

Nine N.C. firms

# Founder of auto chain dies at 103

O.F. Fowler opened  
the first Modern  
dealership in the 1930s

BY ANNETTE FULLER  
Winston-Salem Journal

O.F. Fowler, whose Winston-Salem-based car dealership empire began in the 1930s with Modern Chevrolet, died Friday at Arbor Acres. He was 103.

Today, nine Modern dealerships for Chevrolet, Hyundai, Toyota, Infiniti and Nissan are located in Win-



Fowler

ston-Salem, Greensboro, Concord, Cornelius and Boone. The Modern business is run today by Fowler's sons Rob Fowler and Fred Fowler, and their sons: Omnia, West, Brad, Lewis and David Fowler, all of Winston-Salem.

The Modern corporation employs about 650 people, including Bobby Cranfill, who began work for O.F. Fowler as a cashier at Modern Chevrolet in 1964 in downtown Winston-Salem.

"Mr. Fowler wanted a Chevrolet in everybody's yard," Cranfill said. "He was always concerned about whether every aspect of the customer's experience was taken care of. Back

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## Fowler

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then, we knew most of the customers by name."

Cranfill recalled that during the 1960s, Fowler especially loved "show dates," meaning the days the dealership would unveil the new Chevrolets. The brand-new models were hidden under lock and key in garages all over town. A day or two before the show date, the cars would be quietly driven to the showroom on Fourth Street, where paper would already be covering the windows. Newspaper advertisements would announce the big day.

"We ripped down that paper and opened that door, and the customers came in droves," curious to see what the new models looked like, Cranfill said. "All the salespeople wore corsages, and the organ played music."

Entire families showed up, including children, and they were all treated to fresh apples heaped into a Chevrolet truck bed as well as souvenir rulers or balloons.

Fowler meticulously presided over it all, Cranfill said.

"He was always dressed to the T," said Steve Tuttle, sales manager at Modern Nissan in Winston-Salem. "Every day, he'd ask me, 'You got anything going today?' in terms of sales. He was the type of individ-



1989 FAMILY PHOTO

O.F. Fowler is shown here with two of his grandchildren, David (left) and Lewis. Survivors include his wife, three sons, six other grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren.

ual that you wanted to be busy for. He was the captain of our team, really respected and liked."

Rob Fowler, 58, said his father was fairly comfortable until he died. Even though he was not able to walk the past couple of years, and his memory had begun fading, "his personality still came through," he said.

Tom Fowler, 67, another of Fowler's sons, who works in the construction and real estate business, said his father put a heavy emphasis on education.

"He always used to say, 'An educated man can plow straighter,'" Tom Fowler said. "I took that to mean he valued education for its practicality as well as for building intelligence."

Omnia Floyd Fowler was born Feb. 25, 1908, on a farm near Pilot Mountain, the oldest of

seven children. He worked with his father, Oscar Thomas Fowler, in tobacco fields and in various construction projects as a young man. He went to college at UNC Chapel Hill in the early 1930s until his father tapped him in 1934 to lead one of his new ventures: taking over a Chevrolet dealership in Winston-Salem.

Fowler married Doris Ellen Hackler that same year, and they built one of the first homes on Rob-inhood Road in the Buena Vista area, where they spent most of their 77 years of marriage.

Fowler was an active member of the Kiwanis Club and was a longtime member of the board of directors for First Federal Savings and Loan. He helped Forsyth County high schools with their driver education programs, providing dual-

controlled cars used for training student drivers.

Fowler also worked in real estate, developing projects including Pine Ridge Shopping Center on Reynolda Road and Colonial Village apartments off Silas Creek Parkway.

He rode horses and competed in national competitions, and he also was a saltwater fisherman and sailor.

Fowler loved playing golf at Grandview Golf Course, originally built and managed by him and his father on property owned by the family.

He was a member of Centenary United Methodist Church in Winston-Salem and enjoyed listening to the sermons on the radio in his later years.

Fowler is survived by his wife and his three sons and their wives: Fred and Cabell Fowler, Tom and Daisy Fowler, and Rob and Bonnie Fowler. He also had eight grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren.

Visitation is today from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at Salem Funeral Home, 120 S. Main St., Winston-Salem. The funeral will be held Monday at 11 a.m., also at the funeral home.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations to Centenary United Methodist or the charity of the donor's choice.

