conducted by Mr. and Mrs. W. W. Wheeler. It is the standard stopping place for the traveling public while in Bryson City. The cut does not do it justice in that it does not show it up to best advantage. Its popular pro-

### O. P. WILLIAMS, COURT CLERK.

Oliver P. Williams is the competent clerk of the court of Swain county. Mr. Williams lived in Graham county for several years where he was also court clerk, and also representative of the county in the state legislature. Likewise he was on the board of the education of Graham



HOTEL ENTELLA, BRYSON CITY.

prietors run it in a strictly first class manner, keeping the rooms clean and comfortable, while the table fare is the very best. No wonder that it receives such a large patronage from tourists, traveling men, lumbermen, and in fact from almost all persons who travel the Murphy division of the Southern.

as he is now of Swain. Mr. Williams is a very accommodating and most capable clerk of the court, as well as a clean, honorable, Christian gentleman, and it is no wonder that he has been highly honored wherever he has lived, for of such as he and Sheriff Roane are the salt of the earth. Their calling and election is sure.

Part of an article entitled "Bryson City: Center of Rich Timber Section" appearing in the July 16, 1910 issue of the Asheville Gazette News (Newspapers.com)<sup>5</sup>

Mrs. Ely and Miss Dorothy Ely, spent several days at the Entella Hotel the first of this week.

Mr. and Mrs. Scropp Enloe, Miss Mary Enloe and a party of friends motored down on Friday, from Dillsboro, and spent the day in Bryson at the Entella Hotel.

**Society News in the Asheville Citizen-Times, July 31, 1922.** Beatrice Ely would later acquire property on the Thomas Divide and establish her own hotel, of sorts.

## ENTELLA HOTEL

Bryson City, North Carolina

Rates \$2.00 Per Day American Plan  
Catering to Commercial Men  
and Tourists

Near Southern Depot

J. T. Sandlin, Manager

Ad appearing in the January 19, 1936 edition of the Asheville Citizen-Times. J.T. Sandlin is the paternal grandfather of Jean Sandlin Douthit and her cousin, FBCC member Betty Sandlin

<sup>5</sup> Editor's note: The author, Jean Sandlin Douthit, was born in an addition made to the southeast corner of the Entella Hotel.

On the first floor, in addition to guest rooms, were the kitchen, a large dining room, lobby with service area and registration desk, an office, a parlor, and a row of about six marble lavatories with a long mirror over the entire area. There was also a large sample room in which drummers arranged their displays of merchandise. There was a barber shop on the north side of the hotel with a separate outside entrance.

An additional wing was added later on the south side of the building. In this wing there were three large rooms and a bath on one side and two rooms, a hallway, a bath and a porch on the other side. The second story of the addition consisted of a hall and six bedrooms. Two baths were also added. After the renovation there were about thirty rooms.

Another operator of the Entella Hotel, in the mid-to-late 1920s was the couple Robert and Lillian Cordell. The Cordells are the maternal grandparents of FBCC member Sarah Robinson.

It was at the Entella Hotel where Park Commissioners first met with local citizens, including Jack Coburn and Horace Kephart, to discuss the formation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park<sup>6</sup>.

After Frank's death in 1939, Mattie operated the hotel until 1945 when she sold it to V. L. Cope and W. E. Wilson. The building was razed and Bryson City Coal and Lumber Company was built on the site.

### The Family of Frank and Mattie Fry



**From left: Mary Catherine (Kitty) Fry Pope, Harold Eugene Fry, Hazel Pender Fry Sandlin, Martha Louise Fry Denny, Frank Emmett Fry, II, William Taft Fry, Robert Hewitt Fry**

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<sup>6</sup> *Land Owners of Swain Aid in Success of Movement*, Asheville Citizen-Times, May 30, 1931



Frank Emmett Fry II (2/13/1901--6/30/1981)

By misrepresenting his age at 16, Frank Emmett II joined the Navy in WWI. After his service, he studied engineering at North Carolina State and then established an auto repair business in Waynesville N.C. He married Belle Clarke Bright (10/9/1912--4/1/1989). Belle attended the Woman's College, UNC. She taught school when they lived in Bryson City, and also supervised the cafeteria.

