

1981 Interview with Florence Williams Marshall

Oral History: Madison Township, Armstrong County, Pennsylvania

Jennifer A. Marshall and Adam M. Marshall interviewed their great-grandmother, Florence Williams Marshall, in the summer of 1981. She was born in Fairmount City, Clarion County, Pennsylvania, 01 March 1900, and died in Kittanning, Armstrong County, Pennsylvania on 12 October 1989.

Her parents were Lee Philo Williams (1872-1947) and Alice Viola Willison (1872-1946) of Madison Township, Armstrong County, where she grew up on their farm. Her grandparents were Jacob Williams (1823-1918) and Elizabeth Duckett (1840-1917), and James Alexander (Alex) Willison (1851-1932) and Mary Ellen Adams. She married **Clifford William Marshall** (1897-1964) and was the mother of five children, fourteen grandchildren.



Jennifer was eleven years old the summer of this interview and Adam was eight. Clifford W. Marshall was a grandson of William Kelker Marshall and Anna Mary Rumbarger of Reynoldsville, Pennsylvania; and a great-great grandson of John and Catharina Truby Rohrer Marshall.



Jennifer: What are the first things you remember?

The first thing Great-Grandma remembers is that the floors in the farmhouse were cold. They had moved there from Fairmount City when she was one year old, and she was learning to walk. The family was made up of her Father and Mother, her older sister Mary, and her. They moved in with her Grandfather and Grandmother Williams. There was a small crack in the window frame in her bedroom. When it snowed, there would be a line of snow going across the floor.

Adam: Where did you go to church?

Great-Grandma's family went to the Methodist Church in Kellersburg. Her father took them all by horse and buggy. When there were more children, he bought a surrey that had two seats. On nice days, they walked. Since they were not used to wearing their shoes through the week, their feet would hurt when they had to wear them to church. They would take them off at the edge of town and walk home barefoot. They always went barefoot around the farm.

Jennifer: What was the first car you remember seeing?

Great-Grandma doesn't remember when she saw her first car, but she remembers that the first car her father bought was a black Model-T Ford. Her father drove it very, very slowly. The roads were not made for cars. They were made for horses and buggies.

Adam: What animals did you have on your farm?

There were lots of animals on the farm. They had chickens, cows, horses, pigs, wild rabbits, turkeys and ducks. Great-Grandma had a pet dog named Coolie. He was a nice dog, brown with white spots. He was hit by a car and killed. Grandma doesn't like milk even today because when she was little and they were milking the cows they would squirt milk right into their mouths. It was warm and didn't taste very good.

Jennifer: What was your favorite toy?

Great-Grandma said that she didn't have very many toys when she was little. Her favorite toy was a doll whose name was Sarah. Usually she would get clothes for Christmas. Sometimes she would get one toy. Her family always had a Christmas tree. They would decorate it with paper dolls they cut out. Also they would string popcorn and sew little ornaments. They never bought Christmas decorations. Since they lived with their grandparents, there always were lots of people for Christmas--uncles and aunts and cousins--and they always had a big dinner.

Adam: What did you eat for breakfast?

Great-Grandma always had the same thing for breakfast. They ate pancakes and sausage every morning. Sometimes they would have sausage and buttered bread. The sausage was made on their own farm. The pancakes were buckwheat pancakes. They grew the buckwheat and then took it to a mill to have it ground into flour for the pancakes.



Great-Grandma also told us that she and her sister Mary [Mary Williams Stennett] each had two plaid dresses--one red and the other blue. They would wear them to school, one each week, and then they would trade off. When Grandma wore her red dress, Mary would wear her blue dress. They came down halfway between their knees and their feet. Leggings came up to the knee. The shoes were high, above their ankles, and had to be buttoned.

When they went to school in the winter, their father would take out the bobsled the night before and plow a path. By morning it might be drifted shut, so they sometimes had to walk up to their waist in snow to get to school. The school was located between the farm and Kellersburg, off a road to the right. It was called School Road or School Lane. We think it was about two miles from Great-Grandma's farmhouse.

When we talk to Great-Grandma again, we want to ask her about her school--what subjects she studied, how many children were in each class, when she got vacations, and about when she was a schoolteacher. Also, what was the longest trip she took when she was little. Also, about when she met Great-Grandpa and about when they got married.

[Unfortunately, we never made time for a next interview. *Sic tempus fugit.*]





THE JACOB WILLIAMS FAMILY, 1897

Lee Philo Williams, father of Florence Williams Marshall, is second from the left in the back row. His parents, *Jacob and Betsy Williams*, are seated in the front row, middle. This photo was taken in front of the old Jacob Williams home in Madison Township, Armstrong County, Pennsylvania, a few years before a newer home was constructed.



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