8-21-11  
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WINSTON-SALEM, NC -

**Omnia Floyd Fowler**

Feb. 25, 1908 - Aug. 19, 2011

Omnia Floyd Fowler, 103, died August 19, 2011 at Arbor Acres. Born on February 25, 1908, to the late Oscar Thomas Fowler and Daisy Ashburn Fowler on a farm near Pilot Mountain, Omnia was the oldest of seven children. Known for most of his life as O.F., he grew up on the family farm and worked with his father in the tobacco fields at a young age. He attended UNC-CH until he was asked by his father to come home to help with a new business venture, Fowler-Jones Construction. He was sent out by his father at the age of 19 to supervise multiple, large construction projects. Omnia was later sent to Sparta, NC to rebuild the county courthouse which had been destroyed by fire. While on this assignment, he met his future bride, Doris Ellen Hackler. They were married in 1934 and moved to Winston-Salem, where Omnia soon took over the management of Modern Chevrolet, which, in partnership with Robert Morefield, was the family's newest business venture. Omnia was recognized by Chevrolet as the dealer in 1940 and remained as such for more than 50 years. Chevrolet honored him with numerous awards in sales and service during that time. He was proud of the fact that the Modern name continued to grow as a family enterprise both before and after his retirement.

Once they started a family, Doris and Omnia built one of the first houses on Robinhood Road in the Buena Vista area, where they spent most of their 77 years of marriage together.

In addition to his lifelong interest in construction and in the automobile business, Omnia was an active member of Kiwanis and was a longtime member of the Board of Directors of First Federal Savings and Loan. He was especially interested in the high school driver's education program, furnishing dual-controlled cars for its use. Omnia was a member of Centenary Methodist Church and enjoyed listening to the sermons by radio in his later years.

Recreationally, he enjoyed riding horses at the family's

Grandview Farm in Prantown, having grown up along with his sisters and brother all competing in different aspects of the horse fancy. They competed on a national level, from Florida to Madison Square Garden. Later, Omnia loved playing golf at Grandview Golf course, originally built and managed by both his father and him, on property that had been the Grandview Farm. He also enjoyed playing golf and socializing with his family at Forsyth Country Club. Omnia was skilled at any kind of work with his large, strong hands, tending to his own yard, and helping with those of his sons, until he was in his early nineties. He was also an avid salt water fisherman, and could often be seen in the 60's and 70's navigating a ski boat towing one or more of his three sons, or sailing his beloved sailboat at Lake Norman.

One of the greatest pleasures in his later years was spending time with his eight grandchildren and fourteen great-grandchildren, who affectionately called him "Pop."

Omnia was predeceased by two sisters, Mary Johnson and Mabel Jones, both of Winston-Salem, and a dear grandson, Roger Thomas Fowler of Lewisville.

He is survived by his wife of 77 years, Doris Fowler, three sons and their wives, Fred and Cabell Fowler, Tom and Daisy Fowler, and Rob and Bonnie Fowler. He will be missed by his grandchildren and their wives, Omnia and Jennifer Fowler, West and Jeni Fowler, Brad and Katie Fowler, Lewis and Bibiana Fowler, and David Fowler, all of Winston-Salem, along with Will Fowler and Lisa Lapinski of Los Angeles, Sgt. Michael Fowler, USAF of Colorado Springs, and Kim Fowler of Lewisville. Omnia is also survived by three sisters, one brother, and their families including Irene Gambill, Ruth Lindsay, and Margaret and Albert Macklin all of Winston-Salem; a brother, Oscar Thomas, Jr. and Margaret Fowler of King.

A visitation will be held from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. on Sunday, August 21, at Salem Funeral Home, 120 S. Main Street.

The funeral service will be 11:00 a.m. Monday, August 22, in the Salem Funeral Home Chapel. A reception and visitation will follow after the service.

*Special thanks to all the staff at Arbor Acres who treated Omnia with tender care and love during the last few years of his life.*

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Centenary Methodist Church in Winston-Salem, NC or the charity of the donor's choice. Online condolences may be made through [www.salemfh.com](http://www.salemfh.com).

**FOWLER Saturday, June 26, 1999**

**DOBSON** — Betty Louise Morgan Fowler, 71, of Dobson Village Apartments, Dobson, N.C. died on Thursday after an automobile accident. She was reared in Rowan Co. on September 10, 1927 to the late James Love Morgan and Martha Lou Morgan. She was a member of First Baptist Church of Dobson. Prior to her retirement in 1972 from Duke Power Company, she worked as a secretary for Midwood Baptist Church and Providence Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C. She willingly volunteered significant time to serve those in need in her community. She had been a member of the Woman's Club in Derita and Dobson. She had great interest in and was a member of several geneological societies. Surviving are two daughters and sons-in-law, Barbara and Scott Price, of Davidson, N.C., and Marian and Mike Gillispie, of Dobson, N.C.; and two grandchildren, Kimberly Gillispie of Rock Hill, S.C., and Kelly Gillispie, of Wilmington, N.C. Funeral services will be held at 2 p.m. Sunday at the First Baptist Church of Dobson with Rev. Van Lankford officiating. Burial will follow in the Williamson's Chapel United Methodist Church cemetery in Mooresville, N.C. at 4 p.m. Her body will be taken from Davis & Son Funeral Home to First Baptist Church of Dobson where the family will receive friends Saturday from 7-9 p.m. Memorials may be made to the Children's Center of Surry, P.O. Box 692, Dobson, N.C., 27017, or First Baptist Church of Dobson Benevolence Fund, P.O. Box 278, Dobson, N.C., 27017, or the Williamson's Chapel United Methodist Church Building Fund, 575 Brawley School Road, Mooresville, N.C., 28115.