Emmett and Belle had a son, Frank Emmett Fry III (b. 5/28/1943). Emmett then went to Oak Ridge and worked at the Y-12 Plant. He later moved to Fontana and helped to build Fontana Dam. After the war ended he worked for J. A. Jones Construction Company until his retirement. He was an avid hunter and fisherman.

Frank III, a master mechanic, worked in the service department of several new car dealerships, mostly with Mazda. He and his first wife, Georgeanne, had a daughter, Michelle Ann (b. 4/2/1964). Michelle married Tom Vetrano (b. 1986). They have two sons, Michael (b. 9/13/1993) and Joseph (b. 3/9/1995). After a divorce, Frank married Shirley Ann Rigdon (b. 4/23/1946), a career employee of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They had a son, Frank IV (b. 9/27/1973), a civil engineer, who married Melissa Haynes (b. 11/15/1975). They have two daughters, Taylor (b. 10/23/2002) and Tori (b. 2/12/2004).

Harold Eugene Fry (1/12/1902--12/1/1977)

Harold registered for the military draft during WWII. At that time he was working for TVA at Watts Bar Dam, and was likely excused from service.

Harold married Leolah Carringer (1905--1986), and they had a son (1925--1925). Harold and the infant son are both interred at Bryson City Cemetery. He later married Mary Melton (b. 1912). They had one child, Bettie Joe (b. 1929). After his divorce from Mary Melton, he married Mary (last name unknown). They had no children. He later married his fourth wife, Hazel Robinson. No children. Harold was a mechanic, and also worked in construction.

Hazel Pender Fry Sandlin (7/8/1903--11/11/1989)

Hazel Fry married Thomas Armand Sandlin (10/8/1905--1/9/82). Thomas Armand was a member of the second class of the N C Highway patrol, and retired with the rank of captain. After retirement, he was appointed a U. S. Commissioner for the Great Smoky Mountains National Park by President Lyndon Johnson. He served ten years as chairman of the Bryson City Board of Aldermen. In 1972 he was appointed as a highway commissioner by Governor Robert Scott. He was a charter member of the Bryson City Lion's Club, a two-term chairman of the Swain County Democratic Party, and a director of the Governor's Western Residence Association. One of his fondest memories was the cold, rainy day he served as patrol escort for President Roosevelt when he dedicated the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Hazel was a career teacher in the Swain County School System, with most of her years at the Whittier School.

Three daughters were born to this couple. Martha Catherine (6/12/1926 --9/22/2002) married Albert Brown (b. 7/16 /1928). They had three children: Richard Armand (b. 11/23/53) died at birth; Thomas Gary (b. 11/7/54); and Alan Edward (b. 6/12/1957). Gary married Lynne Burleson (b. 12/16/1955). They had a daughter, Elizabeth (b. 4/2/1995). Elizabeth married John Henson (b. 11/5/1984) and they had a daughter Kaelyn Michelle (b.11/15/2014). Alan married Kimberly Watson. They had three children: Curtis Alan (b. 8/27/1977) died at birth; Evan Thomas (b. 5/1/1981), and Noland Crawford (b. 8/27/84). Alan later married Jannessa Henderson (b. 2/11/1961). Evan married Ruthie Waldroup (b. 2/28/1984) and they had two children, Nathan Thomas (b. 8/26/2008) and Leah Catherine (b. 7/2/2010). Noland married Kristen Bryson (b. 2/1/1984) and had Collin (b. 6/4/2010) and McLain Bedford (b, 2/3/2014).

Armand and Hazel then had twin daughters, Helen Jeannette (b. 12/16/1928) and Dorothy Joyce (12/16/1928--12/31/1990). Joyce married Robert Totherow (8/1/1928--6/11/1989); they had no children. Jeannette married Claude Monroe Douthit (11/21/1928--2/8/2014). Their son, Jonathan Monroe Douthit (b. 7/16/1956) married Deborah Munsey (b. 7/21/1961). They have a daughter, Rachel Lee Ann (b. 5/7/1990) who married Randall Ivey (b. 3/9/1991). Rachel and Randall have a daughter, Rosalie Faye (b. 2/4/2014).

