

Bettie Ogden Rockett

(20 Sep 1879–12 Jul 1951)

of the

Camp Creek Community, Spearsville & Lillie, Union Parish, Louisiana

Daughter of William Robert Ogden & Sarah Ann Elizabeth Breazeal,

Wife of William Lafayette Rockett



by Timothy Dean Hudson

Bettie Ogden Rockett

Sarah Elizabeth Ogden (Bettie) was born on 20 September 1879, the daughter of [William R. Ogden](#) (Bill) and Sarah Ann Elizabeth Breazeal Ogden (Eliza). For several generations before her, it had become customary for parents in the rural South to give their female children multiple given names. In fact, Bettie's mother had three given names. By the early 1900s, many women of Bettie's generation changed this, only giving their female children a single given name. In fact, Bettie only gave a single given name to all of her children, including her sons. She must not have cared for her full name, for everyone knew her merely as "*Bettie*." In fact, many of her immediate family members did not know that her formal given name was that of her maternal grandmother, "*Sarah Elizabeth*" [1].

Bettie was born on the farm of her paternal grandparents, Nathan Ogden and Elizabeth Blanks, several miles southwest of Hillsboro, in Union County, Arkansas. Just a few months after her birth, her parents moved across the state line to Spearsville, Union Parish, Louisiana, where Bettie's maternal grandparents, Hosea Bright Breazeal and Sarah Elizabeth Mayfield, had moved in 1866 [2]. Bill and Eliza Ogden farmed there for the next six or seven years, living on the farms of Bettie's grandfather and uncle, Woodford Breazeal, several miles north of Spearsville [3]. In 1887, Bettie and her parents returned to Union County, this time settling on a farm several miles west of her grandmother's. They farmed there until 1898, when Bill and Eliza Ogden sold their Union County farm and returned to Spearsville [4]. In 1899, Bill Ogden filed a Homestead Application to purchase a 160-acre tract of government land a few miles north of Spearsville next to the Breazeals. Bill and Eliza Ogden lived on their farm until about 1920 [5].

Bettie had one younger brother three years her junior, Minor Ogden, and three younger sisters, Martha, Annie, and Rosa Lea. Minor Ogden was a life-long prankster and caused his mother much trouble. He and his wife, Nannie Smith, did not have any children and became known throughout the community as "*Uncle Minor*" and "*Aunt Nannie*." In the 1970s, one of Nannie Smith Ogden's great-nephews, Lyle Smith, recorded some of Uncle Minor's stories from his childhood. Uncle Minor said that he was so bad as a child that his

...mother spanked him until she gave completely out; then she loaned him out for the neighbors to spank.

Of his sister, Bettie, Uncle Minor recalled that she

...was full of pep and had a fiery disposition, and she usually got right back at him with all he could handle. But that did not deter him in the slightest.

Long after Bettie's death, Minor related his pranks on his sisters to Lyle Smith, who wrote:

Minor and Bettie always had something going on. She was the one who came right back at him. She had been giving him a hard time, so he set a toothless steel trap in bed for her, under the covers. A younger sister, Martha slept with Bettie. She was quiet and shy, not at all like Bettie. Well, Martha went to bed before Bettie, and Uncle Minor caught the wrong sister. Needless to say, another spanking was in store for Uncle Minor.

Minor related to Lyle another prank he played on Bettie that involved one of her beaux:

In about 1896 or 1897, Bettie Ogden was courted by Jim Smith, one year older than her and the eldest son of Elder Woody K. Smith, pastor of the New Hope Primitive Baptist Church that Bettie and her parents attended. When Jim came calling, he always walked, for he had no other mode of transportation. It was about two miles between their houses by road, and less straight through the woods.

Bettie was usually in the kitchen barefoot, doing the family's ironing. In those days for a young lady courting age to be seen bare-footed, was just about as bad as seeing a young lady half-dressed today. It was just something a lady did not do. The kitchen had low wide windows without screens and the windows were pulled up because of the heat. So when Bettie saw Jim Smith approaching, she would put the iron in a safe place and merely step out the window and walk around to her room at the back of the house. She would secure her shoes and be ready to greet her suitor. Now little Minor was taking this all in, and within his impish mind a plan had developed.

He had a small, two-wheeled cart which had been made from wood. The wheels were sliced off the end of a log, and secured to his little square, homemade cart. Where Bettie stepped out the window was exactly where the rain ran off the roof and ran around the corner of the house. Minor had seen Bettie make her escape several times out the low window, so he had the angles and distance all figured out.

Minor set the cart in exactly the spot where she stepped down, and as she did so, the cart ran from under her, causing her to sit down in it, and the cart with Bettie in it rolled around the corner of the house, which was a bit downhill, and almost knocked Jim down, ending with her bare legs sticking out at funny angles.

