

William Henry Graham (1873 – 1948)
Oral History and Research

When we began researching our Graham family history, our family oral history was fuzzy on William's birth date, and where he was born or who his parents were. So, we started this process to help us capture the family's stories, which could help us research the facts around William's family origins. We are always looking for more family participation in this process.

The following are stories we captured from family members. It's our intention to preserve the memory of William Graham and his wife Sadie Greenawalt. We also provide a context for each story, where our research findings let us know the accuracy of each story.

1. Calvin Graham: as a young boy, drove cattle down Route 11. ¹
 - This story was told to Calvin's grandson back in the late 1950's and early 1960s, when Calvin and his sons, Robert and Keith, and Calvin's grandsons were members of the Williams Grove Steam Engine Association.
 - During the late 1950s and early 1960s the Graham family operated a pony ride, and had a 19th century bedroom display and train set layout in the association's museum. Calvin also worked in association's camp kitchen. Our family library has been able to retain the memorabilia of this time.
 - Calvin and Robert also had an early 20th century Hart-Parr Tractor, and the family has a photo showing Calvin's grandson, Bob, at the wheel. The train sets have been preserved and are maintained in the family archives. ² In the bedroom display were two photos of a young Calvin Graham: 1.) a young Calvin with his sister Florence, this photo has been preserved and is retained in our family archives; ³ 2.) a young Calvin wearing a ragged straw hat, bare foot, driving a few cows from behind with a stick, this photo has been lost.
2. Robert Graham: Britton Greenawalt is Calvin Graham's half brother. ⁴
 - This is a common story known by all of the family members. However no one knows exactly how Britton
 - Sadie Greenawalt had a son Earl Britton Hostetter. ⁵ Britton, as he was known by the entire family, took the Greenawalt last name. He was born in 1889 before Sadie married William Graham in 1901. There is no record in Cumberland or Franklin Counties of Sadie being married before William. Britton Greenawalt's marriage application lists his father as dead, and his mother as Sadie Greenawalt. ⁶
3. Robert Graham: Calvin, never wanted to talk about his own father William, or his family, and that Calvin didn't like his father; cared much for him or something to that effect.
 - This story was told to Robert's son, Bob, when Bob asked about his grandfather's family.
 - Robert's son also asked his grandpa in the early 1970s, as a school project, about Calvin's family, and Calvin was his usual gruff demeanor, and short in his reply; there's nothing to tell.

4. Pat Graham-Napoli and her brother Robert Graham: William was illiterate, having little or no education.
 - This story was told to Robert's son, Bob, when Bob asked about his grandfather's family.
 - All the documents where William was to sign his name, there is a mark of an "X", and a witness's signature attesting to William's name and mark. All federal censuses records indicated William could not write, but could read.
 - On the 1940 federal census, under the category of, highest grade of school completed; William was listed as 3rd grade, and Sadie as the 6th grade.
5. Robert Graham: The Hoffman family of Harrisburg Pennsylvania, of the Harrisburg Hoffman Ford Car dealership, was in some way related to his father, Calvin Graham.
 - This story came from the many late 1950s and early 1960s Saturday morning trips Robert and his son Bob would take to Harrisburg's Abram's Scrap Yard on Cameron Street. During this period the Hoffman Ford dealership was located at the intersection of Paxtang and Cameron Street Harrisburg Pennsylvania. This is the route Robert would take to reach the scrap yard.
 - Sadie Greenawalt's younger brother, Thomas Albert Greenawalt, married Ella Lizzie Michael on December 14th 1883. Their 2nd daughter was named Pearl Greenawalt, who married Boyd Hoffman of Hopewell Township, Cumberland County Pennsylvania.⁷ Boyd is the great-grandfather of the current (2013) Earl Hoffman, who is the local Harrisburg Pennsylvania area Ford dealership; Hoffman Ford.⁸

The remaining two stories are important in our search for William's biological parents, his birth date, and his whereabouts during his childhood. No family member knows who William's parents were.

Where is William From

6. Robert Graham: Roxbury in Lurgan Township Franklin County Pennsylvania is where his Graham family was from, and buried.
 - Robert told this story to his son, also named Bob, back in the early 1960s while Robert took his son to Roxbury and other area. Robert Graham worked for the Department of Army in New Cumberland Pennsylvania. He also worked for a brief time in the Letterkenny Army Depot in Letterkenny Township Franklin County Pennsylvania. The family library has preserved Robert's Army Civilian certificates and photos of his time at Letterkenny.
 - Robert told his story to his son; Bob, in the 1990's when Bob asked about his grandfather's family. During this conversation Bob asked his father about the time they visited the Roxbury area. Robert reaffirmed his belief in the origins of the Graham family being from Roxbury, and added the Graham family also lived in the Shippensburg and Newburg areas of Cumberland County. Robert wasn't sure about William being given up by his parents.

