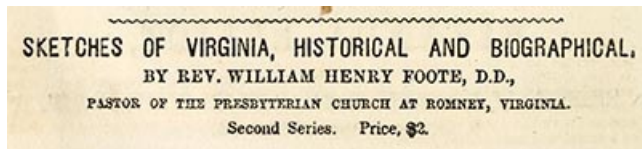


Foote, William Henry ^[1]

Foote, William Henry

by Thomas H. Spence, Jr., 1986

20 Dec. 1794–22 Nov. 1869



An 1856 advertisement for William Henry Foote's *Sketches of Virginia*. Image from [Archive.org](#).

^[2]William Henry Foote, [Presbyterian](#) ^[3]clergyman and historian, the son of Stephen and Hannah Waterman Foote, was born at Colchester, Conn. He was graduated from [Yale](#) ^[4]in 1816 with an A.B. degree, devoted slightly more than two years to teaching, and spent one year at Princeton Seminary (1818–19). After his licensure on 20 Oct. 1819, he preached at various points in Virginia. Several months before Winchester Presbytery ordained him to the full work of the ministry of 7 Sept. 1822, he settled at Woodstock, Va., where he served a congregation, along with that of Stoverstown (Strasburg), until 1824. His next charge was that of the Mt. Bethel, Hampshire County, Va., (now West Virginia), Church, which in 1833 was divided into five formally organized congregations. Foote retained a portion of this field, residing at Romney until 1838. For the next seven years he was a regional representative for the cause of foreign missions in the Old School Presbyterian Church. From 1845 until his death he served churches at Romney, Springfield, and Patterson's Creek (1845–60), except for "three years, six months, and four days" of "protracted exile" in lower Virginia during the [Civil War](#) ^[5]. While a refugee, he supplied vacant churches, served as hospital chaplain, and for a short time was an agent for [Hampden-Sydney College](#) ^[6] which in 1847 awarded him a D.D. degree. In addition to his pastoral work, he conducted academies at Woodstock and Romney.

Foote was neither a native nor at any time a resident of North Carolina. However, while an agent, or traveling secretary, for the Central Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian church (1838–45), he visited many North Carolina counties where he not only promoted the missionary enterprise, but also collected considerable material of a historical nature. His *Sketches of North Carolina, Historical and Biographical* ^[7], written at the request of the Presbyterian Synod of the state, and published in 1846, permanently linked his name with North Carolina. A reprint of the *Sketches* appeared in 1912 and a second in 1965. The volume has consistently demonstrated its value for reference, both in the religious and secular spheres. The author's incorporation into the text of a number of earlier documents, some of which have since disappeared, substantially enhances its usefulness. Notable among the items included but now missing is the original of [Hugh McAden](#) ^[8]'s journal of his tour of North Carolina made during 1755–56. Foote also was the author of *Sketches of Virginia, Historical and Biographical* ^[9] (1850); of a similar work bearing the same title with the addition of *Second Series* ^[10] (1855); and of *The Huguenots* ^[11], or *Reformed French Church* ^[12], published in the year after his death.

Foote's first wife was Eliza Wilson Glass, daughter of the Reverend Joseph Glass of Frederick County, Va., whom he married on 21 Feb. 1822. Two daughters, Ann Waterman and Eliza Wilson, were born of this union. After the death of Mrs. Eliza Foote (21 Apr. 1835), he married Arabella Gilliam of Petersburg, Va., on 31 Oct. 1838; they had one child, Mary Arabella. Foote died at Romney and was buried in the nearby Indian Mound Cemetery.

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Image Credits:

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