

# Hooks - Holland

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The Periodic Newsletter on Family History and Genealogy of  
Bennett Hardy Hooks (1890-1929) and Bertha Gertrude Holland (1896-1991)

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## So, Just How Old Was Ma-Ma?

Bertha ("Ma-Ma") was always known to her children and grandchildren as very sensitive about her age. She would never discuss how old she was, and she even let it be known at one point (according to her daughter Edna Ruth) that she didn't wish the year of her birth to be put on her tombstone. As such, absent any official or written family records, there was always general uncertainty in the family as to when she was actually born.

When Bertha died in 1991, the family took its best educated guess, and had the year 1895 put on her headstone. But

Holland, Bryant H.	Holland	M	M	Aug 1867	32	M	6
Della	Wife	W	F	Oct 1877	22	M	6
Thomas H.	Son	M	M	Jan 1894	5	S	
Bertha G.	Daughter	M	F	Aug 1896	3	S	
Carrie A.	Daughter	M	F	Apr 1899	1	S	

in fact she was born on August 28, 1896. Unlike before, Census records are now searchable online, so we can see that the 1900 Federal Census entry (inset above) for the family of Bryant H. and Della Holland of White Oak Township, NC, lists Bryant as age 32 (born in 1867), Della as age 22 (born in 1877), with 3 children living in the house at that time: Thomas H. (b. Jan 1894), Bertha G. (b. Aug 1896), and Carrie A. (b. Apr 1899).

Bertha's pattern of sensitivity about her age seems to have started sometime after her marriage and the birth of her first child. She married B. Hardy Hooks on October 17, 1912, and the official Wake County Marriage Registry shows her age as 16 (which confirms her birth in 1896). When Mary Louise was born, 13 months later, Bertha gave her age "at last birthday" as 17 (also correct based on the Census record).

However, 2 years after Mary Louise was born, at the birth of Alma, Bertha gave her age as a year *older* than she really was. By the time Edna Ruth was born, 9 years after that, the age she gave was once again correct. (No age

information of any kind was put on James' birth certificate.)

Everyone in the family always assumed Bertha didn't want anyone to know how *old* she was. (And after her grandchildren started being born, I think that's a safe assumption. She forbade any of us to call her "Grandmother," after all!) But what if — at least at this one time in her life — she really didn't want people to know how *young* she was, relative to when she got married and when her first child was born?

We now know that she got married

and then became pregnant at age 16, and gave birth 2 months after her 17th birthday. Did

her sensitivity to her young age begin when, at age 19 (though she told people she was 20), she gave birth again, already having a 2-year-old at home? And was she willing to give a correct age again only years later, when she was into her late 20's, at the birth of her last child?

None of this, of course, explains her huge sensitivity to her age later in life. And to be fair, her incorrect age on Alma's birth certificate might have been an honest mistake. Her exact birth year is now clearly established, but we will probably never know why she didn't want

any of us to know it.



## Bryant H. Holland Married Twice — or Was It 3 Times?

I have just come across the record which explains why Bryant Holland (father of Bertha Holland) is listed in the 1930 Census as "divorced," when his wife Della had died in 1924. The short answer: a short subsequent marriage.

The Wake County Marriage Register shows that Bryant Holland (age 58) of Apex married Josie Wooley (age 57) of Lexa, Arkansas on Christmas Eve, 24 December 1927. (Lexa is a tiny town, about the size Apex was then, near the Arkansas-Mississippi border.) The divorce obviously occurred less than two and a half years later, though I have not been able to find the exact date as yet.

Note that, like his daughter Bertha, Bryant was a little fast and loose with his age. The marriage license says he was 58, but in fact he was 60. Was he fibbing to impress the slightly younger Arkansan?

Could Bryant have married yet a third time? It seems hardly likely, since he died 13 April 1930 (after having been interviewed for the Census). But the question is raised because his daughter Wester Holland put "married" down for his status on his death certificate. Was this to avoid the embarrassment then associated with divorce? Or had he said "I do" one more time?

(Sources for both articles: 1900 U.S. Census (White Oak Twp., NC, sheet 21), Wake County Marriage Register, & Wake County Bureau of Vital Statistics)

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY !

**Bertha Holland (Hooks) Edgerton**

( "Ma-Ma" )

August 28, 2011 would have been  
her 115th birthday.