

The Maxam Sisters from Shelburne Falls, Mass.



These sweet girls were sisters **Blanche and Bessie Maxam** from **Shelburne Falls**, Franklin County, Massachusetts. They were born to parents Hardy Eskridge Maxam (1855-1942) and Florence P. née Phillips (1862-1955).

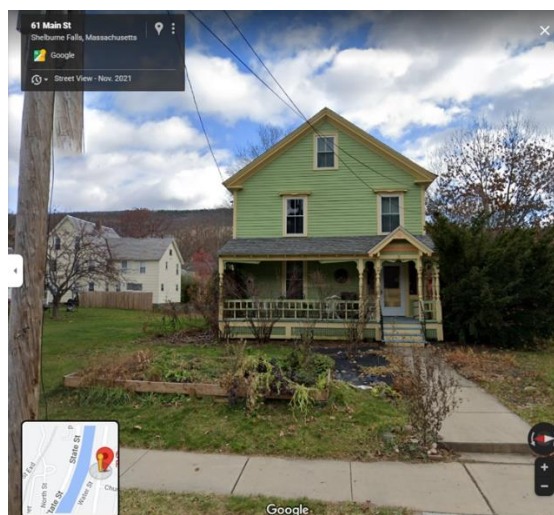


Blanche was the older one, born on May 20, 1886. Bessie Florence was born 3 years later, on September 10, 1889. Their father was a truck man and glass cutter (acc. to 1910 Census), he worked for the Goodell-Pratt Tool company in Greenfield. Newspaper articles about him mention his love for gardening and self-built bird houses.



Link: newspapers.com

The Maxams lived at 61 Main Street in Shelburne Falls. Perhaps this was their house? I can imagine Mr. Maxam's garden in full bloom and little Blanche and Bessie running between the flowerbeds and veggie patches.



The sisters attended the Arms Academy, a public school in Shelburne Falls. And as fate would have it, they both got married in 1910, just 2 months apart.



Blanche married Hermon E. Tenney in August 1910 in Shelburne Falls. Sadly, in 1915, Hermon was in a trolley car accident and his skull was fatally fractured. So just after 4 years of marriage, Blanche was widowed at 28 years of age. She found love again and re-married a year later in 1916. With her second husband, George H. Taylor, she had a son Walter Maxam Taylor who was born in May 1916 in New Haven, Connecticut.

Blanche died on March 17, 1939, in Greenfield, Mass., after a short illness, and was buried at the Arms Cemetery in Shelburne Falls.

**BLANCHE M. TAYLOR
DIES AT HOSPITAL**

**Shelburne Falls Native Ill
Short Time**

Mrs. Blanche Maxam Taylor died about 5:30 o'clock last evening following a short illness with pneumonia, at the Franklin County hospital in Greenfield where she had gone only a few hours before.

Mrs. Taylor was born in Shelburne Falls and was educated in the public schools and Arms academy and was for a number of years employed in New Haven, Ct.

She is survived by one son, Walter Taylor of this place, her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Hardy E. Maxam of Main street and a sister, Mrs. Leon Graham of Greenfield. She was employed in Greenfield but had been at the home of her parents here since she was taken ill several days ago.

The funeral will be held Monday afternoon at 2 o'clock at Johnson's funeral home. Rev. Harold S. Hannum, pastor of the Congregational church, will officiate and burial will be in Arms cemetery.

Link: newspapers.com





Bessie married Leon William Graham on October 26, 1910, in Shelburne Falls. Leon was a paymaster at Greenfield Tap & Die – United Greenfield Division of TRW, Inc. and by 1940 had been promoted to assistant treasurer. Their daughter Elvira Elizabeth “Betsy” Graham was born on May 22, 1922.

Bessie and Leon both died on the same day in August 1976. I found that very curious, but couldn't find an obituary for them on newspapers.com. I did find the text of their obituary, that was published on August 26, 1976 in The Springfield Union, on Bessie's FindAGrave.com page. According to the obituary, the couple's bodies were found together in their car in their garage. After more than 65 years of marriage, the couple had decided to leave this world together. Bessie was 87 and Leon 89 years old at the time.

Both Blanche's son Walter Maxam Taylor (1916-2003) and Bessie's daughter Elvira “Betsy” Walters née Graham were WWII veterans. Walter was drafted in 1940 at the age of 24, his mother Blanche had passed away by then. I can read from his draft card that at the time he was employed by the same company that his uncle Leon worked at as assistant treasurer.

Bessie's daughter Elvira “Betsy” Graham (1922-2020) joined the Army during WWII and was stationed in the South Pacific. She met her future husband Robert J. Walters while in service together. Her obituary says that she carried her parachute home after the war and had her wedding gown made out of it. She had been extremely proud of being a veteran.

Again and so often I look into the eyes of children in my found photographs and imagine how life turned out for them, the choices they made, the joys they experienced and the sorrows they could share with their loved ones. Someone loved them dearly back then, someone kept their photo all these years, and hopefully someone still misses them. I'm hoping to return this photo to the descendants of the Maxam sisters.

There are several photos of the Maxam sisters published on findagrave.com, with their parents and as grown-ups. I love it! I've added my found photo to FamilySearch and FindAGrave as well.



Bessie and Leon's exit touched me deeply when writing this blogpost. I want to end this blogpost by honouring Bessie's memory with this famous quote by Winnie the Pooh:

“If you live to be a hundred, I hope I live to be a hundred minus one day, so that I never have to live a day without you.”

Photos Without Families, originally shared on www.photoswithoutfamilies.blog