

Nancy Ann (Smith) McGowan (1818-1894)

Information about Nancy Ann (Smith) McGowan, Charter Member of Elim Baptist Church, was extracted from Cecil Calder Garrison's book, Descendants of Elias Robert Hodges (1820-1901) and his wife Eleanor Elizabeth (Smith) (1825-1889), Draft dated 23 August 1989, and the family records of La Fayne Hodges May and Wyman E. May.

Nancy Ann (Smith) McGowan was born on 15 December 1818 to the family of Mary Ann (Baxter) Smith and William Smith, Jr. In order to give one an idea of the childhood, Nancy may have experienced, a little bit of information is included about the parents and grandparent of Nancy Ann (Smith) McGowan. She was the daughter of William Smith, Jr. He was a member of Jones Creek Baptist Church, elected 1823 as Clerk of the Church, and 1829-1841, Treasurer of the church. In 1826, he was elected a trustee of the church. He was quite prominent landowner. He was Justice of the Peace in the 16th district in 1819-1829 and 1837-1847. He was a Surveyor of Liberty County 1830-1832, Tax Collector 1836-40 and representative in the State Legislature 1853-54. He was captain of the 16th district militia unit 1824-1846. Nancy's paternal grandfather was Reverend William Smith, Sr.

Her mother was Mary Ann Baxter. William Smith Jr. and Mary Ann Baxter married on 10 August 1810 at Beards Creek Baptist Church in Tattnall County. Mary Ann Baxter was born 22 January 1790 in South Carolina and died about 1853 at their home in Liberty County.

Her brothers and sisters were:

John W. Smith, (1812-1841), who married Mary Mahon;

William Baxter Smith, (1815-1856), who married Mary Ann Hodges (1818-) (sister to Elias Robert Hodges);

Eleanor Elizabeth "Betsy" (Smith) Hodges, (1825-1889) Charter Member of Elim Church who married Elias Robert Hodges (1820-1901), **Charter Member of Elim Church;**

Martha Alice Smith, (1821-1840);

James Madison Smith, (1823- 1893), who married Mary Louisa Baggs (1822-1887); and

Sarah C. (Smith) Foster, (1832-1912), Charter Member of Elim Church, who married **Doctrine Hampton Foster (1831-), Charter Member of Elim Church.**

Thus, from the family of Mary Ann Baxter and William Smith Jr., came three of the charter members of Elim church: **Eleanor Elizabeth "Betsy" (Smith) Hodges, Nancy Ann (Smith) McGowan,** and **Sarah C. (Smith) Foster.** Counting Betsy's husband and Sarah's husband, one has five of the fifteen charter members. These families altogether produced 22 children who attended Elim Church.

Nancy Ann Smith married Gideon Alonzo McGowan. Gideon Alonzo McGowan died on 20 May 1856 prior to the year Elim Church was chartered. Nancy Ann (Smith) McGowan was thirty-eight at the time she was widowed and never remarried. As a widow and single parent, she successfully raised eight children.

Her sister-in-law, Mary Ann (Hodges) Smith, widow of William Baxter Smith who died 13 March 1856, also raised her family of eight children alone. She gave birth to her youngest child eleven days after the death of her husband.

These remarkable women whose strong pioneering "do-it-yourself" principles helped shape the successful beginnings of Elim Church.