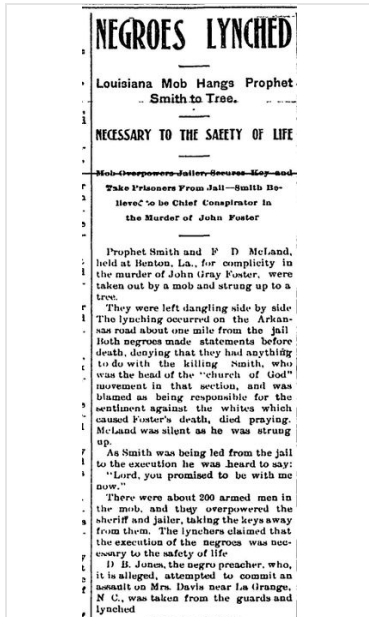




Photo added by Scout Finch

# John Gray Foster

<b>BIRTH</b>	30 Apr 1878
<b>DEATH</b>	12 Jun 1901 (aged 23) Caddo Parish, Louisiana, USA
<b>BURIAL</b>	Oakland Cemetery Shreveport, Caddo Parish, Louisiana, USA
<b>MEMORIAL ID</b>	48101128



Added by Suzan E



Added by Scout Finch

The son of John Martin and Mary Ellen Foster, educated at the University of Virginia and a member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon. The father, James Martin Foster, Sr., died the previous December, which left the management of both the Foster cotton plantations: Little Egypt and the Foster plantation to the Foster sons. John Gray Foster was only twenty-three years old. According to the book "Wicked Shreveport" by Bernadette Jones Palombo, Gary D. Joiner, W. Chris Hale, and Cheryl H White, John Gray Foster had been summoned to the Bossier plantation, Foster plantation, to settle a dispute between an overseer named Vickers and a black laborer (Vickers was white), Prince Edwards. Edwards was accused by Vickers of pulling a pistol on Vickers. After receiving a reprimand from Foster, Prince Edwards without warning hit Foster in the head with a hoe in anger. After going to the doctor for his injuries, Foster, Vickers and an unnamed man arrived at Edward's home in order to fire him. Prince Edwards blasted Foster's chest twice with a shotgun. Foster was taken to the plantation's company store, but was dead by the time he reached it. His mother, Ellen Foster and his brother, James Martin Foster, Jr. retrieved his body and took him to Shreveport. His funeral was held on Friday June 14 at First Presbyterian Church in Shreveport. Pandemonium would erupt over the murder of John Gray Foster with the lynching of two black men allegedly involved. The case became a national sensation, however Prince Edwards would never be caught.

John Gray's monument is a granite sarcophagus style. His name, birthdate and deathdate are also listed on the FOSTER obelisk monument. His young brothers, Erastus and Newton Blanchard are buried beside him.

The Bossier Banner.

June 20, 1901

Page 2; Column 1

Assassination of Mr. J. G. Foster.

Mr. John Gray Foster, of Shreveport, manager of the Foster-Smith plantation, was assassinated Wednesday morning, 12th instant, by a negro laborer on the place, named Prince Edwards. The shocking tragedy, which was entirely unprovoked, is deeply deplored by the people of this parish and State. Mr. Foster was a prominent planter in this parish, a popular and influential young man, belonging to one of the oldest and most widely known families in the State. He was a brother of Hon. W. L. Foster, State Railroad Commissioner; Hon. James M. Foster, Representative from Caddo parish, Mrs. McMillin, wife of Gov. Benton McMillin, of Tennessee, and Mrs. T. M. Comegys, of Shreveport.

The remains of the deceased were buried in the old cemetery in Shreveport last Friday afternoon. As an evidence of the high esteem in which Mr. Foster was held by the merchants and business men of the community and out of respect to this memoray the principal mercantile establishments and offices were closed during the hour of the funeral, from 5 to 6 p. m.

Immediately after the murder of Mr. Foster, Prince Edwards made his escape, and so far has eluded the vigilant snatch of the officers and citizens.