Photo by Olan Mills

**Fowler-Baker 1999**

Mr. and Mrs. Edward B. Fowler of Pinnacle announce the engagement of their daughter, Amy Sue Fowler, to Mark Anthony Baker, both of Greensboro.

Ms. Fowler graduated from UNC-Greensboro and is a merchandising specialist for VF Corporation in Greensboro.

Mr. Baker is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Noel W. Baker of Rural Hall. He graduated from UNC-Chapel Hill and is a certified public accountant for BDO Seidman LLP in High Point.

A September 25 wedding is planned at First Baptist Church in King.

**ALSPAUGH**

Mrs. Virginia Fowler Alspaugh, 75, of 3070 Kinnamon Road died Monday, July 12, 1999 at Forsyth Medical Center. Mrs. Alspaugh was born on August 8, 1923 to W.O. and Mattie R. Fowler. She spent her early life in Mt. Airy and moved to Winston-Salem where she began working for Security Life & Trust Co. in the 1940's. She was married to G. "Mack" Alspaugh, Jr., who passed away in 1987. Mrs. Alspaugh was an active member of Highland Presbyterian Church and was employed by Thalhimers in the Cosmetics Department for 25 years. She was a volunteer at Old Salem, Medical Park Hospital, and Reynolda House. In addition, she was very active at Meals on Wheels for many years. Mrs. Alspaugh is survived by two sons, Rick Alspaugh and wife, Jeana, of Winston-Salem and Greg Alspaugh and wife, Dena, of Lovettsville, Va.; two grandchildren, Justin and Kate Alspaugh. Funeral services will be held at 11 a.m. Wednesday at Highland Presbyterian Church by Dr. Stephen McCutchan and Rev. Maggie Henderson. Burial will follow at Forsyth Memorial Park. The family will receive friends from 7-9 p.m. Tuesday at Vogler & Sons Reynolda Chapel. Any memorials may be made to Highland Presbyterian Church Memorial Fund, 2380 Cloverdale Ave., Winston-Salem, N.C., 27103.

**DEZERN**

Mrs. Daisy Fowler Dezern, 91, died Saturday, October 12, 1996 at Meadowbrook Manor in Clemmons. She was born July 21, 1905 in Surry County. Mrs. Dezern was a member of Mineral Springs Baptist Church in Jonesville. She was preceded in death by her husband, Eddie H. Dezern in 1965. Surviving are four daughters, Madeline Dowell, of Delaware, Louise Hill, of Pilot Mt., Ola Mason, of Winston-Salem and Opal Brown, of Washington State; four sons, James Dezern, of Winston-Salem, Raymond Dezern, of Hamptonville, Windell Dezern, of Salisbury and Bobby Dezern, of Pfafftown, 17 grandchildren; and 29 great grandchildren. Funeral services will be 11 a.m. Tuesday at Hayworth-Miller Silas Creek Chapel with Rev. Tom Everton officiating. Graveside services will be 1 p.m. Tuesday at Union Cross Baptist Church in Surry County. The family will receive friends from 7-9 p.m. Monday at the funeral home.

4/442 Dorey Fowler FWW Rockford IL  
 B: 9 June 1918 [sic] 1846  
 D: 15 March 1918 7<sup>pm</sup> 6<sup>ed</sup> McKinney Bayard  
 F: Wilson Mc Lellan NC  
 M: M. Mason NC corner of  
work

45/46 Hubert Lee Fowler MWM Retired Farmer  
 b 15 Feb 1876  
 d. 30 Sept 1960 Mt Airy  
 Lead Cross (no stone)  
 F: Weirman  
 M: Thursday Coe  
 Inf Virginia McCormick Fowler of  
 312 Madison Avenue Mt Airy

1880 Lury County Eldora VS

#94. Fowler, Jesse L 49 Farm	#95 Fowler, James W. 33 Farm
Dorey Dubera 32	Thurley 24
Charles W. 12	Luz A. 6
Ada Bell 6	Hubert L 1
Ada 3	Lerdy 40 sister farm below
Mary (Oct)	

Surrey } Salena d. md. Alfred Atkins 3 Nov 1855 Little Adm  
 md. 4 Nov 1855 by J. Copeland J.P.  
 Charles Fowler & Rachel E Fulk 19 March 1855 Alfred Atkins  
 md. 20 May 1855 by J. Whitaker J.P.  
 Wesley Fowler & Mahala Peel 21 Sept 1855 Thomas Peel  
 b. ca 1826 b. 1833

# ROLLIN': Dealership family has a broad vision

*W-S Journal 1-26-03*

**T**he Fowlers have been selling Chevys here at the corner of Fourth and Broad since 1947.

They put their Nissan and Toyota dealerships out there on the outskirts of town with the rest of their competitors.



