

Oct 1982

Steven,

I hope you enjoy reading
this as much as Grandpa
had writing it.

Love
mom

Esther Williams Bellend



GRANDPOP'S BOOK

A Century of Memories

by Noah Kellum Williams

(1879-1979)

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to the memory of those persons who have influenced me to the extent that I changed the direction I was going, and, thus, they became cornerstones of my career, namely:

Amanda Truex Williams, my step-mother. When she came to our home, I was suffering with dyspepsia and acute indigestion. She prevailed on me to quit eating greasy food, and to chew all my food till it was well mixed with saliva, thus laying the foundation for my many years of good health. She died in 1894.

Robert Tomlinson, my uncle. He furnished me a home, schooling, and Quaker direction for six of the formative years of my youth. He died in 1937.

Robert Williams, my oldest (and next older) brother. He was the moving spirit that took me to both North Dakota and Penn College. He was killed in 1916 in the fire at Penn College.

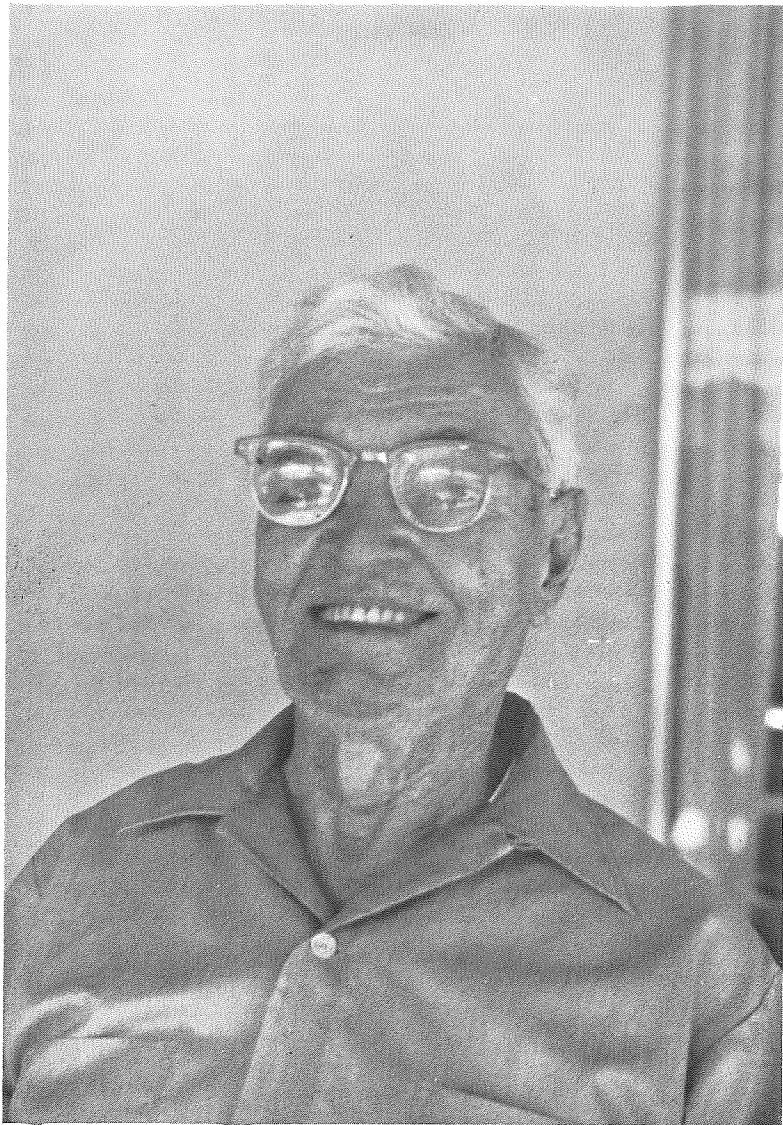
Elmer H. Gifford, Business Manager of Penn College. He found me a place to work for my board and room, so I could enter college. He died sometime in the 1930's.

Absolom Rosenberger, President of Penn College. When I was out of money, discouraged, and preparing to quit school, he persuaded me to stay and finish the year, and arranged credit for my tuition and room rent so that I could. Upon my graduation, he secured a college professorship for me. He died in the 1930's.

Sylvester Jones, President of the College Y.M.C.A., and the first Quaker missionary in Cuba. He induced me to go to Cuba. He died in the 1940's.

Erwin Marx, a graduate of Cornell University's College of Engineering, and head of the engineering firm of Marx and Windsor, of Camaguey, Cuba. After my Cuban adventure had fallen flat and I had searched all Eastern Cuba for work, and found none, he gave me employment in the field of engineering which enabled me to change the whole course of my life—from farmer boy, college professor, and adventurer; to a successful career as a civil engineer. He was still living in October 1958.