Jim said, "Well, hello, Bettie." She replied, "I am going to kill Minor." Needless to say, Uncle Minor got another spanking.

The romance between Bettie Ogden and James Hardy Smith did not last, and on 26 October 1902, Jim married Bettie's cousin, Ida Tabitha Dettenheim. Bettie Ogden remained single until she was thirty, very late for a woman during that era in the South [6].

On 5 December 1909, at her parents' house near Spearsville, Bettie Ogden married William Lafayette Rockett, a widower with seven children [7]. They settled on his farm in the Camp Creek Community several miles south of Spearsville, where Willie farmed and ran a store. After they sold their home north of Spearsville in 1920, Bill and Eliza Ogden primarily lived with Bettie and Willie

at Camp Creek. Bettie belonged to the New Hope Primitive Baptist Church at Spearsville, along with her parents and brother, Minor Ogden.

Like most residents of north Louisiana and south Arkansas, Bettie and Willie continued using their horse-pulled wagon for transportation long after automobile use had become standard in many areas of the United States. Bettie did not trust the bridges across the various creeks in her community. When she and Willie approached a bridge while riding in their wagon, she made Willie stop so she could get out and walk across the bridge by herself while he drove the team across [8].

Willie Rockett eventually obtained an automobile. It was customary in that era for men to drive both wagons and cars, but many women did not learn to drive automobiles as their use spread in the early 1900s. When necessary, Bettie could drive a wagon, but she initially refused to attempt to drive an automobile. Willie patiently attempted to teach Bettie to drive their car, but she repeatedly steered the vehicle off the dirt road and ended up in the ditch. One day Bettie drove their car along a dirt road near their house. She did not properly maneuver it around a curve, and the car slid off into a sandy dry creek bed and became stuck. At that point, Bettie gave up learning to drive an automobile for good. Instead, Willie drove her wherever she needed to go. On one Sunday every month, he drove her to services at New Hope Primitive Church north of Spearsville where the Ogdens and Breazeals attended church. On the other Sundays of each month, they attended services together at the Camp Creek Baptist Church where the Rocketts belonged [9].

Bettie Ogden Rockett developed many health problems during the 1940s while still at a relatively young age. Willie dutifully cared for her throughout this stage of her life. After several years of poor health, Bettie Ogden Rockett died in at the age of seventy-one on 12 July 1951 [10]. She is buried beside her three infant children and stepson, Benjamin L. Rockett, in the Camp Creek Cemetery south of Spearsville [11].



Children of Bettie Ogden & William Lafayette Rockett

When she married in 1909, Bettie Ogden became the stepmother to Willie's seven children by his first marriage who ranged in age from four to sixteen years. Bettie and Willie Rockett had eight children of their own, three of whom died as infants. The biological children of Bettie Ogden and Willie Rockett are:

1. **Otha Rockett** (26 Dec 1910–5 Mar 1998) married on 12 January 1929 in Union Parish, Louisiana to John David Nutt [JD] (6 Oct 1908–25 Aug 1981), son of Samuel Robert Nutt (3 Feb 1880–13 Aug 1960) and Elizabeth Beaird (4 Oct 1887–25 Nov 1922). Otha and JD Nutt are buried in the Camp Creek Cemetery, Spearsville, Union Parish, Louisiana.
2. **Minor Rockett** (5 Apr 1913–6 Apr 1913) is buried in the Camp Creek Cemetery, Spearsville, Union Parish, Louisiana [12].
3. **Anne Rockett** [Annie, Minnie] (16 Aug 1914–16 Apr 1915) suffered from marasmus. She perished of bronchial pneumonia and is buried in the Camp Creek Cemetery, Spearsville, Union Parish, Louisiana [13].
4. **Jewell Rockett** [Marie] (11 Feb 1916–3 May 1916) died of "*Tubercular meningitis*" at the age of nearly three months and is buried in the Camp Creek Cemetery, Spearsville, Union Parish, Louisiana [14].
5. **Hamric Rockett** (4 Sep 1918–17 Jun 2013) married in 1947 to Lottie Farrar (6 Oct 1928–27 Jan 2021). Hamric and Lottie divorced, but he did not remarry. Hamric spent his life in Shreveport, where he worked as a jeweler. Hamric Rockett is buried in the Centuries Memorial Park, Shreveport, Caddo Parish, Louisiana.
6. **Hazel Rockett** (4 Sep 1918–26 Apr 2005) married Joseph Ethridge Bryan (14 Nov 1912–6 Jul 1992), son of Joseph Edmond Bryan (31 Mar 1884–15 Apr 1968) and Frances Elizabeth Brynside [Fannie] (29 Oct 1885–27 May 1960). Hazel and Ethridge Bryan are buried in the Spearsville Cemetery, Spearsville, Union Parish, Louisiana.
7. **Aletha Rockett** (14 Jun 1920–16 Aug 2010) married on 3 May 1937 in El Dorado, Union County, Arkansas to Robert Melvin Everett (7 Jun 1914–19 Dec 1989), son of William Walter Everett Jr. (29 May 1890–30 Aug 1964) and Rosa Dellma Reagan (9 Nov 1893–13 Dec 1988). Aletha and Melvin Everett are buried in the Spearsville Cemetery, Spearsville, Union Parish, Louisiana.
8. **Demaris Rockett** (22 Feb 1923–3 Jul 2016) married Edward Young Burns [Chic] (2 Dec 1912–31 Oct 1999), son of Marion Van Burns (7 Feb 1877–7 Aug 1965) and Bertha Porter (24 Oct