**Phoebe  
Zerwick**

But Modern Chevrolet stayed put.

Over the years, people would come knocking, wanting to buy one corner or the other. But Rob Fowler, the president of the car business, and Tom Fowler, the president of Fowler

Investments, sent them away with a polite "no." The brothers wanted something more.

And they got it.

The N.C. School of the Arts has teamed up with Krispy Kreme Doughnuts and a host of money men and developers to build a mixed-use office and performing-arts complex.

It's quite a vision.

But months before Scott Livengood, the doughnut company's president, got in his Lexus and drove around this corner imagining a corporate statement here, the Fowlers realized that there was something bigger and better they could do with their corner empire than sell cars.

"This is where West End meets downtown," Tom Fowler said. "We couldn't imagine a better location for mixed-use development."

## A mix of styles

Krispy Kreme and the college announced their deal Thursday at the Stevens Center with all the dazzle you'd expect from a performing-arts school and a company that's turned doughnut-making into, well, a performance. That's how you sell doughnuts these days.

The Fowlers were there. They'll have a big piece of this deal, but they aren't the flashy sort.

Oscar T. Fowler, the grandfather, grew up in Pilot Mountain. When it was time to make his fortune, he moved to Winston-Salem. He founded the Fowler Jones Construction Co. and the Grandview Construction Co. He turned his horse farm in Pfafftown into the Grandview Golf Club, and he and a partner opened Modern Chevrolet on Main Street.

Eventually his eldest son, Omnia F. Fowler, took over the car dealership, and moved it to the corner of Fourth and Broad. It was 1947. The war was over. Chevrolet was making new cars again. The Fowlers gave away a free Fleetline Aero Sedan. It packed the showroom.

## 'Is this the best place?'

"I've been here 26 years full time," Rob Fowler said Friday morning. "We've been talking about, 'Is this the best place?' the whole time."

He and his brothers (Fred Fowler is the vice president of the car company) got serious about moving three years ago. They climbed up on the roof and took pictures of downtown. They knew they could do something big here, with these sweeping views of the city skyline.

Tom Fowler started buying up property. When he paid \$400,000 for a rooming house on Green Street, next to a row of Chevy warehouses, people who track these things noticed.

The Fowlers had hoped to find a way to reuse Modern's glass and concrete showroom. Tom Fowler has a thing for old buildings. He's the one who restored the feed mill in Lewisville that's become the town's logo. He could see a restaurant, an art gallery, even an ad agency in the space now filled with new cars.

The corner showroom, though, doesn't fit the Krispy Kreme story line. A '60s retro store will be part of the company museum, in the new lobby. But Livengood wanted the headquarters to look like an old-time schoolhouse, along the lines of Old Town Elementary School.

The Fowlers will go on selling cars. They'll even do it better on University Parkway, where there's plenty of space and an interstate at the back door.



### FOWLER

Mrs. Fannie Fulk Fowler, 99, widow of Charles R. Fowler and life long resident of Pilot Mountain, passed away Sunday, May 13, 2001 at Northern Hospital of Surry County. She was born in Surry County August 16, 1901 to Samuel Wilson and Drusilla Forkner Fulk. Mrs. Fowler attended the Women's College of Greensboro and was active in teaching for over 20 years in the Surry County School System. She was an active participant in many organizations including Eastern Star Chapter 23, of which she was a member for 78 years. She was a member of the Pilot Mountain Town Board, helping name many of the streets in the town of Pilot Mountain. She was one of the first women to drive an automobile in Surry County. She served on several boards as a life long member of First United Methodist Church of Pilot Mountain and was its oldest member. Surviving are two sons and daughters-in-law, Samuel O. and Christine Fowler of Martinsville, Va., Charles F. and Rachel Fowler of Shelby; seven grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; one sister, Rebecca Blalock of

Pilot Mountain; and several nieces and nephews. Entombment will be in the Pilot Mountain City Cemetery. In addition to her parents, Mrs. Fowler was preceded in death by her husband Charles F. Fowler, a son, Dr. William R. Fowler, a daughter, Julie Fowler Reshoft, a grandson, Clay Fowler, two sisters and three brothers. Funeral services will be held on Wednesday, May 16, 2001 at 11 a.m. at the First United Methodist Church of Pilot Mountain with the Rev. David Wyant and the Rev. Sidney Lanier officiating. The family will receive friends at the church following the service and at other times at the home of her sister, Rebecca Blalock on Butler Street, Pilot Mountain. Memorials may be made to First United Methodist Church of Pilot Mountain, The Pilot Mountain School Restoration fund or the charity of the donor's choice. The Fowler family is being served by Cox-Needham Funeral Home, Pilot Mountain.

