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# The Family of Francis Marion Shaw Newsletter

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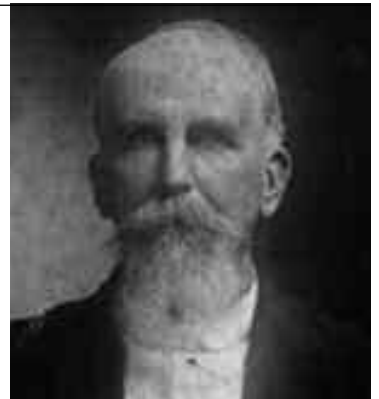
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THE FAMILY OF FRANCIS MARION  
**SHAW**  
AND RACHEL MOORE ALLEN



T H E G R A N D C H I L D R E N

**MARY IDELL  
SHAW ENNIS**  
*The Last of a Generation*

**I**n May of 1945, Lacey Shaw, son of Francis Marion and Rachel Moore Allen Shaw passed away, the last surviving child of that union. Eighteen months later, in November, 1945, Eliza Allen Knight, daughter of Barzilla and Rachel Moore Allen passed away, the last of the children of that union, and the last of that Shaw-Allen family's generation.

Remarkably, it would be almost 70 years before the next generation and the last grandchild of Marion and Rachel Shaw, would belong to the ages.

On February 4, 2014 Mary Idell Shaw Ennis, the last surviving of their 57 grandchildren, drew her last breath of 104 years. It was only fitting that someone so self-determined and resilient would be the final chapter in that generation's history.



**S**he was born August 6, 1909, the eighth of nine children and youngest daughter of Jesse Shelby "Dock" Shaw and Susan E. Bullard.

She was the first of the children to be born in the newly constructed farm home in the Possum Branch district, southwest of Ray City, Georgia. Her siblings Cora, Beatrice, and Marvin were no longer living at

home, however Charlie, Jack, and Preacher were still residing on the farm. Gribbon wasn't born until 1912.

Mary started her schooling in 1915 in Valdosta, while living at the home of her sisters and brother-in-law, Cora and Frank Griffin. About every other weekend, Mary and Pauline, Cora's daughter, would ride the train to Ray City to visit the family.

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*The Family of Francis Marion Shaw is a non-profit newsletter published semi-annually, or more frequently, for the benefit of the descendants of Francis Marion Shaw and his wife, Rachel Moore Allen Shaw.*

*Historical contributions are requested. Your family histories including character traits, religious affiliations, professional pursuits and vital information such as birth dates and places, marriage dates and places, and death dates and places, are all welcome. Photographs help make the newsletter come alive. If you have some special photos of your ancestors which you would like to share with all of the family, please make a copy print of it and send it on to the address below. If original photos are sent, they will be carefully handled and returned, but editor cannot be responsible for loss or damage. Send your manuscripts and photo submissions to:*

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*In this photo of the newly-built Jesse Shelby "Dock" Shaw home, above, Mary Idell is the baby in the white dress standing in front of her mother.*

*Young school girl Mary Idell, had her picture taken with her little brother, Gribbon. Little could she have imagined that she would live to be 104 years old.*

Mary attended school in Valdosta for three years, before returning to her home in the Lois community in 1918 for the remainder of her limited formal schooling.

She first attended the Pine Grove School, riding in a buggy to within a half a mile of the school and walking the rest of the way with her cousins and friends. She finished her schooling at King's Chapel, completing the 8th grade in 1924.

**I**t was about this time that she experienced one of the most terrifying moments of her life when a tornado tore through the Lois community, flattening the woods along Possum Branch. As the family watched the phenomenon occurring from the safety of their front porch, the whirlwind started moving toward the Shaw home. Suzie rushed the children into one of the bedrooms and covered all of them with a mattress. The wind blew out all of the windows, and tore the doors off of the hinges. From the experience of that event, Mary always had a very uneasy feeling any time a storm was brewing.

**N**ow, Dock Shaw was known to be a strict and strong-willed man and raised his children to be the same. And Mary was no different. So quite often the two of them would see things differently and this resulted in some harsh punishment meted out by Dock. At the age of 15, Mary felt she needed to save their honor and she moved to



Jacksonville, Florida and was taken in by her sister Beat and her husband Jesse Carter. She didn't return to visit her folks again for almost two years.

Mary tried to pay her own way, getting a night job at the Swisher Cigar Factory wrapping King Edward Cigars. She quit there after 6 months because of the rough talking environment.

Then she got a job with a potato chip company bagging potato chips, which lasted about a year. Then she went to work for a sandwich shop on Market Street, making peanut butter sandwiches and "fishing pickles out of a barrel."

**T**wo years later Mary was employed at Kingerman Meat Packing Company on Bay Street in Jacksonville, where she packed sliced ham, whole hams, hot dogs, and met the shipping clerk, Clifford Lewis Ennis. Lewis, as she called him, was fascinated by this young, attractive Georgia girl and followed her daily to the streetcar stop. Then he started showing up at the dance hall she frequented on her off hours.

Beat, Jesse, and Jack and his wife often went to the Winter Garden dance hall with Mary, and when Lewis showed up, Mary was put off by it. He would ask her to



*Mary Idell, about mid-1930s,, was a wife and mother of a school-age son.*

dance over and over again and she would refuse. But his persistence paid off, and she found him to be quite personable. But that was the only place they would ever meet.

