

Family of James Rufus and Hettie Lee Callaway Blackburn

Married September 21, 1919

The James Rufus Blackburn family was established in Surry County on September 21, 1919 when Rufus married Hettie Lee Callaway. They actually married in Lambsburg, Virginia, where they were both born, but soon set up housekeeping in Mount Airy, NC.

Rufus was born on August 5, 1895 in Lambsburg, Virginia to Levi and Louisa Hawks Blackburn. Louisa died in childbirth in delivering Rufus' younger sister Nina. Rufus was consequently raised by his dearly beloved step-mother Nealy Puckett Blackburn, who married his father in 1903 when Rufus was only 7. His father Levi died March 29, 1933 and is buried with his first wife in the Hawks family Cemetery in Lambsburg. Step-mother Nealy died November 10, 1935 and is buried at Chestnut Grove Primitive Baptist Church in Lambsburg. Rufus died on July 16, 1978 and is buried in Skyline Memory Gardens, Mount Airy NC.

Hettie was born on November 3rd, 1900 in Lambsburg, Virginia to Thomas Daniel and Laura Matilda Faulkner Callaway. She died on February 21, 1990 and is buried with Rufus at Skyline Memory Gardens. Their marriage was met with difficult challenges early on but none that Rufus and Hettie could not meet head on. Rufus was called into military service and served in France in World War I. Upon return he began a job at the granite quarry in Mount Airy. After being there for a while, and during a routine lung x-ray required for all quarry workers, it was determined that he had suspicious spots on his lungs and he was

sent to Western North Carolina Sanitorium in Black Mountain, NC for residential treatment of tuberculosis. At this time, this was a serious, perhaps fatal, diagnosis. After being removed from his family for a period of time, and losing his lucrative job at the quarry, it was determined that he did not have tuberculosis after all, but instead scar tissue from pneumonia suffered in trenches of WWI. He came home to his struggling family and did the only thing he knew how to do....farming. He was able to start the process of buying a small farm in White Plains just outside Mount Airy. Then came the Great Depression on 1929. They lost the farm, resulting in their becoming tenant farmers, living on someone else's land and farming for the landowner, retaining just enough food for their own family. Rufus and Hettie worked hand-in-hand and became known in the area as a progressive farmer and homemaker pair. They worked diligently with the North Carolina Extension Service, established by the government to help farmers struggling after the depression. They learned the best and most modern ways of planting, harvesting, storing and preserving foods. They caught the attention of a prominent landowner and businessman, Charlie Fulton who owned a large horse farm with a brand-new brick home that was going unused. Mr. Fulton worked out a deal that was mutually beneficial to himself and Rufus and Hettie. This relationship set the stage for prosperity for Rufus and Hettie, allowing them to purchase their own farm adjacent to the Fulton farm and to establish themselves as pillars of the White Sulphur Springs community and Salem Methodist Church where the family belonged.

During this period of challenges and opportunities, they grew their family of six children: Ruby Irene (b 10/14/1920 m Fred Lambert), Eugene Lee (m Mildred Jessup), Charles Edward (m Mary Lee Marion), James Donald (m Carolyn Inman) Marilyn Gaye (m Jay B. Ledford) and Gilmer Warren (m Martha Burke). Their children all prospered in

different areas. Ruby was executive secretary and designer at Quality Mills for 29 years in Mount Airy. Gene became co-owner in Little Oil Company in Richmond Va. Edward was a trucker for R J Reynolds Tobacco in Winston-Salem and farmer in Tobaccoville. Donald applied his engineering degree from N C State University to ultimately be transportation engineer for the city of Raleigh. NC. Marilyn was an accomplished artist and seamstress with her own monogram business, in addition to years of bookkeeping work at several businesses. Gil earned a BA in history from Wake Forest University and a PhD from University of North Carolina. He taught and ultimately served as coordinator of special projects at Gardner-Webb University before becoming Provost at UVA-Wise. All the women were cooks and homemakers extraordinaire like their mother Hettie. All the men retained their roots of working in the soil and being able to “fix” anything, like their father Rufus. All the men served in the military, like their father. Gene and Ed served in World War II with Gene being wounded critically in Iwo Jima and remaining in a military hospital for 13 months. Donald served in Korea and Gil during the Bay of Pigs Invasion.

Hettie and Rufus left a lasting legacy that still has a strong presence in Surry County but has extended across the miles as their progeny has studied and worked and left their mark wherever they traveled and settled.



Hettie as a young girl.



