

Family Histories of Robert Elliott Williams (1890-1963) & his son John Elliott Williams (1916-1991)

Robert Elliott Williams was born 22 March 1890 at the family residence, 21 Newton Street, Paisley, Scotland. He was the second son of Andrew James Williams and Jane (Elliot¹) Williams and the fourth of nine children. Jane's parents were John Elliot and Catherine Heaslet². Most of the Williams children were born in Paisley but the final child was born in Belfast, Ireland as the family had emigrated from Scotland to Ireland between 1901 and 1905. Robert was said to have served in the British military and met his wife, Annie Marshall, through an army comrade (Tom Marshall, the brother of Annie). Robert and Annie were married in Canada, 14 August 1912, in the town of Morewood Ontario. (Ontario License # 018647 – LDS film # 1906765). A John Williams, presumably Robert's younger brother, witnessed the marriage. Robert, we understand, had come ahead to Canada with his brother John (who went by the name Jack) to get settled and Annie followed after. Annie, daughter of Robert and Annie Marshall, was one of five children. The family³ lived at Ballystockart (Stanfield House) in the Comber Parish, County of Down, Ireland. Three of her siblings were baptized in the 1st Comber Presbyterian Church between 1889 and 1894, although Annie herself was born 10 May 1890 in Belfast.



Robert & Annie Williams



John about 9 years old at
Maitland



Our only picture
of baby Jean



Meta and Annie Williams
during a 1918 visit to Ireland

Robert and Annie lived in Morewood for a time, where Robert was a cheese-maker working for Alva James Martin.² The Williams family lived in several towns on Eastern Ontario during the 20's as Robert was employed as a manager of several different cheese factories in the area. Annie and Robert had three children altogether but both of the girls died around the age of six

Children of Robert and Annie

i. **Meta Marshall Williams**

Born: 25 May 1914 at Morewood, Ontario. Died: Jan 12, 1920 at Chesterville, aged 6 years 9 months 25 days from pneumonia. Buried at Maple Ridge Cemetery Chesterville. (Ontario Certificate # 34639 LDS Film #1863409)

ii. **John Elliott Williams**

Born: 11 October 1916 at Ormond, Ontario. Died 22 November 1991 at Kingston Ontario. Buried at Maple Ridge Cemetery Chesterville.

iii. **Jean Williams**

Born: 22 June, 1923 at Chesterville. Died 10 Jan, 1929 at Maitland, Augusta Township, at 5 years 6 months 19 days from pneumonia. (Ontario Certificate # 21015 LDS Film: 2210920). Buried at Maple Ridge Cemetery Chesterville. The certificate notes that the family had been in Maitland for 11 months.

due to pneumonia. Meta, the first child, (shown here with her mother) was born in 1914. John Elliott Williams was born 11 October 1916 at Ormond Ontario. Jean was the third child, born in 1923.

The family moved to Alberta about 1929 when Robert's employer³ closed due to the Depression. They had a lucrative contract, at the time, shipping cheese and butter to New York City but the contract was terminated as a result of protectionist measures in the States. Robert's sister Annie, who lived in Calgary, was married to Jay Martin. Jay was a dairy inspector and let Robert know about a dairy manager's position available in Lethbridge, Alberta. Robert got the job and worked at the Crystal Dairy for about two years. Tragically, Annie contracted pneumonia in the summer of 1930 and died the 5th of September when John was just 14 years old. She is buried in a Lethbridge cemetery.



Robert with one of his dogs
at Maitland in the 1940's



Robert at his home
in Kingston - 1960

Robert moved back East with John (who preferred the name Jack, like his uncle) in the early 1930's to work again at the Maitland Union Cheese Factory in Maitland, Ontario. An August 1934 article in the Brockville Recorder identifies Robert and Jack as witnesses to a Coroner's Inquest related to an automobile accident that happened in front of the cheese factory. A car, traveling at high speed struck a milk truck turning into the factory and one of the passengers was

killed. Robert enjoyed breeding dogs at his home in Maitland, not far from the factory. He married Mabel Hudon, a Cornwall Ontario girl, about 1933 but we know very little about her. It is not known as yet when Robert retired from the cheese/dairy industry but he did work for a period on the restoration of Fort Henry at Kingston in the 1950's as a cabinetmaker. He may have changed jobs in the late 1930's because Jack's Navy enlistment papers (Jan 1941) indicate that Robert was living at 8 Ann St. in Brockville. Robert died at Kingston, Ontario in 1963 at 73 years of age.