- A Graham family reunion newspaper story of Elmer Graham's family dated 1972 was in the personal effects of Robert Graham. The reunion was held in Ohio. Elmer Frank Graham was born to James Graham (1835-1911).
- The geographical areas where William lived and moved about are within a ten mile section west and north-west of Shippensburg Pennsylvania. It includes Lurgan, Southampton, and Letterkenny townships of Franklin County, and Hopewell and Southampton Townships of Cumberland County. The borough of Shippensburg is split between both Franklin and Cumberland counties.

When was William Born

7. Robert Graham: William's middle name is Henry.
 - This story was told to Robert's son, Bob, when Bob asked about his grandfather's family.
 - The June 21st 1880 census record for Southampton Township Cumberland County indicated that a Henry Graham, 13 years old, was a servant living in the home of Lenard and Catherine Thrush.
 - There are no other records that indicate William's middle name as Henry. The middle name may or may not be correct.
8. Robert Graham and his sister Pat Graham-Napoli: Pat recalled being told that her grandfather William was given up by his family at a young age to another family because William wasn't wanted by his family, the family was too large and poor, and couldn't keep William.
 - Robert told his story to his son; Bob, in the 1990's when Bob asked about his grandfather's family.
 - Pat's story was told in 2010, about William being given up by his parents, but she didn't know anything about where William or of his parents origins.
 - We clearly have our grandfather William from the time he married Sadie Greenawalt in 1901.⁹ This also allowed us to use the federal census to locate William in 1900 living in Shippensburg Pennsylvania.
 - William was born September 12th 1873 in R.R. Shippensburg.¹⁰ This birth date and birth location came from his funeral memorial sign in book and pamphlet. All of our research and family stories indicate that William was born 1872-1873 in the Shippensburg Pennsylvania area. On identifying William's Birth Date, the following was what we currently have uncovered.
 - William's birth date and place of birth matches the August 27th 1870 federal census record for William and Mary Graham living in District 179 of Shippensburg Township, post office Shippensburg Pennsylvania.

- William was previously married, and that's a whole new story that helped us locate William's parents. He married Della Catherine Killinger February 5th 1896, while she was four months pregnant. On the marriage application and license William indicated he was 23 years old. He would be 24 years old in September 1896, making his birth year at 1872.
- The June 7th 1900 census record for Southampton Township Cumberland County indicated William was born May 1872; he was 28 years old, which also equates to an 1872 birth date.
 - William lived with the Hock family, a farmer by occupation, and who had children named Alice C., and Florence M. Names William and Sadie would later use for their children, which may be just a coincidence. This census is pivotal in getting to know if the William who married Della is the same William who married Sadie.
 - *(Here we have another census taking issue with the marital status of William, which I don't think is an error, but a hesitation by the census taker on how to record William's marital status. I keep looking at the record, and I think it is an "M", meaning he's married.) Is this an S, D, W, or M?*



- *(Also listed on this census record, about eight homes away, working as a servant in the home of George and Carrie Strohn, was Anna Graham, 15 years old, no listed birth date. As I later discovered this Anna is William's cousin, the daughter of a David Theodore Graham.*
- In the fall of 1901, Della file for divorce in Franklin County, charging William with desertion. The divorce hearing was held April 1902, and later decreed on July 11th 1902. ¹¹
- William's October 1901 marriage application and license to Sarah Greenawalt recorded in Cumberland County indicated he was 27, and with his September birth month, he would have been born in the year 1873. That's right, married in Cumberland County, before the divorce was final in Franklin County. This part of William's life is a must read.
- On the April 20th 1910 federal census, William was 40 years old, not yet 41, birth year 1870. On the January 15th 1920 federal census William was 48, not yet 49; birth year 1872. On the April 22nd 1930 federal census William was 58, not yet 59; birth year 1872. On the April 29th 1940 federal census William was 68, not yet 69; birth year 1872.
- William's death certificate dated June 1848 estimated his age to be about 75, and his obituary indicated he was 75, making his birth date 1873. William was buried on June 15th 1948. ¹² According to a birth date calculator, using his age and date of his death, William would have been born September 13th 1873.

