

NARRATIVE TEXTS

Catherine Munson Foster, Author and Storyteller, 1908-1995

After growing up in tiny East Columbia and attending Texas Woman's University, Catherine Munson Foster spent her early adult years writing for the *Fort Worth Record-Telegram* and the *Houston Press*, then returned to Brazoria County in 1944 to write for *The Angleton Times* more stories than Scheherazade ever told.



In truth, memories of Catherine Foster are based more on her kinship with that ancient storyteller than on her published writings. She spent the last years of her working life at the Brazoria County Library, caring for the county's books and its own stories as well—especially its ghost legends. Even after she retired in 1970, she continued to visit Brazoria County schools.

Three generations of students remember how the fourth grade teacher would turn off the lights and lower the shades on the big school windows, and they knew what was in store for them—they'd heard from the older children. "The Ghost Lady" was coming! Foster would begin her tale of Brit Bailey, an early settler who still searches by lantern light for his jug of whiskey, or the ghost dogs who foiled Santa Anna's escape from Orozimbo Plantation, or the headless ghost of John Jackson, who may still be seen some moonlit nights in December, wading in Lake Jackson, searching for his head.

A lover of history, she helped write and edit *A Narrative History of Brazoria County* as well as a pictorial history and a cookbook of historic recipes. She was instrumental in the formation of the Brazoria County Historical Museum, but it was her ghost stories which were her unique contribution to her beloved community. One who bloomed where she was planted, Catherine Foster was, perhaps, that rare blossom, the ghost lily.

Quotations

So there you have it. I am the sort of person who scares little children.

The doorbell rang and I answered it, prepared to go into my usual act of being scared to death of the trick-or-treaters and ready to pass out the goodies. When my visitor saw me, he or she (I couldn't tell which under the mask and costume) gasped out, 'You!' and turned and ran.

Photo

#1986.045p.0002 Caption: "Catherine Foster standing under trees where Brit Bailey is buried." Brazoria County Historical Museum.

Sources

Foster, Catherine Munson, *Ghosts along the Brazos*, Ruth Munson, illus. (Waco: Texian Press, 1977).
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Jones, Marie Beth, "Services Monday for noted storyteller Foster," *The Brazosport Facts*, p. 7A, September 24, 1995.

Heines, Vivienne, "Ghost Stories: Foster's historical yarns keep audiences shaking," *The Brazosport Facts*, p. 1C, October 31, 1984.

"The Catherine Munson Foster Memorial Award for Literature," Brazoria County Historical Museum flyer.