While living in Maitland, Jack attended high school in Brockville. He enjoyed a number of sports as a youth but boxing became his main interest. The Brockville Police organized an activity program for young people, which encouraged sports. Jack's size, strength and agility made him a contender in the flyweight division and he went on to compete at a fairly high level, winning an award at the Golden Gloves tournament one year. He earned pocket money on the side by fighting on the under-card of local professional matches.



1936 Photo

Jack left high school without graduating and worked for a while with his father in the dairy at Maitland. His training in the mechanical trades began during his high school years and later, during the depression years, with Phillips Electrical Works in Brockville, Chicago Flexible Shaft Company (later known as Sunbeam Appliance) in Toronto and Canadian Acme Screw and Gear Company in Toronto. During this period he achieved proficiency as a general machinist and engine-fitter.

In October 1937 Jack obtained a position with International Nickel Company at their Copper Cliff Mine (Sudbury, Ontario) as a machinist. In 1938 he was transferred from the General Maintenance Machine Shop to the Power Section Mechanical Maintenance and placed in charge of a crew assigned to programmed maintenance of engines, turbines, pumps, air compressors and miscellaneous auxiliary and ancillary machinery. During the next two years he became interested in the engineering and operational aspects of this very large power and utilities plant. He obtained credit for the necessary experience through time spent maintaining equipment and qualified for Fourth, Third and Second Class Stationary Engineer Certificates by sitting examinations in 1940. During this period he was also promoted to supervisor of Power and Utilities at the Levack Mine and began a correspondence course in Steam-Electric Engineering. He continued to participate in boxing in the Sudbury area and was active in skiing.⁴

In December 1940 Jack joined the Royal Canadian Volunteer Navy (R.C.V.N.) for the duration of hostilities. After basic training he received a three-month course in marine engineering and was subsequently appointed to be an instructor in engineering and machine shop practice at the mechanical training school at the Naden Establishment in Esquimalt, B.C. He was to meet his wife to be, Jessie Crawford Hepburn, at a navy social club in Victoria in 1941 and they were married on the 4th of April 1942.

After a year of teaching naval recruits, he requested service on ships to qualify for Watch-keeping and Charge-of-Machinery Certificates. This was granted and he subsequently acquired the necessary sea time as Assistant Chief Engineer on H.M.C.S. Dawson (on service in the

Queen Charlotte and Aleutian Islands) to qualify for the certificates. In May 1943 he wrote the examinations for Warrant Engineer and Sub-Lieutenant Engineer. He later served as Chief Engineer on two other RCN Corvettes on Atlantic convoy service (H.M.C.S. Fennel Jul 43-Apr 44 and H.M.C.S. Shediac Jun 44 – Jan 45).⁵ He was mentioned in dispatches, 18 Jul 44, as a result of actions (while on Fennel) in the sinking of U-744 by several Canadian ships. Jack's story is that the Captain was actually rewarding him for saving the ship after a number of depth charges detonated early damaging the hull. He managed to lead his engine room team in plugging the holes with mattresses, shoring things up with timbers and getting the engine-room pumped out. Jack was promoted to Commissioned (Warrant) Engineer while serving on Shediac in Jan 1945 before his demobilization in October 1945.

Jessie was a B.C. girl, born 23 March 1922 in Nanaimo, daughter of J.T. Hepburn (Biggar, Scotland) and Margaret McLean Smith (West Calder, Scotland). She stayed with her parents throughout the war in Victoria and had their first son during that period while Jack was away in the Aleutians. John Patrick Williams was born 23 April 1943.