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NOAH KELLUM WILLIAMS
Age 92 -- 1971

FOREWORD

N. K. Williams' century (1879-1979) coincided almost exactly with the second century of our country, and did coincide with the first century of Edison's incandescent electric light — starting only 3 years after Custer's Last Stand. It saw the development of the telephone, radio, television, bicycle, automobile, airplane, and satellite. His work involved the spread of railroads, highways, pipe lines, and irrigation systems—a great period in the history of mankind.

He was a Prairie product, as were his contemporaries Hoover, Truman, Eisenhower, and Will Rogers. They all made bigger waves than he did, but his ripples lasted longer.

Subsequent to his retirement from the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation in 1951, he devoted much time to the writing of this book. It was a disappointment to him that no publisher wanted to print it. Now, in memory of him, and at Ethel Williams' instigation, it is being printed very nearly as he wrote it and distributed to his five score direct descendants, most of whom have been aware of its existence and referred to it by its logical name:

GRANDPOP'S BOOK

Gordon L. Williams

(OBITUARY)

NOAH KELLUM WILLIAMS (1879-1979)

Today, June 12, 1979, N. K. Williams, my father, would have been 100 years old. He was born 6½ miles west of Parsons, Kansas, the third of 7 children of Nathan Williams (1844-1934) a Quaker, pioneer, farmer, and schoolteacher. The first two, Ruth Anna (1876-1974) and Robert (1877-1916) had been born in Illinois. The younger 4, namely, John (1881-1963), Luella (1882), Zona (1885-1980), and Lloyd (1888-1976) were, like Noah, from Kansas. Lloyd was the son of Nathan's 2nd wife, Amanda Truex Williams (d. 1894). Due to the untimely death of both mothers, the children were largely raised near Westfield, Ind., by relatives of the mother of the first 6, Lydia Tomlinson Williams (1846-1886).

Noah was graduated from Westfield Union High in 1897, and William Penn College, Oskaloosa, Iowa, in 1902. He taught one year at Nebraska Central College, Central City, Nebraska, then went to Cuba on his own as a non-salaried Quaker missionary in 1903. He was followed two years later by his fiancée, Birdie Fay Pickett (1886-1972) of Broken Bow, Nebraska. With no missionary income, he turned to engineering, where he became quite successful on the construction of numerous railroads and sugar mills throughout the eastern half of Cuba, supervising up to 1,000 men.

In 1918, he and Birdie moved to Florida with 5 children - Elizabeth (1908), Gordon (1910), Vera (1912), Kenneth (1914), and Robert (1917-1918) - and enough money to buy one of the bigger and nicer houses in West Palm Beach. Subsequent children were John (1919-1977), Mary (1922), Richard (1924), and Esther (1926). In Palm Beach County, he was an engineer on swamp drainage and land development; his main job being Chief Engineer and Construction Superintendent on the development of Kelsey City (now Lake Park) 6 miles north of West Palm Beach. He was also its Town Councilman and Sunday School Superintendent, and Palm Beach County Commissioner. He was unsuccessful at a saw mill near Boca Raton and vegetable farming near Pahokee, but did very well at dairy farming near Monet, then Jupiter. He was wiped out by the boom-bust of 1926 and hurricane of 1928; so, leaving his family in Florida, returned to Cuba to work for Henry

practice backfired on me just once.

While working on Hoover Dam, I taught a large class of very boisterous boys; always interrupting, hitting each other or doing most anything to make a disturbance. One day I told them one of my experiences and was really surprised as to how intensely they listened. Always thereafter they wanted a story. I always told them if they would pay attention to the lesson so we could get through early I would tell them a story. It was surprising, even to me, how they really paid attention to the lesson on the promise of a story. I never disappointed them.

One Sunday I had a new boy. The following Sunday after the lesson, came the usual clamor. Some wanted a crocodile story, others wanted a revolutionary story. I turned to the new boy and asked, "Which kind of story would you like?"

"I would like to have a true story!"

After the government retired me in 1951, on my way from Ephrata, Washington, to Fort Pierce, Florida, I stopped for a visit in California. One of those visited was Virgil Hinshaw, a Penn College schoolmate. After some conversation I made the remark that I didn't yet know just what I would do, now that I am retired. He replied, "I don't see why you need worry about something to do. Just write up your experiences."

"But I can't write."

"Write your experiences just like you tell them. They are very interesting."

In 1952 we had a class reunion, celebrating the 50th anniversary of our graduation from Penn College. Each of us wrote a brief history of our lives for the past 50 years. Various members of the class, after reading my contribution, also insisted I should write down my experiences. Some even went so far as to add that if no one else read them, my grandchildren would enjoy them.

So this is my life story as I have lived it and as I have enjoyed it; and I hope that others who read it may get some enjoyment out of it, too. While it is autobiographical, it is not always chronological, and I have tried to select the interesting things and leave out the drab or commonplace. Furthermore, I have brought in some persons and events that had very little immediate connection with my life and activi-

PREFACE

What makes a thing funny? Nine persons out of ten can't answer that question. During my junior year in college I had the answer brought home so forcibly I never forgot it.