## FOWLER

Mr. Joseph Ralph Fowler Jr., 75, of Wilmington, died on January 7, 2001, while visiting one of his children in Fort Irwin, Calif. Born in Faison, he graduated from Mount Airy High School, attended UNC-Chapel Hill, and, during WWII enlisted in the Navy to become an aviator. He later graduated from Cornell College, in Iowa. He began his business career working for Piedmont Airlines in Winston-Salem and later worked for Fowler Motor Company in Mount Airy. From 1953 to 1958, Mr. Fowler represented Surry County in the N.C. House of Representatives. During this time, he was responsible for bringing the Proctor Silex plant to Mount Airy. Upon its locating there, he went to work for the company and became the plant manager. He continued his career with the Jervis Corporation, as vice-president, in Tennessee. In 1974 he became director of travel and tourism for the state of West Virginia. He was named a Distinguished West Virginian by Governor Arch Moore for his work in the growth of the tourism industry in the state. He was also named a Kentucky Colonel for his work to benefit tourism in that region. Before he retired in 1985 his department developed the slogan "Wild, Wonderful West Virginia." which has remained very prominent in the tourism industry. He was responsible for the development of the West Virginia Thoroughbred Breeder's Program which revitalized thoroughbred racing in Charlestown, making it competitive with the larger tracks in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware. Throughout his career, he worked as an AQHA judge and show announcer. After retiring from the state of West Virginia, he served as

the director of marketing for Tri-state Greyhound Park, then as the vice president of Robert's River Rides, which operated the West Virginia Belle Sternwheeler. Mr. Fowler was a member and an Elder of the First Presbyterian Church of Ripley, W. Va. until his retirement and was a member of the Myrtle Grove Presbyterian Church in Wilmington, where he taught children's Sunday school and organized Promise Keepers groups. He was a Master Mason and past member of Renfro Lodge #691. He was preceded in death by his first wife, Mrs. Patricia Shine

Fowler, formerly of Mount Airy, and by his second wife, Jean Sayre Fowler of Cottageville, W.Va. He is survived by his sons, Joe R. Fowler of Salisbury, Captain Jonathan Fowler (USA) of Fort Irwin, Calif; his daughters, Glory Fowler of Cumberland, Va., Joy Fowler Ph.D. of West Harrison, IN, Merry Fowler-Venburg of Montpelier, Va., and Vicki Jo Fowler of Johnstown, Penn.; his sister, Barbara Tenpenny of Wilmington; and nine grandchildren. Memorial services will be at Myrtle Grove Presbyterian Church in Wilmington at 2:30 p.m. on Jan. 20, 2001. Memorials can be made to Myrtle Grove Church, 800 Piner Road, Wilmington, NC 28409; the NC Masonic Foundation, director of development, P.O. Box 6506, Raleigh, NC 27628, or The Muscular Dystrophy Association, 8001 Franklin Farms Drive, Suite 107, Richmond, VA 23288.

Debbie (Fowler) Seagle  
615 Kentberry Dr.  
Charlotte, NC 28214

10-24-2000

I am writing your association in hopes that you will be able to help me in my quest to find out about my ancestors.

My name is Debbie (Fowler) Seagle and with my husband's help we are trying to do my family history. The only thing I know for sure was my grandfather's name was Silmer Preston Fowler and his date of birth was July 21, 1902. We found him in the 1920 Virginia Census, and his father was Robert Lee Fowler. The county was Pittsylvania which I think is just beyond the North Carolina state line.

We also found Robert L. Fowler in the 1900 North Carolina Census living in Surry County with his wife Mary S. Fowler. So I am sure that he is my Great Grandfather.

We looked in the 1880 North Carolina Census and found Jas H. Fowler living in Surry County with a son Robert Lee and the age matched what my Great-Grandfather would have been.

I am also very interested to find out if Jas H. is the same James H. who was a private in Co. A 44<sup>th</sup> Regiment NC troops during the Civil War.

That is as far back that we were able to go and document our findings. If your association could help us we would be very grateful. Also my father, Roy Fowler told me before he died that his great-grandfather or grandfather was a full-blooded Indian, but we have been unable to find any information on what tribe he was from.

phone: 704-394-5755

Thank You Very Much,  
Debbie (Fowler) Seagle

James H. Fowler, <sup>witnessed &</sup> proved codicil to Will of  
Isaac Perkins probated 26 Dec 1883.

R. L. Fowler m. Mary <sup>E. Edmonds</sup> <sup>age 21</sup> 16 Dec 1897 <sup>(Dabson Twp)</sup> Surry  
age 22, son of J. H. Fowler (L) & Martha Fowler (L)  
dan. of Preston Edmonds (L) & Jemmy Edmonds (D)  
m. by A. H. Freeman, J. P. wit R. G. Sewelllyn, W. B. Norman &  
Edna Freeman (Lic # 1285)

James Isreal Fowler d. Surry 4-12-1920  
Son of James H. Fowler & Martha Moser

Preston Edmonds <sup>Surry</sup>, age 35, son of Isham Edmonds (L)  
& Charlotte Edmonds (L) & America Callahan of  
Surry, age 33, dan. of Hugh Callahan (L) &  
Martha <sup>Callahan</sup> (L) were married 28 Feb. 1889  
in Dabson Twp, by B. W. Badgett, J. P. wit  
W. Marion, S. E. Edmonds Lic # 1177