1941 Photos

After the war Jack and Jessie moved to Toronto, where Jack went back to school as a part of a veterans education program. During the next few years he prepared for entry to university, completing his high school diploma in 1947. At the same time he worked as an operating engineer in several steam power plants in Toronto to acquire the additional experience to qualify for writing examinations for a First Class Stationary Engineer certificate. He later qualified and obtained the certificate in 1949.

Jack entered University of Toronto, at Ajax, in September 1947 with the objective of taking a degree in mechanical engineering. This was a special facility established to take the extra load of veterans. After completing the second year of the course in 1949, he found summer work with Canadian Johns-Manville as an operating engineer. The plant used coal dust as its energy source, which was very volatile. In August while attempting to extinguish an accidental fire, Jack's coveralls caught fire. He was seriously burned and spent the next five months in hospital recovering. Although he recovered completely, the school year was disrupted and the family's financial situation was suffering, having two children by this time.

Jack and Jessie's second son, Robert Nelson, was born 24 August 1948 (at the Oshawa hospital) while they were at Ajax. Robert's twin, James, died at childbirth. Their third son David Elliott was also born at Oshawa 14 May 1950.

In May 1950 Jack applied for full-time work with the General Motors Corporation (GMC) Diesel Division. General Motors was building their diesel and locomotive plant in London, Ontario. Jack obtained a position as Chief of Power and Utilities and went to work in London during construction of the plant. He was promoted to plant Engineer after the first few months of operation. This involved complete responsibility for lands, buildings, manufacturing machinery, power plant, utilities and construction work. His staff, of engineers, technicians, draftsmen, operating engineers and skilled trades personnel, numbered about 100 at times of maximum production.

In the early years at London the family lived on Wilton Avenue. A fourth boy, Thomas Marshall, was born 7 December 1952. In 1955 the family moved into a new home on Coombs Avenue, near the University of Western Ontario. The family was very active in outdoor activities though the late 1950's. There was always a skating rink in the backyard in the winter and the whole family enjoyed numerous trips to the local ski hills. Son John became a proficient cross-country skier. Jack enjoyed fishing and camping trips with his boys and there were frequent trips to the beaches of Georgian Bay. Jack and Jessie always had able caddies for their games of golf.

In 1955 Jack was asked to take over the Production Process Engineering Department and to reorganize it for increased production. He received special preparation for this in the form of a concentrated course in advanced methods and standards at the General Motors Institute in Flint, Michigan, as well as one year of on-the-job training as Assistant Superintendent of Production in the manufacturing plant. He began the reorganization of the department early in 1957. This was completed in about one year. His department was responsible for the methods, standards, plant layout, process systems, new product development and cost reduction techniques. One of the main objectives was to develop new production capabilities to replace the anticipated decline in locomotive volume. Several new major products were placed in production under his direction.

Throughout his time at GMC Jack followed the formal, in-plant, training program from the General Motors Institute Management Training Division. This was to serve him well in his later career. Over a period of eleven years he studied: personnel relations, employee appraisal and development, union contracts, collective bargaining, arbitration procedures, techniques of supervision, job evaluation, job classification, applied psychology, methods and systems analysis techniques, labour standards and time study methods, value and cost analysis techniques, elements of data processing and computer techniques.

After his promotion to management, Jack attended Middle and Top Management Development Seminars, at GMC. These seminars were one week in duration each year covering: advanced management technique, corporate business management, developing managers including selection and training, cost and efficiency methods, forecasting, marketing, sales, public relations, organization principles and procedures, corporate policy administration for middle and top management personnel, Harvard School of Business case study technique and business games, as well as other special management "tools" such as operations research and business management planning techniques.

Jack had management responsibilities at GMC as Chairman of the Power-Utilities Committee for

GMC (U.S.A. & Canada). He was also active in community matters, becoming Secretary and subsequently President of the Lions Club (a community service group) and President of the University Heights Ratepayers Association. He successfully ran in municipal politics being elected as a London Town Counselor and serving as Public Works Commissioner. Other duties came with the position as well. He was Vice-Chairman of the London Township Parks and Recreation Board Member, a member of the City of London Public Utilities Commission, Chairman of the City of London Recreation Committee, and a member of the London - Port Stanley Railway Commission.