- William's memorial booklet listed his birth date as September 12th 1873. The booklet also listed friends who attended his funeral: Mrs. W. J. Warren; Mrs. Bruce Warren; Mr. and Mrs. James Warren and son; Ester Clough; Bertha Clough; Gladys Davis; Mrs. Luther Miller; Mr. and Mrs. Robert Bender; Mrs. Cora Black; Edna Hoch; Bruce Hoch; Annie Wenger; C. C. Greenawalt; Kenneth C. Greenawalt; Jean Mathna; and Jean Wheler/Wheeler/Wlueler/Wlneler. Floral Tributes were made by: The Greenawalt Family; Calvin Graham; L. B. Smith Inc.; and the L. B. Smith Employees Association.
 - Bruce Hoch was the son of Charles and Alice Hoch, who William lived with after he disserted his first wife Delia in 1898, and before he married Sadie Greenawalt in 1901.
 - Bertha Clough and her daughter Ester Clough
 - Calvin Graham worked for the LB Smith Company.

Who are William's Parents

- Based on William's marriage application with Dellia Killinger, we know that William's parents were William and Mary Graham. ¹³ William lived in Shippensburg, but the marriage application did not clearly indicate where his parents William and Mary lived.
- The June 21st 1880 census record for Southampton Township Cumberland County indicated that a Henry Graham, 13 years old, was a servant living in the home of Lenard and Catherine Thrush. Lenard was 80 years old (b. 1800), and his wife, Catherine was 50 years old (b.1830).
 - The 1870 census for Lenard and Catherine list Lenard's age the same, but Catherine's age is listed as 50 (b.1820).
 - In 1900 Catherine Thrush was living with Annie Catherine Graham-Agle, William's older sister and husband Edward Agle. Catherine Thrush's relationship was indicated as grandmother. It's not clear if she is a grandmother of Annie Graham or Edward Agle.
 - There are a number of people named Catherine Thrush in the area. Example: there was a Catherine Thrush who was the daughter of Lenard Thrush, and she married her cousin Jacob Thrush. But this Catherine was born about 1801. ¹⁴
 - Catherine Thrush (b.1820) is most likely the 2nd wife of Lenard Thrush, whose 1st wife was Nancy Fisher and died. ¹⁵ Edward Agle's maternal grandmother.
- William's mother died in August 24th 1874. ¹⁶ Records indicate that Mary Graham was having children within two years of each other. Although the obituary didn't say the reason for her death in 1874, I assume she may have died from complications with having another child.
 - A death notice for Mary Oliver-Graham from the Shippensburg News dated Saturday, August 29th 1874. This notice is brief, and inconclusive in determining why she died. "DIED. GRAHAM – In Shippensburg Township, August 24th, 1874. Mrs. Mary, wife Wm. Graham, aged 32 years, 6 months, and 16 days." ¹⁷

- On December 24th 1872 William's uncle, James Graham's, wife had died. Her death too may have resulted from complications with having a child. "DEATH – GRAHAM – Near Newburg on December 24th suddenly, Mrs. Angelina, wife of James Graham, aged 35 years, 6 months, 19 days. ¹⁸ That child was Elmer Franklin Graham, who was later taken in by his older brother David Graham of Newburg. The resemblances between David, Elmer, and William are very striking, as is David's and Elmer's children with Calvin and Robert Graham.
- When William married Dellia Killinger on February 5th 1896, William Graham was a farmer from Shippensburg and he made his mark "X", which was witnessed by E.M. Shade. William also listed his parents as William and Mary Graham. It should be noted that the license did not indicate where William's parents were from. Only that William's residence is Shippensburg.
- The June 7th 1900 Southampton Twp., Franklin County Census listed William Graham as a servant in the home of Charles Hock, a farmer, of Southampton Township Franklin County. William is 28 years old, listed as being born May 1872. His occupation was not readable on the census form, but I think it says "servant". William could read, but could not write, and he could speak English. When asked if single, married, widowed, or divorced, the census taker made a mark of either a "W" for Widowed or "M" for Married. But it is clearly not blank, or is it an "S" for Single or "D" for Divorced.
- Our grandfather Calvin signed William's death certificate, which indicated William was from R.R. #3 Shippensburg, Franklin County. The certificate didn't list his mother's and father's name; that William was a widower, not identifying his wife's name; and that William's birth date was unknown. ¹⁹
- A Graham family reunion newspaper story of Elmer Graham's family dated 1972 was in the personal effects of Robert Graham. The reunion was held in Newburg Pennsylvania. Elmer Frank Graham was born to James Graham (1835-1911).

End Notes

¹ Up until the early 1950s, there were only two direct routes between Shippensburg and Carlisle Pennsylvania; Ritner Highway and Walnut Bottom Road. Both roads connect to Shippensburg's East King Street.