Preston Edmonds <sup>Dabson</sup>, age 19, son of Isham Edmonds (L)  
& Charlotte Edmonds (L) & Jemmy Jane Hancock of  
Rockford, age 20, dan. of John Hancock (L) & Mary  
Hancock (L) were m. 27 Feb 1873 in Rockford Twp  
by Moses D. Harbour, Prim Bapt Min wit John R.  
Badgett, Martha L. Joyce & C. L. Badgett Lic # 1176

(John W Hancock (brother to Jemmy Jane) was  
m. in Surry to Julia C. Perkins 1881 (Lic # 1583)  
& to Ada Snow 1895 (Lic # 1582)

America Callahan Edmonds d. 12-3-1922 (8-57)

Preston Edmonds  
d. 8-6-1932  
(18-267)

SURRY COUNTY GENEALOGICAL ASSOCIATION  
P. O. BOX 997  
DOBSON, NC 27017

November 22, 2000

Debbie Fowler Seagle  
615 Kentberry Drive  
Charlotte, NC 28214

Thank you for your letter dated October 24, 2000 regarding the Fowler family. We are sorry it has taken us so long in answering your letter.

We were able to find some information for you that might help. We have enclosed info regarding the marriage of Robert Lee Fowler and Mary Edmonds and also marriage info on her parents as well as some misc. info on the Edmonds family. We did not find a marriage of James H. Fowler. We did find a couple of delayed births of his children that stated his name was James Henry Fowler and his wife was Martha E. Moser. This matches the information you had found in the 1880 Surry Co. Census. Martha's father Isarel Moser's will is in Surry Co.

We do not show James H. Fowler listed in the Surry County Civil War book but that does not mean it is not the same as you stated. Write the Department of Cultural Resources, Archives and Records Section, 109 E. Jones Street, Raleigh, NC 27601-2807 and request Civil War information for him. They will advise you of the cost of copies if information is available. They may have his personal information as well as pension information. If you want copies of Wills they will assist.

If you want to obtain any of the marriage, birth or death records we stated, write the Surry County Register of Deeds, P. O. Box 303, Dobson, NC 27017. The copies are 25 cents each.

We hope the information enclosed will help some. If you have more specific questions on individuals, please write us again. We don't do in-depth research but will check our available resources.

W#

Research Committee

# Dobson Couple Married 70 Years

## Holiday Gathering Has Special Meaning

By **PETER SORENSON**  
Staff Writer

**DOBSON** — It was a neighbor's Model-T Ford that served as the means of conveyance for Alex and Hattie Fowler to the Dobson courthouse for their Dec. 22, 1928 wedding.

For 70 years, they have lived at different locations on Rt. 3, Dobson, since the time it was a "dirt road," their son, Odell Fowler, said. The couple presently live at 264 Cody Trail.

And in the 70 years since their wedding, the Fowlers always have considered Christmas to be a family time, one shared with their six children, 18 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren.

"We generally give them a little money," Hattie Fowler, 88, said last week. "We don't get out and buy gifts no more. We used to."

This year's Christmas celebration for the Fowler family was a kind of combination celebration for their anniversary as well as a holiday gathering, held at Union Cross Ruritan Building, according to the Fowlers' daughter-in-law, Carolyn Fowler.

"We invited the church family, from Fairview Baptist Church, and we had cake, punch, different types of food (such as) nuts, cheeseballs, chicken salad, sausage balls, a vegetable tray, a fruit bowl and toasted pecans," their daughter-in-law said.

At their Christmas gatherings, held first at their home at 264 Cody Trail in Dobson, and later moving to the Ruritan building as the children and grandchildren increased in number, Hattie Fowler said one of the most important things is the reading of the Christmas story. The family does that in chronological order of each child's age; as each becomes old enough to read, the next Christmas would be that child's turn to read the Christmas story. Their holiday gatherings also include a Christmas meal and singing, she said.

Not every Christmas has been a joyous one, though. "One Christmas, we had it here (at the Dobson house) and I had a boy in Korea," Hattie Fowler said, referring



Peter Sorenson/The Mount Airy News

**70TH ANNIVERSARY:** Alex Fowler, 89, and Hattie Fowler, 88, stand in the living room of their Dobson home Wednesday, the day after celebrating their 70th wedding anniversary.

See **COUPLE**, page 2A 12-28-98

## Couple

Continued from page 1A

to her son's having fought in the Korean War.

Other memories from their 70-year marriage include a trip in which one of their daughters and her husband took them to Canada, which Alex Fowler said was three or four years ago. And about six or eight years ago, he added, one of their sons took the couple on a trip to Disney World in Orlando, Fla., where he said one of the highlights was seeing the seals jump out of the water at Sea World.