Mary Catherine Fry Pope (1/27/1907--12/1/1981)

Catherine "Kitty" Pope married Clarence C. "Bill" Pope (8/23/1906--4/8/1985). Bill served in the army in WWII. Both Bill and Kitty were career employees at the American Enka Plant in Enka, N. C. They had no children.

William Taft Fry (11/7/1908--2/16/1987)

William (Bill) Fry was a veteran of WWII, serving with the 7th Armored Division of the army in Europe. He was captured during the Battle of the Bulge and remained a prisoner until the end of the war. He was awarded the Purple Heart. After the war ended he worked at the Y-12 Plant in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

Bill married Ruth Beasley (4/17/1922--4/8/2005). They had two children. John Paul Fry (b. 3/10/ 1946) married Joyce Scarbora, and they had a son Joshua Paul (b. 1989). He married a second time to Anna Fry in 2004. John Paul served in the army in Vietnam and later in the National Guard. Judy Fry (b. 2/3/1947) married Michael Estep in 1965. They had two children: Michelle Amber Estep (b. 5/4/1966) and Michael Allen Estep (b. 5/4/1969). Judy later married James Bryan. There were no children of this marriage.

Robert Hewitt Fry (11/15/1911--11/25/2005)

Robert married Sarah Elizabeth Reeves (1/14/1912--11/17/06). While living at the Entella Hotel, he was an enterprising youngster. Being a good fisherman, he kept fish in the family bathtub to sell to visitors, a practice much opposed by his siblings. Robert served in the U. S. Navy during WWII. He was a tool maker/machinist as a government employee at the Norfolk Naval Air Base. He retired after 30 years of government employment that included his work with TVA and with the USN. Robert and Elizabeth had two sons: Robert Hewitt II (4/21/1937--12/24/2005) and William Frank (b. 5/31/1939). Robert II married Nelda Santos (12/6/1940--1/22/92). They had three children: Robert III (b. 1/31/1967), Suzanne Michelle (b. 3/19/1965), and Kelly Dean (b. 11/6/1961). Suzanne married Abdul Hamza. They had a daughter, Mia Hamza (b. 4/23/1990). With a second husband, Rick Soucier, she had another daughter, Clair (b. 12/7/1995). Kelly married Alfred Sotor and had twins, Christian and Cierra (b. 7/1/1990). William Frank Fry married Susan Rodger (b. 5/2/1946). Their daughter Jodi Jeane (b. 5/15/1971) married Miles Ingram and they have a daughter Maya (b. 5/25/2001). Their son Benjamin (b. 4/30/1978) married Erin Thompson. They have no children.

Martha Louise Fry Denny (5/25/1914--1993)

Martha married Jim Coman, and they divorced with no children. She then married Arthur Layton "Dutch" Denny (8/31/ 1909--11/25/1973). They had no children. Arthur Denny had a daughter, Arlene Hardy, from a previous marriage. Louise and Dutch were both career employees of the Savannah River Site in Aiken, S. C.

## Acknowledgments

*The Heritage of Swain County, 1987*

Ancestry.com

Family records of Hazel Fry Sandlin and Louise Fry Denny

Collaboration of Jonathan Douthit, William Fry, Frank Fry III, Gary Brown, and Alan Brown

Research and editing assistance of Don Casada

## **Editor's Note**

In addition to the seven members of the Fry family who were noted to be buried in the Bryson City Cemetery, several others mentioned in the article are also buried there, including:

- Frank Fry's fellow road commissioners A.M. Bennett, J.E. Coburn and A.S. Patterson;
- Robert and Lillian Cordell, operators of the Entella Hotel
- A.H. Elmore, from whom Frank and Mattie Fry acquired the Entella
- Jeremiah Shank, employer of Willard Wheeler at Bryson City Pump Works
- James H. Cathey, Jr., the son of James H. Cathey who documented the source of the name Entella



