

Family Branch: KELLY | MURPHY

Branch 5 of 7

Michael William Kelly

1876-1964

Great Granduncle

Michael William Kelly was born on August 6, 1876, in Auburn, New York, carrying on a family name that traced back through four generations of Michaels. Despite completing only his second year of high school, Michael's life took a dramatic turn in June 1898 when, at age 22, he enlisted to serve in the Spanish-American War.

He was mustered into federal service at Camp Black in Hempstead, Long Island, joining the 3rd New York Volunteer Infantry. His regiment soon relocated to Camp Alger near Fairfax, Virginia, where it was assigned to the First Brigade, Second Division of the Second Army Corps. While celebrated units like the Rough Riders fought directly in Cuba, stateside volunteer regiments like the 3rd New York focused on training, guarding infrastructure, and garrisoning domestic bases. Because the active fighting phase lasted only a few months—with hostilities officially ceasing on August 12, 1898—Michael's unit never deployed overseas.



Instead of battlefield injuries, the greatest threat to Michael's regiment was widespread camp sickness. Severe outbreaks of typhoid fever and inadequate sanitation at Camp Alger forced the Army to march the regiment north to Camp Meade in

Middletown, Pennsylvania, in late August 1898. Prominent period photographer James T. Chapman famously documented daily life, rigorous drills, and recreational activities at Camp Meade during this time. Notably, his photographs captured soldiers playing basketball—a rapidly growing sport invented just seven years prior in 1891, operating at the time without the backboards that would be introduced in 1906. Michael remained at Camp Meade through the autumn until the regiment returned to Elmira, New York, for final furloughs and discharge.



Upon returning to Auburn, the 1900 census recorded Michael working as a shoemaker. He lived with his parents, a few siblings, and a cousin, Mary Dunlavy. Because his brother Bernard worked as a shoe finisher, it is highly likely the family members were employed by the same local shoe shop.



In 1905, Michael married Elva Mae Robbins (1884–1976). He briefly paused his shoemaking career to serve on the Auburn city police force, as recorded in the 1910 census. However, by 1920, he had returned to the trade. He spent the next few decades steadily advancing in the industry, eventually

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working as a shoe superintendent for a slipper manufacturer in Malone, New York. Michael retired in 1943, and he and Elva moved to St. Petersburg, Florida, eventually settling in nearby Madeira Beach by 1950. Michael passed away on April 18, 1964.



The Next Generation: An overview of Branch 5...Descendants of Michael William Kelly and Elva Mae Robbins



1. Virginia M. Kelly

1909-1995

1st cousin 2x removed

Virginia appeared on the 1930 census at age 21 living with her parents and working as a stenographer for a local doctor's office. Though her formal marriage record has not yet been located, she eventually married a man with the surname Michaels. By 1940, she had relocated to Florida, where she spent the remainder of her life. She did not have any children. Virginia passed away on May 14, 1995, in St. Petersburg, Florida.

MICHAELS, VIRGINIA KELLY, of St. Petersburg, died Sunday (May 14, 1995). Born in Auburn, N.Y., she came here in 1940 from Rochester, N.Y. Locally, she was a member of St. Petersburg Women's Club and was a Protestant. Survivors include a sister, Jane K. Lanier, St. Petersburg; two nephews, Michael Lanier, Atlantic Beach, and Stephen Lanier, Keystone Heights; and a niece, Suzanne Philips, New York City. Anderson-McQueen Funeral Homes, Ninth Street Chapel, St. Petersburg.

Children: None

2. Jane Arianne Kelly

1921-2012

1st cousin 2x removed

Jane was likely named in honor of her paternal grandmother, Jane Murphy Kelly. After completing her education in New York, she stepped forward during World War II to serve two and a half years as a WAVE with the Naval Air Force.

Established on July 21, 1942, the U.S. Navy WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) was a groundbreaking branch of the U.S. Naval Reserve. Designed to free up male sailors for sea duty by filling critical shore positions, the program eventually enlisted roughly 100,000 women to work as clerks, mechanics, air traffic controllers, parachute riggers, and medical personnel.



During her wartime service, Jane was briefly married to Marine Corps Sergeant Jack Travers Spencer. After the war, she built a career in the medical department of the Veterans Administration. On October 8, 1949, she married World War II veteran William Sidney Lanier (1915–2009). Originally from Washington, D.C., Bill had served in the U.S. Army Air Corps and also worked for the Veterans Administration. The couple shared a long, 60-year marriage. Jane passed away on September 28, 2012, at the age of 91.



Jane Kelly circa 1939

Children: Michael William Lanier (1952–), Stephen Jon Lanier  (1954–2005), Suzanne Lanier

