

**JAMES ENFIELD BERRY
WAS CHATTANOOGA'S 1ST MAYOR**

By John Wilson
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James Enfield Berry was Chattanooga's first mayor, but he left the promising city soon after his one-year term ended. His granddaughter, Martha Berry, had a remarkable career in founding a school in the hills of North Georgia.



The Berrys are said to have originally come from Devonshire, England, and they made their way into Maryland and Virginia at an early date. Thomas Berry, who was married at Rockbridge County, VA, in 1877, was the son of another Thomas Berry. He was wed to Elizabeth Walker, daughter of William Walker.

Thomas and Elizabeth Berry moved on down to Blount County, TN, soon after their marriage. Thomas Berry died there in 1805 at the young age of 40. A neighbor, John Montgomery, became the guardian for his young children. Montgomery had married Patsy McChesney. The McChesneys were originally Rockbridge County, VA, also.

The Berry children included Mar, James Enfield, Elizabeth, Martha, William Walker and Teresa. Mary married Hambright Black and they moved to TX. Elizabeth married William Toole, a tanner and merchant at Maryville. Martha married Jacob F. Foute, who was clerk of the county court and a merchant and trader at Maryville. William Walker Berry married Caroline

Meredith at Roane County in 1822. They moved on to Boliver, TN. W. W. Berry died in 1856. Teresa married the Rev. James Hamilton, and she eventually made her way to MS.

Elizabeth Walker Berry lived to age 70. She died in MS.

James E. Berry, who was born in 1790, in 1818 married Rebecca Crawford McChesney, who was a younger sister of the wife of his guardian. Another McChesney sister, Martha, died in 1924 and left \$60 each to her sisters, except Rebecca Berry received the balance of the estate. The Southern and Western Theological Seminary at Maryville was given \$40.

John Montgomery was postmaster at Maryville from 1800 to 1816. James E. Berry held the post until 1833.

Berry was also active in business. He built Moreland Mills on the east side of Pistol Creek along with his brother-in-law, Jacob Foute. This mill survived until it burned in 1929. Berry in 1828 purchased from his brother, W.W. Berry, a lot in Maryville with "a white painted house."

James E. Berry was described as a gentle and scholarly individual, who, unfortunately, had little business sense. He signed a large not for a relative who disappeared, leaving him bankrupt and saddled with the care of the man's wife and five children. The Berry slaves were put up for sale and Mrs. Berry opened a boarding house. The eldest son, Thomas, left school in 1833 at age 13 to help support the family.

Just after the Indian removal, the Berrys were among those attracted to the former Ross's landing settlement. James E. and Rebecca Berry moved there, along with William Walker Anderson, who had married Elizabeth McChesney, sister of Rebecca McChesney Berry.

At Chattanooga, James Berry dealt in general merchandise and grain in a log building by the river. The Berry and Andersons were among the founding members of the Presbyterian church at Chattanooga.

Berry also became involved in politics and was elected to the first alderman board on December 20, 1839. The next month the seven aldermen met at the log cabin schoolhouse on Lookout Street and chose Berry as mayor for the year 1840.

During that year, Elizabeth McChesney Anderson died during a late summer epidemic of “fever chills.” Then, in August of 1841, Mrs. Berry died also. They were buried at the Gardenshire farm near Citico Creek in a plot that became known as the Citizens Cemetery.

The Berrys had several small children at the time of Rebecca Berry’s death. These included James Enfield Jr., Elizabeth Hamilton, William Hamilton and John Marshall. The oldest daughter, Sarah Crawford McChesney Berry, had married William Clark in 1840. Margaret McChesney Berry had died at a young age.

James E. Berry Jr. married Mary Jane Evans. Elizabeth Hamilton Berry married Thomas Anderson. William Hamilton Berry married Josephine Daniel. John Marshall Berry married Tennessee Russell, then Margaret Rawlings.

Apparently disillusioned by the twin tragedies, James E. Berry moved away from Chattanooga soon after his wife’s death. He took a second wife – Ariminta McLester – in 1843. They had a son, Joseph Walker Berry, in 1844. Another son, Augustus, died at a young age. James E. Berry died in 1957.

James Enfield Berry is often confused with another James Berry, who was born in Virginia and came to Tennessee at about the same time. This James Berry was born at Abingdon in Washington County, VA, in 1788. He was married in 1813 in Rhea County to Elizabeth Shoun. To punish Rhea offenders, he built a stocks and a pillory on the courthouse square in 1814 at a cost of \$39.96. This James Berry was register of deeds from 1821-1823 and county court clerk from 1823-1836 for Rhea County. Then he moved to Bradley County, where he was clerk and master from 1840 until his death in 1856. He was postmaster at Old Washington and at Cleveland, and he kept a hotel where the Ocoee Hotel stood.

Thomas Berry, eldest son of James Enfield Berry, married Francis Rhea. He was called Capt. Berry after his war service in Mexico. At the time of the Civil War, he had a plantation and white-columned “Oak Hill” mansion near Rome, Ga. He formed a Confederate company and fought at Vicksburg and elsewhere.

During Sherman’s march through Georgia, the soldiers raided Oak Hill, cleaning out the smokehouse, dairy, kitchens and cellars and taking the chicken and livestock. Everything was burned except the big house, where Francis Berry and her 3-year-old daughter, Jennie, were imprisoned with the house servants.

After the war, Thomas Berry obtained a \$50,000 loan, and he was able to build back up his plantation. Another daughter, Martha, was born in 1866. She was a remarkable woman who established a renowned school that became Berry College. Martha Berry in 1931 was chosen one of America’s “12 Greatest Women.” She was feted at a dinner in Chattanooga, where her grandfather had once been major.

*Read more stories by John Wilson at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>