

Blackwater Hero Carrie Williams

A Brave Schoolteacher Who Made a Difference for Thousands of West Virginia Children

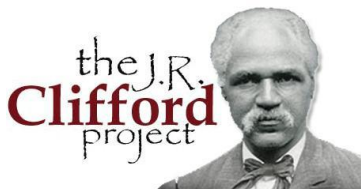
Caroline “Carrie” M. Edwards was a schoolteacher, beginning in the 1890s, at the Coketon Colored School, at the head of the Blackwater Canyon. In 1898 Williams and her lawyer J.R. Clifford (1848-1933), West Virginia’s first black attorney, won equal treatment in West Virginia’s Supreme Court for black students, and also equal pay for black teachers – all across the State of West Virginia.

Thanks to intrepid research on Ancestry.com by FOB staff Brandae Mullins, we have recently connected with some of Carrie Williams’ descendants. Here’s a summary of what we have learned. Carrie Williams was born in Chillicothe, Ohio, around 1866. Her parents were Jacob and Rachel Edwards, born in Virginia in about 1830. On November 20, 1889 Carrie married Abraham L. Williams in Thomas, WV. He was born in Mineral County in about 1861 to Benjamin and Henrietta Williams. Abraham worked as a miner in Thomas, WV until his death on August 30, 1913 from lung disease.

Carrie and Abraham Williams had nine children: May (1891), Nevada (1892), Robert (1893), Russell (1897), Irving (1899), Ethel (1901), Josephine (1907), Juanita (1908) and Wendell Phillips Williams (1913). In 1908 May married Howard Lewis in Thomas; Nevada married Fred Thompson in Thomas, also in 1908. Nevada and Fred had two children, Freddie and Alberta. Nevada died from influenza/pneumonia during the flu pandemic of 1918, and she is buried at Rose Hill Cemetery in Thomas in an unmarked grave. After Abraham’s death in 1913, Carrie and her younger children joined her older sons in Chicago, Illinois. After daughter Nevada’s death, her children also moved to Chicago, where Carrie Williams died on January 22, 1930,



We have shared what we know about Carrie’s famous case with her descendants. We hope they can soon visit the Blackwater Canyon, and see where their ancestor worked and lived – and made such a positive difference for her home State! Thanks for supporting our J.R. Clifford Project!



Friends of Blackwater

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