J.E.W. the politician
in 1958

In 1961, as Jack approached age 45, it became apparent to him that further personal progress would only be accomplished by, waiting ten years for the possibility of becoming Works Manager, moving within General Motors Corporation to the United States, or by taking a position in another industry. The next step in his career progression came through a competition for the federal government position of Superintendent, Works and Plant

Maintenance at a new airport to be built at Malton, Ontario that grew to become Toronto's Pearson International Airport. He carried out the duties and responsibilities of this position from August 1961 to June 1964. During this period the Williams' lived on Rexdale Blvd. in the Toronto borough of Etobicoke. He found the position to be interesting and but stressful. As the airport project was nearing completion he looked for a career change and found success in another government competition as a Classification and Establishment Analyst in Ottawa with the federal Department of Transport. This was essentially personnel work, which he had studied in depth at GMC.

Children of John and Jessie

- i. **John Patrick Williams**, born 23 Apr, 1943 in Victoria B.C., Works as an aircraft engineer.
- ii. **Robert Nelson Williams**, born 24 Aug, 1948 in Oshawa, Ontario. Works as a research technician for the federal government.
- iii. **James Williams**, twin of Robert died at birth, 24 Aug 1948.
- iv. **David Elliott Williams**, born 14 May 1950 in Oshawa, Ontario. Works as a contracts manager for the federal government.
- v. **Thomas Marshall Williams**, born 7 Dec, 1952 in London, Ontario. Works as a mining geologist.

The whole family did not move to Ottawa in 1964. Jack and Jessie's oldest son John remained in Toronto to study aircraft maintenance training and went on to work around the country as a licensed engineer. Once the three younger boys were in high school Jessie started working in the Nepean Township library.

At Transport Jack carried out classification work in Air Services Branch from 1965 to 1967, completed studies and reported on the re-organization of Construction Branch in the department (1966 - 1967) and reviewed and commented on draft classification standards for technical categories (1967-1968).

Jack and Jessie retired in 1984 and built their retirement home. For seven years they enjoyed traveling, golfing, gardening and socializing with their neighbours. In 1991 John Elliot Williams suffered a debilitating stroke and died a year later in November 1992 after a further series of strokes. He had been a pipe smoker for most of his adult life, which no doubt contributed to his death. Jessie is doing well in her 84th year and continue to drive herself to her volunteer job at the local library.

Notes:

¹ The name Elliot has in some instances had a second “t” added. This goes back to the Scottish Registry records where several of Jane Elliot’s children, including Robert, had the additional letter added.

² An extensive family tree has been established for the Heaslet family. They have two connections to the Williams family as Robert’s sister Catherine married a second cousin, James Heaslet.

³ A family tree is also available for the Marshall family, which was extensively researched by the author during a visit to Comber, Northern Ireland in the fall of 2004.

⁴ Alva Judson Martin, at various times employed several Williams family members at the Morewood Cheese Factory. Martha (Williams) Cassels and her husband William were the first in the early 1900’s. One would assume that Robert and Jack got their jobs there through their sister. Annie (the youngest Williams) eventually married Alva’s son Jay.

⁵ The name of the cheese factory at Maitland is not yet known for certain. There was the Maitland Union Cheese Factory (est. 1893) and later the Chateau Cheese Company. The Chateau Cheese Company was owned by Charles Henri Labarge who sold it in 1929 to Borden (perhaps there is a coincidence regarding the end of Roberts employment there). A cheese factory operated on the same site until 1950. A 1936 photo taken by Jack Williams shows a very different structure from the building pictured in a book about Maitland with a large Chateau Cheese Company sign on it (date not known).

⁶ Contact has been made with the son’s of two of Jack’s friends from his Sudbury days. It is hoped that they will have pictures and information from that period.

⁷ Research in the logs of the Canadian Navy ships that Jack served on has provided additional details on his wartime comings and goings. Efforts to find surviving crewmembers have not been successful.

Author's Note:

This is the fourth edition of the family histories of Robert and John (Jack) Williams. A large amount of information related to Williams ancestors is captured in related documents.