"Prophet" Smith, S. D. McLand, Phylis Hamilton and Mandy Edwards, charged with being directly or indirectly concerned in the murder of Mr. Foster, were brought to Benton Friday morning by Deputies Sheriff J. F. Edwards and I. G. Smith and lodged in jail. Tuesday night Messrs. Edwards and Smith arrested Henry Webb, Hull Hicks and John Mills on the Foster place, who are suspected of being implicated in the murder. The three negroes were lodged at jail at this place Wednesday morning.

A couple of weeks later, E. K. "Prophet" Smith and S. D. "Prince" McLand were lynched after being taken by a mob from the Bossier parish jail. This event was covered nationally and even made the New York Times as well.

The Deseret News.

June 20, 1901

Page 1

THE LYNCHING AT SHREVEPORT.

Lame Attempt That Was Made Its Justification.

WHITES NEED PROTECTION.

Alleged Evidence Implicating Smith and McLand-History of Their Religious Organization.

New Orleans, June 20.-The lynching of the two negroes last night near Shreveport created a sensation today as with the excitement dying out it was thought their lives would be spared at least until the capture of Prince Edwards, who killed J. G. Foster on the Foster plantation.

A special from Shreveport, however, says that evidence was discovered clearly establishing the guilt of Smith and McLand as enemies to the whites and dangerous elements to be left at large among the negroes, and that the people of Bossier regarded their execution as essential to the preservation of order in the parish.

The evidence obtained by the police showed the following facts:

The organization of which "Prophet" Smith was the head had its origin in Houston and was known as the "Church of the Living God." The members of the supreme council, as indicated by regular printed letter-heads which were found, were Smith and McLand, who were lynched, and Prince Edwards, the murderer of John Gray Foster.

Smith, when he came to Louisiana, established himself at Shreveport but was ordered away by the chief of police as a dangerous character. After the shooting of Foster a search of his premises was instituted and the ark of the covenant, a rudely constructed box with hoodoo designs on and within it, was found. When it was touched by the searchers the negroes were greatly terrified and declared that but one had advanced far enough to lay hands on the sacred box.

The members of the church known as princes had regular meetings at which Smith presided with the designation of "king." The following is an exact copy from the minutes of the meeting held on the Foster plantation, showing how business was carried on and the enmity that existed between Smith and his followers and the chief of police of Shreveport and Foster, the murdered man:

"The royal archive of the kingdom of God met in supreme council; sang 'Dark was the Night.' Opened by reading the thirty-second chapter of Isaiah. After E. K. Smith, the king, announced the meeting, he stated that he was advised of God to call the princes together in council to decide what should be done with the chief of police and his force for interfering with the king of the church of God in Shreveport.

"Prince Webb being the first to arise said he was in favor of demanding six months affliction upon the chief. Prince Hicks said he was in favor of the same. Also Prince McLand. Also Prince Johnson. Also Prince Edwards. All concurred, demanding six months affliction on Chief Lake of Shreveport.

"Next case was the rockers of the building. The case was decided. All that rock the building must be punished with death within four days.

"A complaint was taken against J. G. Foster that he should be tormented until he give consent that all saints leave the place."

Before he was lynched last night, Smith confessed that he had loaded the gun with which Foster was killed. Many letters of an incendiary character written by Smith and his followers have been found. The discovery of these evidences of conspiracy led to last night's lynching. Sheriff Thompson of Bossier made no attempt to interfere with the superior numbers of the mob.

### Family Members

#### Parents



James Martin Foster  
1831-1900



Mary Ellen *Long* Foster  
1842-1910

#### Siblings



Ernest Flavel Foster  
1860-1862



Mary Elinor *Foster* Comegys  
1868-1946



James Martin Foster  
1871-1928



Theresa Olive Foster  
1879-1920



Lucille *Foster* McMillin  
1879-1949



Newton Blanchard Foster  
1880-1881



Erastus Fullilove Foster  
1884-1888

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**Created by:** Scout Finch

Added: 13 Feb 2010

Find a Grave Memorial ID: **48101128**

*Find a Grave*, database and images

(<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/48101128/john-gray-foster>: accessed 05 November 2022), memorial page for John Gray Foster (30 Apr 1878-12 Jun 1901), Find a Grave Memorial ID **48101128**, citing Oakland Cemetery, Shreveport, Caddo Parish, Louisiana, USA; Maintained by Scout Finch (contributor **47112463**) .

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