1884–21 May 1982). Demaris taught at the Spearsville School, serving several years as the school librarian. Demaris and Chic Burns are buried in the Bernice Cemetery, Bernice, Union Parish, Louisiana.

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Notes

1. Bettie Ogden Rockett's given name was merely listed as "*Bettie*" in all known documents except for the 1920 federal census, which gave her full name:
 - a. Family Bible
 - b. Death Certificate:
 - c. Marriage license: Union Parish LA Marriage Book 17, p. 27 (W. L. Rockett to Bettie Ogden, 5 December 1909).
 - d. Newspaper notice of marriage: "*The Gazette*" (Farmerville, LA), 22 December 1909, p. 1, column 4: "*Willie Rockett and Miss Betty Ogden were married at the brides home Dec. 3.*" The newspaper gave in the incorrect date of their marriage, as their marriage record stated that the ceremony occurred on December 5th.
 - e. 1880 Union Parish LA Federal Census, Ward 3, ED #87, p. 461a/14, Dwelling #125, line #48: "*W^m Ogdon*" (age: 27; Farmer); #49: "*Liza Ogdon*" (age: 26; wife; keeping house); p. 461b/15, line #1: "*Bettie Ogdon*" (age: 8/12; Daughter).
 - f. 1900 Union Parish LA Federal Census, Ward 3 ~~part of all west of ten mile creek~~, ED #119, p. 76b/8b, Dwelling #129 132, line #91: William Ogden (July 1851; age: 48; married 25 years; farm mortgaged); #92: Elyza Ogden (July 1854; age: 45; Wife; 6 children, 6 living); #93: Betty Ogden (Sep 1879; age: 20; Daughter).
 - g. 1910 Union Parish LA Federal Census, Police Jury Ward 3, (Part of), ED #134, p. 96a/14a, Dwelling #186, line #28: Willie Rockett (age: 38; 2nd marriage; farmer; farm owned freely); #29: Bettie Rockett (age: 30; Wife; married 4 months); wife; no children); p. 102a/20a, Dwelling #271, line #8: Willie Rockett (age: 38; 2nd marriage; married 5 months; farmer; farm owned freely); #9: Bettie Rockett (age: 30; Wife).
 - h. 1920 Union Parish LA Federal Census, Ward 3, ED #127, p. 49b/6b, Dwelling #105, line #55: William L. Rockett (age: 47; home owned, mortgaged; farmer); #56: Sarah E. Rockett (age: 40; Wife).
 - i. 1930 Union Parish LA Federal Census, Police Jury Ward 3, ED #56-6, p. 163a/13a, Dwelling #230, line #7: William L. Rockett (age: 57; married; Farmer; home owned); #8: Betty Rockett (age: 50; Wife); #13: William R. Ogden (age: 78; widowed; father-in-law; Retired).
 - j. 1940 Union Parish LA Federal Census, Police Jury Ward 3, ED #56-8, p. 125a/12a, Camp Creek & Spearsville Road; Dwelling #188, line #7: William L. Rockett (age: 66; Farmer; home owned; home value: \$600); #8: Betty Rockett (age: 60; Wife); #11: William Ogden (age: 87; father-in-law).
 - k. 1950 Union Parish LA Federal Census of Population and Housing, Ward 3, ED #56-12, sheet #12, Dwelling #88, line #6: W. L. Rockett (age: 77; Farmer); #7: Betty Rockett (age: 70; Wife).
2. 1880 Union Parish LA Federal Census, Ward 3, p. 460b/13, Dwelling #109, line #23: Hosa B. Brazzeal; pp. 461a-461b, Dwelling #124, line #45: Woodford Brazzeal; Dwelling #125, line #48: "*W^m Ogdon.*"
3. Union Parish Louisiana Tax Assessments, 1880-1884, 1886-1888.
4. Union County Arkansas Deed Book 258, p. 281. Bill and Liza's farm was the SE¼ of the SE¼ of Section 34 and the SW¼ of SW¼ of Section 35, Township 18 South, Range 15 West.
5. New Orleans Land Office, Homestead Application #19764, filed 14 January 1899 for 158.13 acres, the NE¼ of NW¼, the W½ of NE¼, and the NE¼ of NE¼ of Section 19, Township 23 North, Range 2 West, in Union Parish Louisiana. 1900 Union Parish Louisiana Federal Census, Ward 3 "*all west of ten mile creek,*" p. 77, #132 William Ogden. Bill Ogden paid the fee of \$13.95 at the time he filed his homestead application. The final certificate was #11957. William was not issued a U. S. patent for his homestead until 24 April 1925, after he had sold the land. The patent was recorded in Union Parish Louisiana Deed Book 55, pp. 473, 490.
6. Information from the late Lyle Smith, great-nephew of Minor Ogden. Lyle interviewed "*Uncle Minor*" during his lifetime and carefully recorded his responses.
7. Union Parish LA Marriage Book 17, p. 27 (W. L. Rockett to Bettie Ogden, 5 December 1909). "*The Gazette*" (Farmerville, LA), 22 December 1909, p. 1, column 4.
8. Family details relayed by Remona Everett Hudson, Bettie Ogden Rockett's granddaughter.
9. Family details relayed by Aletha Rockett Everett, Bettie Ogden Rockett's daughter.
10. "*The Gazette*" (Farmerville, LA), 19 July 1951, p. 1, column 2.
11. Camp Creek Cemetery (Spearsville, Union Parish LA), tombstone of [Bettie Ogden Rockett](#) (20 Sep 1879-12 Jul 1951).
12. William and Bettie Rockett's family Bible recorded Minor Rockett's birth and death as 5 April **1912**, but some dates given in their Bible are inaccurate (it also recorded Otha Rockett's birth on 25 December 1910 rather than December 26th).
13. Three different sources give conflicting dates of birth and death for Anne Rockett (Annie), as well as creating confusion regarding her name. The Family Bible identifies her as "*Anne Rockett,*" her tombstone as "*Annie,*" and her death certificate as "*Minnie Rockett.*" The three sources:
 - Louisiana State Board of Health, Certificate of Death #18554, 1915.
Name: "*Minnie Rockett;*"

