

LUTHER "LUKE" ALEXANDER & DONA FLORENCE BOYD SHANKS (#512)

Source: Heritage of Putnam County Tennessee – 2008 by Putnam County Heritage Book Committee and County Heritage Inc.

Pg. 191: Simon Shanks and his English bride, Margaret Maddux, were married in 1823 in VA and came to TN in 1835 with Margaret's parents, Craven Maddux and Betsy Davis. None of Simon's siblings came along. The story passed down in the family says they were proud German people who ostracized Simon for marrying outside the German clan. The family spelled the name Shank with in VA; however, one of the earliest patriarchs who came into Lancaster County, PA, near Shanksville, was HeHeinrich Schenck, Luke Shanks' gr-gr-gr-grandfather, who preferred the German spelling of his sir name, Schenck. Luke Shanks' grandparents were Craven Michael Shanks, who served in the Union Army during the Civil War, and Nancy Katherine Hendley, who died at an early age in 1877. They were buried in the Shanks family cemetery on Century Farm, up the hill behind the barn where the log cabin once stood on what is now Hopewell Road. Luther "Luke" Alexander Shanks, born in 1890 in a log cabin in the lower end of Putnam County, TN on what is now a Century Farm, was one of seven children who lived to be adults. He was born to Robert Fain Shanks and Anna Louisa Anderson. Anna Louisa Anderson was a daughter of Thomas Anderson Jr. and Louisa Alexander, who both died in June 1861 in their early 40's, along with two small children leaving behind 11 children.

Ann had a twin sister, Jane, who married an Evans. Jane was the mother of Mollie Sutton. The youngest child of Robert and Anna, Josie, had Downs Syndrome. Her mother, Ann, taught her how to dress herself and make up her bed. Luke said his mother spoke of praying that she would live longer than Josie because it would be a burden for other members of the family to take care of her. Grandma Ann's prayers were in 1919 when the dreaded FLU, which started in Europe, reached the United States. Luke had this flu and said, "It was the worst thing I ever had – I couldn't get out of bed. As one person got better, they had to wait on the others. Mrs. Molly Sutton, who was a niece of Ann's, would ride her horse down from Baxter to help the family out during this terrible time. Finally, Josie came down with the flu and died in January 1919. Grandma Ann also succumbed to the disease in March 1919, fulfilling an answer to her prayers.

Luke Shanks married Dona Florence Boyd, who was born in 1889. Her parents were George Washington Boyd and Naomi Tennessee Kerr or Carr. George Washington Boyd's parents were Eliza Jane Jared and Bransford B. Boyd, who was a Confederate soldier during the Civil War and died at the age of 33. Later a memorial for him was placed in the Confederate Circle at Mt. Olivet Cemetery in Nashville. Bransford Boyd was the youngest child of John and Elizabeth Leath Boyd, early settlers of Putnam County. Eliza Jane Jared Boyd remained a widow until her death in 1899. Bransford and Eliza were the parents of four children: Lafayette, Irvin, George, and Betsy Ann Boyd. Andrew Carr and Carolyn Stillman Jared were the parents of Naomi Tennessee Carr. Carolyn Stillman was a daughter of Joseph and Dorcus Byrne Jared. Dorcas died in 1836 at the age of 33 and was buried in the Byrnes-Jared Cemetery. Joseph later married Rachel Ray.

Luke Shanks was a farmer most of his life. He was also a merchant in Buffalo Valley during its heyday. He later formed a partnership with his brother, Walter Shanks, known as Shanks Brothers. He began feeling sickly and "went out on the farm hillside full time to be out in the sunshine". He lived to be 89 years old, enjoying life to the fullest with very few sick spells or medicines, other than aspirin. He had his first Coca-Cola when he was in his late 60's, the first and last. He never indulged in coffee, tea, or tobacco. He had one episode with moonshine which he thought was going to cost him his life and vowed he would never indulge again. To him these things didn't have any food value, so he surmised it was useless to spend money on such things. He bought his first car, a 1935 Chevrolet, in 1937 and learned to drive it.

Dona Florence Boyd Shanks was a school teacher when she and Luke married. She attended the Normal School (MTSU) in Murfreesboro and Dixie College, now TTU, in Cookeville. She bought one of the first automobiles in this area. Elise McKinley said when Dona Boyd went past their house going to teach school, the entire family would race to the window to see the car and the unbelievable woman driver. Dona learned to change tires as the roads were very rocky, causing many flats. Before buying a car, her dad, George Boyd, had to ride a horse while leading another one, on week-ends for her to come home or else get

the buggy out. She would board during the week with someone in the neighborhood where she taught. Later she would accept schools in Huntsville, AL and Cairo, GA, as her school term here would be drawing to an end. She would engage someone to finish her school in Putnam County and go further south to take up another school, which would ensure her full time employment. In Putnam County, the school term would only be for 3-4 months. Her last school, a subscription school, was in the 1920's in Buffalo Valley, referred to as the school up on the hill on the bluff. It was completely demolished when I-40 went "slap-dab" through the middle of Buffalo Valley.

Dona Boyd exchanged teaching school for a full time job on the farm with three children while keeping house. Dona Boyd and Luke Shanks were the parents of three children: Ann Miriam Gwaltney, George Shanks, and Naomi Carolyn Huddleston.

Story submitted by: Carolyn (Shanks) Huddleston, 3031 Mill Pond Ln., Silver Point, TN.

<http://wwwajlambert.com>