Hattie Fowler talked about what the holiday season has meant and still means to her even after more than 70 years.

"We always try to get something for the children," she said. "For the most part, I'm thinking (it's a celebration of) the Lord (who) was born many years ago ... it's a time to see all of my children, and (a time for) singing and eating."

# The Mount Airy News

E-mail us at: [mtairynews@advi.net](mailto:mtairynews@advi.net)

## Pilot Woman Looks Back At 98 Years

By MONDEE COX

Staff Writer

As we look back on the last century, there are only a few who remember almost the entire 20th century, Fannie Fowler, born Aug. 16, 1901, does.

Fowler, Pilot Mountain's oldest citizen, is 98 years old, and lives at Northern Hospital of Surry County.

She was born at home to Samuel Fulk and the former Drusilla Fortner. The middle child of seven children, she had three brothers and three sisters. Only one sister is alive today.

She still holds on to memories of her childhood, growing up in Ararat. Her grandfather was the train-master at the Ararat station at the time when the line was completed to Mount Airy. He also owned two tobacco warehouses, in the days before R. J. Reynolds.

On Oct. 5, 1921 she married her sweetheart, Charles Robert Fowler. They were married for 64 years. He died 14 years ago at the same hospital she lives in today.

They had three children together, two sons and a daughter. Julia Reshoft, who preceded her mother in death, Samuel Oliver Fowler, and Charles Robert Fowler. Between them they have given Mrs. Fowler eight grandchildren.

Remembering backing to days gone by, Fowler spoke of the time it took to travel from Pilot Mountain to Mount Airy. "It would an entire

day to make the trip by horse and buggy” said Fowler.

She was the first female to drive a car in Pilot Mountain, and that was a Buick. It had metal rims and it took a very long time to stop. She had an accident in town one day when a man pulled out in front of her and she couldn't stop the car in time. Fortunately, no one was hurt.

Fowler remembers when Highway 52 was built.

“One hundred men came from South Carolina to build the highway, and it took a very long time. Before that all the roads were dirt and had lots of rocks in them. It made for a bumpy ride” said Fowler.

Fowler recalled the sinking of the Titanic, now she has lived long enough to have seen the movie, which quite impressed her.

She remembers vividly the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Bobby Kennedy. She especially recalls Bobby's murder, because she was watching his speech live on television when it happened.

“There was such a sadness that fell over the country when the Kennedy's were killed” stated Fowler.

“John F. Kennedy was my favorite president, with Lyndon B. Johnson running a close second,” said Fowler.

When asked what memory had affected her life the most she replied, “It had to be the death of Roy Harrell, he was just a young boy, probably 21 or 22 yrs. old. He and his friend, Isaac Lawrence had gone swimming down at Hiatt's Mill Pond. Roy had gotten himself into trouble and was crying out for help. His friend thought he was just joking and ignored his cries for help. Harrell died and I remember seeing his body after they pulled him out of the water. It was the worst thing I ever saw.”

Fowler's favorite invention of the 20th century is the advent of television. She saw her first “talking pictures” in Baltimore, M.D. while visiting friends. They didn't buy a television set until long after she was married.

When asked who her favorite actress and actor was she answered “Judy Garland and Clark Gable” respectively. Her favorite movie of all time was “Gone With The Wind.”

In all her years she has traveled the U.S. extensively, but never got to go overseas. Her two favorite places that she visited were: Nassau, Bahamas and the Kennedy Compound in Hyannisport, Mass.

Fowler says she doesn't think she did anything special over the years to live to such a ripe old age, but her family hertiage probably had alot to do with it. "The Fulk's just happen to have longevity," stated Fowler.

She has been living at the hospital for four years now, and loves having visitors. If you drop by to say hello, don't forget to bring her a homemade fruitcake, it's her favorite and she didn't receive one for Christmas this year.

#### FOWLER

PILOT MOUNTAIN — Mrs. Fannie Fulk Fowler, 99, widow of Charles R. Fowler and lifelong resident of Pilot Mountain, passed away Sunday, May 13, 2001, at Northern Hospital of Surry County in Mount Airy. She was born in Surry County, Aug. 16, 1901, to Samuel Wilson and Drusilla Forkner Fulk.