One morning while Acting-President Kelly was conducting the chapel exercises, there suddenly appeared in one of the aisles, apparently out of nowhere, a dog with a placard tied around his neck. On the placard in big letters was "Class '02". The college just roared! When silence was at last sufficiently restored, the President asked the janitor to take the dog out and made no comment. Just how much Pres. Kelly had seen from his vantage point on the rostrum, and how much he guessed at, I will never know.

I was taking Psychology that year with the Senior Class, and Pres. Kelly was the professor. His lesson for that day was the above question. His first question after calling the roll was addressed to Harlan Meredith, a very prominent member of the Senior Class, an athlete and captain of the football team. "What makes a thing funny?"

Harlan stammered and stuttered, and finally said, "I don't believe I quite know."

Ordinarily the President would have called on another, but not today. He answered the question himself. "A thing is funny when it is out of place, unusual or unexpected. For instance, there is nothing funny about a dog. If you were walking down the street and saw a dog, you would think nothing of it; but if you saw a dog in chapel, you would probably smile."

The class roared but Harlan didn't smile.

As I have often told Sunday school classes, "So long as we live in one place and don't get out of the usual groove, our lives are very much like our neighbors—humdrum and uninteresting. But the moment we get out of the groove and set foot in a foreign land with a strange language, things immediately begin to happen and life really begins to take on interest."

In my seventeen years in a foreign land I had many unusual experiences—hence interesting ones. Since returning to the States, I have made good use of these episodes to hold the attention of my Sunday school classes and to illustrate points. The

J. Kaiser as an Engineer on the Cuba Central Highway.

In 1930, early in the Depression, he took his family West, where he worked on pipelines in Mexico and Montana, then Boulder (now Hoover) Dam and irrigation projects near Yuma, Arizona, and Ephrata, Washington, where he retired from the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation in 1951, aged 72.

In 1933, he and Birdie were separated. In 1941, he married Mrs. Hattie Kinsey (1876-1967) of Indiana and Cuba whom he had known for $\frac{1}{4}$ century. They lived together the following $\frac{1}{2}$ century in Yuma, Ephrata, Ft. Pierce, Florida, and Dania, Florida. The 11 years, from her death until his, he lived with Ethel and me in Miami, Florida. He was entombed with Hattie in Hollywood Memorial Gardens, Hollywood, Florida - at ground level in the west side of mausoleum F, the 6th crypt north of its transverse hallway.

He died at Leesburg, Florida, January 29, 1979. He had traveled widely over much of the U. S. by bicycle and automobile, and the eastern half of Cuba on horseback. He had seen 100 Fourth of Julys, Thanksgivings, and Christmases, but lacked $4\frac{1}{2}$ months of seeing 100 birthdays - a goal he had hoped to reach. In fact, he liked to quote a doctor's prophecy, when he was a young man, that he should live to be 100. He almost did!

He had just over 100 descendants, 2 of which are great-great-grandchildren.

Gordon L. Williams

ties, but had enough unusualness or historic value that I found them interesting and hope others may also.



NOAH WILLIAMS & HATTIE (MAMITA) KINSEY WILLIAMS
Ft. Pierce, Florida c.1952

Chapter 1

ANCESTRY

At the time of Admiral Penn's death the king of England owed him a large sum of money. To settle the debt, the king gave his son, William, a large tract of land in the colonies which he named Pennsylvania.

William Penn was not only a Quaker, but an energetic business man. He promptly set out to colonize his land among oppressed people in England, Wales, Holland, Germany, and the Scandinavian countries. One condition he put in every Charter was the right of the individual to religious liberty. Furthermore, while he accepted this land as the payment of a debt owed to his father, he felt that the king had no right to convey it since the rightful owners were the Indians. Consequently, before colonizing each piece of land, he purchased it from the Indians and he signed a treaty with them which has gone down in history as the only treaty never sworn to and never knowingly broken by either side. The story comes down by tradition in our family that a pioneer, well out on the frontier, had to leave home to be gone several days. There were savage Indians all around. The wife was afraid, so the first night of his absence she pulled in the latch string, something Quakers never did. She rolled and tossed and just couldn't sleep for hours, and finally got up and put the latch string out. She went back to bed and slept soundly. That night there was an Indian massacre. A day or so later she saw a big bunch of Indians approaching the house in war paint and was very much frightened. One Indian who could speak some English advanced and said all they wanted was some water, which she gladly gave them. While they were drinking the same Indian said, "You are Quakers, aren't you?" The question frightened her and not realizing its import she stalled by asking, "Why do you ask?" "We came here the other night to burn your house, and found the latch string out."

The amount Penn paid the Indians was not great,