

Elizabeth Willard. Apparently, before she agreed to marry Jacob, Elizabeth decided to test the ring to make sure it was real.

It also seems that by the late 1800s, the supply of unique names for Williard children was starting to run low. (Although, if you read the church records and find out there actually were more than two boys named "Dewalt Willard" in the area, it may be that the name supply has been running short for a lot longer than just since the 1800s.) Anyway, there were three first cousins born in Columbiana County, Ohio in the late 1800s, all of whom were named John Williard. I don't know what it was about those ancestors and that name, "John" but there sure were a lot of them. These John Williards all, thankfully, had different middle names, so for their entire lives, they were known as "John N.," "John L." and "John A." My grandmother used to tell stories about her childhood, and she never referred to an "Uncle John" but always to an "Uncle John N."

There is also some evidence that, in the present day, this naming trend has gotten even worse. My great grandfather was named William Cool Williard. He named his first son, my great uncle, William Clarence Williard. Thus, there were two "WCWs" in the family, with different middle names. Uncle Bill followed the trend by naming his son William C. Williard. By that time, there were too many Bill Williards, and far too many WCWs, so we all just called him "Three." That is a nickname that, to his chagrin, he still bears to this day.

The William Cool Williard family has, for most of my life, been excited about being a "family" and all that being a family means. My grandmother had six sisters and two brothers, and they have been getting together with their children, grandchildren, and great grand-

children once a year since the 1950s. In my lifetime, this Williard reunion has generally been on Fathers Day, and almost always around Canfield, Ohio. Although recently, the number of attendees sits around 50, there have been many a prior reunion in which the number of people that showed up were so great that we all had to where nametags that not only gave our names, but how we fit into the family. In those years, I was known as "Evie's granddaughter." In retrospect, it was an improvement to the years when great-grandma Doris called me "Connie" thinking I was my mother, and my cousins called me "Cheryl" thinking I was my sister. (They are sitting over there, by the way.) This mix up isn't just senilily, though. In looking at all my relatives, it is very clear that the Williard genes are strong. As my mother has often said, we have one man's face and one woman's face, and you can see it at any age, any weight, and with any color hair. It is certainly true that many of us look more like siblings than cousins, and for the siblings, the resemblance can be extraordinary.

One year, in the 1970s, my grandmother and her sisters decided to get together to evaluate, physically, what it means to be a "true Williard." They took a census of the hundred or so people who were at the reunion that year, and they concluded that a "true Williard" had light brown hair, blue eyes, a very big nose, could cackle like a witch when laughing and had a propensity to snort when laughing or when surprised. I was graded "near Williard" because my nose wasn't big enough.

I always thought it was the William C. Williard family that had such strong genes so that we all looked alike. In recent years, however, we have learned that that the Williards at large have looked alike for hundreds of years. I have pictures here on my

computer of Uncle John N. and his two brothers that are virtually indistinguishable, and which are extremely similar to that of their grandfather, the Squire. So, it's the John Williard family that looks so much alike and has such strong genes. Or at least, that is as far as we've got pictures.

In connection with my study of the George Willard family that lived in New Freedom, Squire John's uncle's family, I began corresponding with George Willard's several times descendant. We agreed to meet one day and visit the old farmhouse. Not knowing how I would recognize him in a public place, we agreed to meet at the old cemetery in Graceham, because, while public, there probably wouldn't be a ton of people wandering around. My mother and I arrived at the cemetery first, and while we were photographing some tombstones, we were very surprised to see my mother's first cousin Brian Kirby walk into the cemetery. Last time we checked Brian was in Houston, Texas and had no interest in genealogy whatsoever. This cemetery was an extremely strange place for him to be. Well, there is no point in dragging this out any further, as I'm sure you have already guessed, this was not Brian, but George's many great grandson. He was a cousin, but definitely not a first cousin. The family resemblance was still strong even that far back.

So, that brings us to the present day, from 1600's in France, to 21<sup>st</sup> century America. We've come a long way from the days of Major Simon Willard and the Maryland Dirt Farmers. Nicolaus was my 9 great grandfather, 10 generations ago. Mary Elizabeth has 10 or more generations of descendants in this country, which, as you know, represents an almost uncountable number of people. But I have one more story to tell.