MRS. FOWLER

Mrs. Fowler attended Women's College of Greensboro and was active in teaching for over 20 years in the Surry County school system. She was an active participant in many organizations, including Eastern Star Chapter 23, of which she was a member for 78 years. She was a member of the Pilot Mountain Town Board, helping name many of the streets in the town of Pilot Mountain. She was one of the first women to drive an automobile in Surry County. She served on several boards as a lifelong member of First United Methodist Church of Pilot Mountain and was its oldest member. Surviving are two sons and daughters-in-law, Samuel O. and Christine Fowler of Martinsville, Va. and Charles F. and Rachel Fowler of Shelby; seven grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; a sister, Rebecca Blalock of Pilot Mountain; and several nieces and nephews. Entombment will be in the Pilot Mountain City Cemetery. In addition to her parents, Mrs. Fowler was preceded in death by her husband, Charles R. Fowler; a son, Dr. William R. Fowler; a daughter, Julie Fowler Reshoft; a grandson, Clay Fowler; two sisters; and three brothers. Funeral services will be held at 11 a.m. Wednesday, May 16, 2001, at the First United Methodist Church of Pilot Mountain with the Rev. David Wyant and the Rev. Sidney Lanier officiating. The family will receive friends at the church following the service and other times at the home of her sister, Rebecca Blalock on Butler Street, Pilot Mountain. Memorials may be made to First United Methodist Church of Pilot Mountain; the Pilot Mountain School Restoration Fund or the charity of the donor's choice. The Fowler family is being served by Cox-Needham Funeral Home, Pilot Mountain. 5-15-01

SURRY COUNTY GENEALOGICAL ASSOCIATION

P. O. BOX 997  
DOBSON, NC 27017

<http://juliemorrison.com/surry/>

September 27, 2001

Bonnie Fowler Way  
4203 Manchester Lane  
Monroe, NC 28110

Your letter postmarked August 20, 2001 to Catha Stroupe of the Surry Community College Library was forwarded to our association. You were inquiring about cemetery books in the library. We do have cemetery books in our research room. We are sorry the library was not open on Saturday for you.

We looked at the Salem Fork Christian Church cemetery in Cemetery Book 2, page 118 and 119. We found Miltida B. Fowler 7-7-1892 - 2-3-1926 and Cleatus O., s/o J. B. & M. B. Fowler, 1-1-1918 2 mo 4 days. We did not find John Beasley Fowler. At the courthouse we found Cletus Otis Fowler, son of John B. and Matilda B. Draughn Fowler, born 5-24-1917 and died 1-1-1918 (Book 3-43). This did not agree with the cemetery marker per the cemetery book. We did not find Matilda B. Draughn Fowler's death in Surry Co.

We found a John Fowler and a John Henry Fowler record in Surry County. John Henry Fowler died 4-27-1965 in Surry County, son of Ed Fowler and Nancy Simpson (Book 50-156). John Fowler died in Richmond, VA 6-6-1950, son of Rufus Fowler, mother not named (Book 36-356). He was born in Mt. Airy (no date). This record was very hard to read. He may have been in the North Carolina State Hospital (Penitentiary). He may have been cremated 6-8-1950 in Rudfield (?), NC. Perhaps it meant Reidsville. If you want to order these records you can order them from the Surry County Register of Deeds, P. O. Box 303, Dobson, NC 27017. Copies are 25 cents each. Rufus Fowler, age 20, was a boarder/farmer in the household of Flemmon R. Runnels in the 1880 Surry Census, Eldora Township.

I don't expect either of these death records are the one you are looking for. The parents of Cleatus could have died in another county of NC and she was brought back to be buried in 1926 with the son and the father moved

someplace else and died in the 1960s as you think. You could write the NC Archives to see if they can find a death record in NC for the father. The address is Department of Cultural Resources, Archives and Records Section, 109 E. Jones Street, Raleigh, NC 27601-2807.

If you have more specific questions that you want us to check, please write us again and we will be happy to help you. Sorry we could not find the information for you that you wanted.

*WH*  
Wilma Hiatt  
Research Committee

We looked at the Salem Fork Christian Church cemetery in Surry County, VA. We found Mildred B. Fowler 7-7-1892 - 2-3-1926 and Cleatus O. & M. B. Fowler, 1-1-1918 2 mo 4 days. We did not find John Beasley Fowler. At the courthouse we found Cleatus O. Fowler, son of John B. and Matilda B. Daughn Fowler, born 5-24-1917 and died 1-1-1918 (Book 3-43). This did not agree with the cemetery marker per the cemetery book. We did not find Matilda B. Daughn Fowler's death in Surry Co.

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I don't expect either of these death records are the one you are looking for. The parents of Cleatus could have died in another county of NC and she was brought back to be buried in 1926 with the son and the father moved

0 of 2

Ms. Stroupe,

I would like to know if you all have cemetery books at the library - I am looking for a burial in Salem Fork Christian Church - a possible burial - His wife Matilda B Fowler and an infant son Cleatus Fowler is buried there - The name I am looking for is John Beasley Fowler - I don't know when he died - probably in the late 60's or if you know where I might get this information - I was by there on Saturday and was told the library does not open at all on Saturdays -  
(over)

2 of 2

If you could help me at  
all please respond to:

Bonnie Fowler Way  
4203 Manchester Lane  
Monroe, N.C. 28110

Cem. Bk. 2, p. 1189119

Miltida B. Fowler 7-7-1892

2-3-1926

Cleatus O. s/o J. B. + M. B. Fowler

1-1-1918

2 mo 4 days

Did not find John Beasley Fowler