After two months of dancing, the couple started dating, and three or four month later his conversations turned to marriage. This scared Mary to death and she moved back to Georgia just to avoid him. But Lewis wasn't deterred by distance and called her on the phone constantly. Finally he made the trip up to Georgia to let her know he was serious, and proposed to her.

"Lewis kept following me to the streetcar stop so I said, Oh well, I may as well get married," Mary would jokingly recall. They were married on February 5, 1930 in Murray Hill. Jack and his wife were her only family members in attendance.

**T**he newly weds lived with Lewis's parents for a few weeks, then got an apartment in the Fairfield area near the coliseum. On March 31, 1931 the Ennis couple started and ended their family with the birth of Clifford Lewis Ennis, Jr.

Unfortunately, the challenges of a new family were made more difficult when Lewis lost his job and the trio were forced to move back to Georgia. They moved into the old log house down on Possum Branch that had been the original home of Dock and Suzie Shaw. Lewis tried to help with things around the farm for about a year, but told Mary farming wasn't for him. One day he went to Ray City to get a haircut and didnt come back, leaving Mary and Clifford with the Shaws.



*Mary Idell and Clifford Jr. about 1947, pictured left, just before he entered the U. S. Navy. The strain and demands of a troublesome marriage seem evident in her appearance. However, by 1956 her modern, self-confident, resilient demeanor was re-established, and she carried it with her the remainder of her life.*



*Mary Idell at the age of 88 was still a vibrant, active, and highly mobile woman. She is shown on the right with Clifford Jr. on her left, and Clifford III, on her right. Clifford Jr. died in 1999. Shortly thereafter Mary had a new home built in Green Cove Springs, near her grandson.*



Lewis returned to Jacksonville, where he was hired by Standard Oil Company as a station manager in Avondale. Beat and Jesse begged Mary to reconcile with Lewis and move back to Jacksonville. Finally after almost two years, Mary and Clifford moved back and the Ennises were a family again. Mary kept the books for the business, "trained mostly by common sense."

**H**owever, one of Lewis's favorite pastimes was going to the dog tracks. He became a heavy gambler on the races, creating a financial hardship on the family. When full ownership of the service station was available, they had difficulty coming up with the purchase price. Finally, Jesse Carter co-signed the loan with Mary.

In 1940 census shows the Ennis family renting a home at 4231 Appleton Avenue in Jacksonville. But that was a temporary address. From 1930 to 1942 the family lived in 25 homes. In the early 40s, Lewis cut back on his gambling, and they built their first home at 5033 Blackburn Street. It seemed that the Ennis family was settling into a comfortable life.

But the demons of the past resurfaced and in 1947, Mary and Lewis finally ended their 17-year marriage. Mary was single again but knew how to survive.

At that point in her life Mary sought a new profession, thinking she would like to get into nursing. Right after the divorce, she started her nurse training at the Riverside Hospital. But just after a few weeks, she found that she could not handle the sight of blood, and withdrew her enrollment. That same year, Clifford Jr. joined the U. S. Navy, and suddenly Mary was single and alone.

**S**he once again relied on the skills she knew best, landing a job with Tillman Laundry and Dry Cleaning, doing various office jobs and keeping the payroll. She worked at Tillman's for 12 years.

About 1958 Mary got on at the Naval Air Station in Jacksonville. She was working in the main PX for about a year, when she noticed that her supervisor was "padding" the inventory. She was one of the first "whistle blowers" at the Naval Air Station. Her supervisor went to prison and she moved on to a quieter setting.

Her bookkeeping skills were well established and in demand, so she was hired by the Florida Milk Producers, keeping 5 sets of books. The milk producers eventually expanded their association to include operations from Atlanta to Tampa and Miami. The work load was increasing constantly and finally after 17 years, Mary decided she had enough, retiring in 1975.

Mary always advanced her position through hard work, self-confidence, and straight talk. When asked by one of her employers in an interview if she ever made mistakes, she answered, "Mister, take a damn good look at me. I was born a mistake."

She kept books for the Ennis Oil Company, Clifford's business, for about 10 more years, before finally setting aside her bookkeeping profession for good.

**B**ut Mary still had more life to give. Clifford was diagnosed with throat cancer in 1992, and in 1998 Mary and Clifford moved to Melrose, Florida on the edge of Santa Fe Lake. There she spent the last years of his life caring for him in his battle with cancer. Her only child died October 4, 1999.

Mary was alone again. But in her characteristic strong-willed manner, Mary approached life as though she would live forever. In 2002 at the age of 93 she purchased a new automobile and built a brand new home in Green Cove Springs for her "retirement" years. On her 100th birthday, she was still driving and living alone.

But the clock ticks for everyone and after she fell in late 2013, Mary's strength ebbed away. The final chime sounded for her on February 4, 2014, passing away at her home.

Mary was a young girl who had the courage to leave the protective roof of her parents home to start a new life on her own. She became a strong woman who had the determination to face the hardships of a single mother, providing the necessities of life for herself and her son. She was a beautiful lady who had the wisdom and honesty that came from 104 years of her life's experiences.

Mary Idell Shaw Ennis—the last survivor and the end of another generation. —BLS



*Through her entire life, there was a certain joy with life that seemed to sparkle in her eyes. She said she always tried to carry a smile wherever she went. "I got many a job just because I went in smiling."*