There is also an amazing wealth of information on Jessie's family history in Scotland that makes interesting reading. The genealogical work of her father, James Thomas Orr Hepburn, has provided the inspiration to a number of people to explore and record their family roots.

David Elliott Williams
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

John Elliott Williams - Service Details per Canadian Navy Records

Toronto D.H.Q.	Stoker I/C	14 Jan 41	14 Jan 41
Toronto D.H.Q.	S.P.O.	15 Jan 41	24 Feb 41
Naden	S.P.O.	25 Feb 41	27 May 41
Givenchy (Armentieres)	S.P.O.	28 Feb 41	24 July 41
Naden	S.P.O.	25 Jul 41	7 Sep 41
Naden	E.R.A. 4/C	8 Sep 41	10 Aug 42
Givenchy (Dawson)	E.R.A. 4/C	11 Aug 42	7 Sep 42
Givenchy (Dawson)	E.R.A. 3/C	8 Sep 42	23 Jun 43
Givenchy	E.R.A. 3/C	24 Jun 43	9 Jul 43
Stadacona	E.R.A. 3/C	10 Jul 43	19 Jul 43
Avalon (Fennel)	E.R.A. 3/C	20 Jul 43	30 Sep 43
Avalon (Fennel)	A/Ch. E.R.A. (ty)	1 Oct 43	6 Jan 44
Fennel	A/Wt. Eng T.	7 Jan 44	17 Apr 44
Avalon	A/Wt. Eng T.	18 Apr 44	18 May 44
Cornwallis	A/Wt. Eng T.	19 May 44	31 May 44
Shediac	A/Wt. Eng T.	1 Jun 44	8 Jun 44
Burrard (Shediac)	A/Wt. Eng T.	9 Jun 44	22 Aug 44
Shediac	A/Wt. Eng T.	23 Aug 44	6 Jan 45
Naden	Wt. Eng T.	7 Jan 45	25 Jul 45
Shediac	Wt. Eng T.	25 Jul 45	16 Sep 45
York	Wt. Eng T.	17 Sep 45	17 Oct 45
Discharged	Wt. Eng T.	17 Oct 45	

Examinations & Certificates

12-3-41	Passed Prov. Test (Good)
8-9-41	Granted Boiler Room Watch Cert.
6-10-41	Granted E.R. Watchkeeping Cert.
12-2-43	Granted E.R.A. Charge Certs. 3 & 4
18-12-43	Recommended for Warrant Rank.

Notes & Related Information

¹ **WILLIAMS, John Elliott, Chief Engine Room Artificer (V-22689) - Mention in Despatches - RCNVR** - Awarded as per **Canada Gazette** of 9 September 1944 and **London Gazette** of 18 July 1944 "For good service in destroying an enemy submarine."

- <http://www.rcnvr.com>

² SPO was a Stoker Petty Officer. That is to say he was a pipe-fitter, boiler-maker, coal shoveller, boiler watch-keeper but was not directly involved with the engines themselves. They were the exclusive territory of the Engine Room Artificers. At the time, a SPO would be promoted to a Chief Stoker - he could become an ERA only through meeting the technical qualifications. Most unlikely in peacetime, but often done in wartime, especially when they realized that some men had far more knowledge and experience than was originally thought when they were taken on.

³ (Ty) or (ty) stood for "temporary", which meant for the duration of the war. All promotions granted because of wartime exigencies were noted as (Ty). This meant when the war was over they had to revert to their pre-war ranks.

⁴ A Warrant Officer was a man with superior technical qualifications. He had to be a confirmed Petty Officer before being promoted. He did not hold a commission but was granted a "Warrant". This allowed him to wear the full range of officer's kit and he was entitled to be called "Mister". WOs had normal wardroom privileges. His duties were confined to his technical specialty only and his rank was shown by the wearing of a single thin stripe and loop. He could be promoted to Chief Warrant Officer and would then wear a thick stripe. Promotion was rare but a CWO could become a Lieutenant (E). Warrant Officers were phased out in 1949 when the old CFR scheme was expanded. WOs were often the Engineering Officers aboard small vessels like corvettes, minesweepers and submarines etc.