- Ritner Highway is known today as State Route 11, and begins at Carlisle's West High Street travels directly to Shippensburg's East King Street.
- Walnut Bottom Road starts at Carlisle's South Hanover Street on present day State Route 465 for about 8 miles, and then becomes State Route 174. Rt. 174 continues until it connects with East King Street in Shippensburg. At this connection point is also known today as the Rittner Highway and State Route 11.

² The Taylor ~ Graham Library also maintains an extensive archives collection, Taylor ~ Graham Library 479 County Line Road York Springs Pennsylvania 17372, <http://taylorgrahamlibrary.net/>

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⁴ Britton Greenawalt Relationship To William Graham: 1911 Marriage Records, No. 200, Register of Wills & Clerk of Orphans' Court Services, 1 Courthouse Square, Carlisle, PA 17013

⁵ Britton and Sadie Greenawalt relationship, and Britton's Paternal Hostettler Last Name: 1900 June 19-20, 1900 Federal Census for Southampton Township, Franklin County, Pennsylvania, Enumeration District 53, Sheet 1567-01. Roll: T623_1413; Page: 15A; United States of America, Bureau of the Census; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1900. T623, 1854 rolls.

⁶ Britton Greenawalt Marriage: 1911 Marriage Records, No. 200, Register of Wills & Clerk of Orphans' Court Services, 1 Courthouse Square, Carlisle, PA 17013, Taylor ~ Graham Library, 479 County Line Road York Springs Pennsylvania 17372

⁷ Greenawalt Family of Cumberland and Franklin County Pennsylvania, David Franklin Greenawalt, California, 1988, and Nicholas Greenawalt (1754-1831), Taylor ~ Graham Library, 479 County Line Road York Springs Pennsylvania 17372

⁸ Graham and Hoffman Family Relationship: July 2006 telephone conversation between Bob Graham and Earl Hoffman, and the Thomas Greenawalt Obituary, The News Chronicle Shippensburg, November 8th 1940.

⁹ William Graham Marriage to Sadie Greenawalt: 1901 Marriage Records, No. 228-13, Register of Wills & Clerk of Orphans' Court Services, 1 Courthouse Square, Carlisle, PA 17013, Taylor ~ Graham Library, 479 County Line Road York Springs Pennsylvania 17372

¹⁰ William Graham's Birth: The only record of William's birth is written on his funeral memorial booklet record, dated June 15th 1948, from the M. Garfield Barbour Funeral Home, Shippensburg Pennsylvania. This record was likely written by a family member; William's birth is being recorded as September 12th 1873; Taylor ~ Graham Library, 4709 County Line Road York Springs Pennsylvania 17372.

¹¹ Court Docket Index, 1902, Page 119, Divorce Case #20 dated April 1902, Reason- Desertion, Decreed July 11, 1902. Clerk of Courts, 157 Lincoln Way East, Chambersburg, PA 17201

¹² William Graham Certificate of Death: File Number 52764, June 12th 1948, Pennsylvania Vital Division of Vital Records , 101 South Mercer Street, Room 401, P.O. Box 1528, New Castle PA 16101

¹³ William Graham and Dellia Killinger Marriage: 1896, Marriage Records, Marriage No. 61, Clerk of Courts, Courthouse Annex, 157 Lincoln Way East, Chambersburg, PA 17201

¹⁴ Page 31, 32, 35, Thrush Family History: David Thrush, 610 Willow Bank Street, Bellefonte, Pennsylvania 16823; Lenard Thrush Estate Records: Prothonotary Office, Clerk of Courts, Courthouse Annex, 157 Lincoln Way East, Chambersburg, PA 17201

¹⁵ Page 41, Thrush Family History: David Thrush, 610 Willow Bank Street, Bellefonte, Pennsylvania 16823.

¹⁶ Mary Oliver-Graham Death Notice: Microfilm, The Shippensburg News, dated Saturday, August 29th 1874, Shippensburg Historical Society 52 West King Street P.O. Box 539, Shippensburg PA

¹⁷ Mary Oliver-Graham Death Notice: Microfilm, The Shippensburg News, dated Saturday, August 29th 1874, Shippensburg Historical Society 52 West King Street P.O. Box 539, Shippensburg PA

¹⁸ Angelina Gross-Graham Death Notice: Microfilm, The Shippensburg News, Saturday, January 11th 1873, Shippensburg Historical Society 52 West King Street P.O. Box 539, Shippensburg PA

¹⁹ William Graham's Parents: Certificate of Death, File No. 52764, Pennsylvania Division of Vital Records, 101 South Mercer Street, Room 401, P. O. Box 1528, New Castle PA 16101; Taylor ~ Graham Library, 479 County Line Road York Springs, PA 17372.