Date of death: 18 April 1915;

Place of death: "Lillie La;"

Description: "female, white, single;"

Date of birth: 20 September 1914 [this is the birthdate of Bettie Rockett];

Age: "5 mos, 2 ds;"

Father: "Willie Rockett;"

Birthplace of father: "Union Parish;"

Mother: "Bettie Ogden;"

Birthplace of mother: "Union Co. Ark;"

Cause of death: "first had marasmus then on April 15 1915, Brochs pneumonia Set up;"

Physician: "C. S. McDonald;"

Attended Dates: "I hereby certify that I attended deceased from Mch. 10 1915 to April 18, 1915 that I last saw her alive on April 18, 1915, and that death occurred, on the date stated above at 5 pm."

- Willie and Bettie Rockett Family Bible records the birth of "Anne Rockett" on 16 August 1914, which matches her tombstone inscription. However, the Bible records that "Anne Rockett" died on 16 April 1915, while the tombstone states that she died on 5 April 1915, aged "7 Mos, 29 Dys." Her age does not match a death of April 15, but it would match a death on April 15th. However, this does not match the physician's statement on the death certificate of Minnie Rockett, which must be Anne. It appears that the little girl died between April 15 or 18, 1915.

14. Three different sources give conflicting dates of birth and death for Jewell Rockett, as well as creating confusion regarding her name. Both her tombstone and the Willie and Bettie Rockett Family Bible refer to her as "Jewell Rockett," which is presumably her actual name. It appears that the physician who attended her, Dr. V. E. Dudley, did not keep accurate records. The three sources are:

- Louisiana State Board of Heath, Certificate of Death #5556, 1916.

Name: "Marie Rockett;"

Date of death: 6 May 1916;

Place of death: "Lillie;"

Description: "female, white, baby;"

Date of birth: 28 Jan 1916;

Age: 3 months;

Father: "Will Rockett;"

Birthplace of father: "Lillie, La;"

Mother: "Bettie Ogden;"

Birthplace of mother: "Ark;"

Cause of death: "Tubercular meningitis;"

Burial: "Camp Creek Cemetery;"

Physician: "V. E. Dudley."

It is unclear why Dr. Dudley identified the baby as "Marie" or why he gave her death on May 6th.

- Willie and Bettie Rockett Family Bible records the birth of "Jewel Rockett" on 14 February 1916 and death on 4 May 1917. The year of death is almost certainly a mistake.
- Camp Creek Cemetery, tombstone of "Jewel Dau. of W. L. & Bettie Rockett" gives her birthdate as 11 February 1916 and death on 3 May 1916, with her age inscribed as "Age 2 Mos. 22 Dys." These dates match her given age.

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