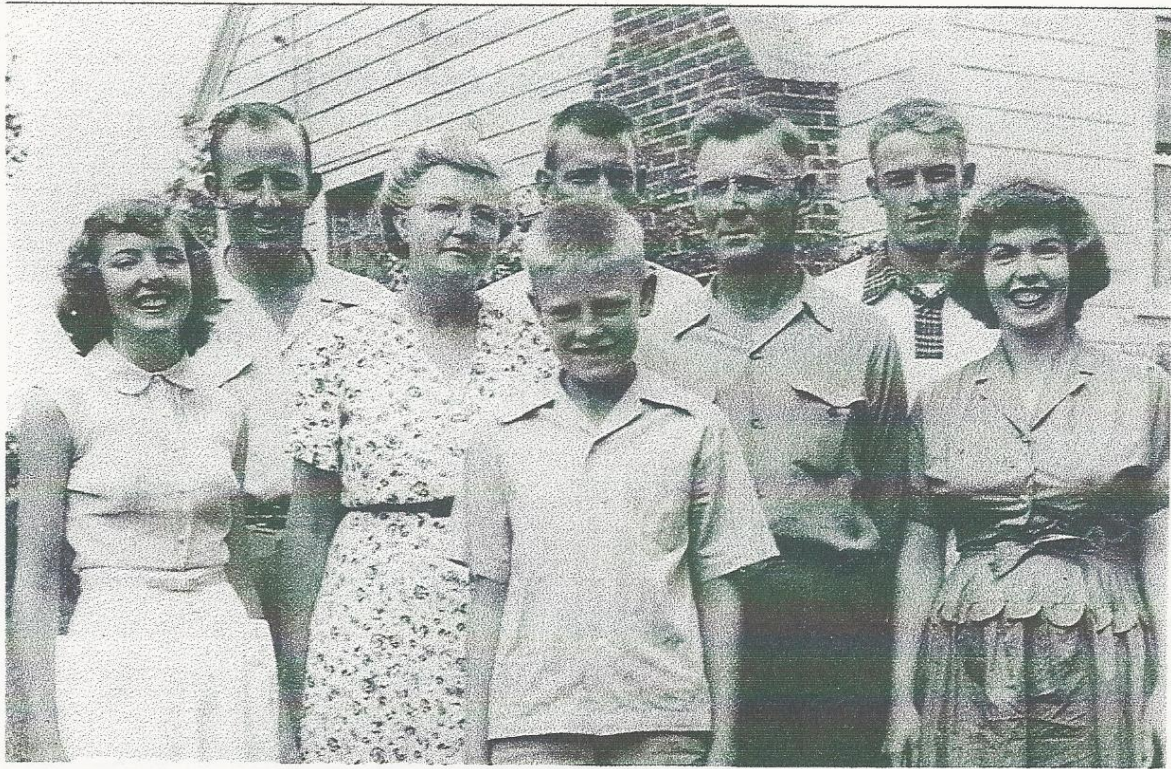
Rufus as a teenaged boy.



**Rufus and Hettie in front of
Greensboro Home pre-depression**



Rufus in France during WW I



Center front: Gil Blackburn; 2nd row L-R: Marilyn, Hettie, Rufus, Ruby; back row L-R: Gene, Ed and Donald



At Ivy Green Baptist Church



At Salem Methodist



Front row L-R: Donald, Hettie, Rufus, Edward

Back row L-R: Marilyn, Gilmer, Eugene, Ruby Circa 1955



Rufus & Hettie
50th Wedding Anniversary



Rufus & Hettie
in their back ya



The Blackburn homeplace soon after construction circa 1950.



Rufus and Hettie Blackburn progeny, gathered as the family has for over 60 years for a Christmas celebration at the family homeplace, now owned by Mike and Donna Ledford Smith. Since this photograph, there have been a plethora of babies born and new spouses acquired. Shown here in no particular order are attendees of event in 2019:

- **Ruby Blackburn Lambert (Fred Lambert deceased)**
 - **Arlette and Doug Porter**
 - **Andrea Puckett Porter Kittrell**
 - **Allie**
 - **Anna Claire**
 - **Elizabeth**
 - **Will**
 - **Douglas and Meghann Porter**
 - **Cooper**
 - **Coralee**

- **Jim and Mary Lambert**
 - **Luke and Jamie Lambert**
 - **Waylon**
 - **Cade**
 - **Rubylynn**
 - **Shane and Emily Lambert Dunlevy**
 - **Malcolm**
 - **Ronan**
 - **Colman**
 - **Decendant of Fred Lambert Jr – deceased)**
 - **Nealy Lambert and Michael Rotjam**
- **Descendants of Edward and Mary Lee Blackburn-deceased**
 - **Charldean Blackburn Noll & Larry McDowell**
 - **Chris and Catherine Noll Collins**
- **Descendants of Donald and Carolyn Blackburn-deceased**
 - **Sara Blackburn (husband James Blackburn deceased)**
 - **James Mark Blackburn**
 - **Jarrett and Bonnie Blackburn Bailey**
 - **Charlotte Bailey**
 - **Greg and JoAnn Blackburn**
- **Marilyn Blackburn Ledford (Husband Jay Ledford deceased)**
 - **Danny and Toni Ledford**
 - **Alex Ledford**
 - **David Ledford**
 - **Donna Smith Ledford**
 - **Zachary Ledford**
- **Gilmer and Martha Blackburn**
 - **Stuart and Tama Blackburn**
 - **Hannah Blackburn**
 - **Ethan Blackburn**