

JOHN MARSHALL ADAMS | IDA PRINCELLA MORTON

John Marshall Adams (1814–1862) married Ida Princesa Morton (1822–1888) in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1839. In our Adams heritage,¹ the family name was spelled Addams (with a double “d”) in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Our first American Addams ancestor was **Richard Addams (1676–1747)**, who came to the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, area from Northamptonshire, near London, in the late 17th century. About 1698 he married **Gertien Op Den Graeff (1680–1725)**, the daughter of **Abraham Op Den Graeff (c. 1658–1731)**, who was one of the 13 original founders of Germantown, Pennsylvania.²

William Addams (1705–1773), the son of Richard and Gertien Addams, was the founder of a small village in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, called Adamstown. It was founded on July 4, 1761.

Three generations later, my third great-grandfather **Richard Keene Adams* (1780–1818)** was born in Carlisle in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania. On October 27, 1801, he married **Elizabeth Woods (1783–1832)**, who was born in Tyrone County, one of the six counties of Northern Ireland.

Richard Keene Adams moved to Lexington, Kentucky, where in 1805 he helped to build Ashland, the home of the American statesman Henry Clay (1777–1852). Later (after 1814) he moved to Nashville, Tennessee, where he was an architect, contractor, and builder. In 1818, at age 37, Richard Keene Adams died from a fall from the Union Bank Building, which was, at that time, on the corner of Union and Cherry streets in Nashville. He had helped to build the bank. He was also a Mason.

Richard Keene Adams and Elizabeth Woods had three children. The youngest being John Marshall Adams, my great-great-grandfather. John Marshall Adams was born in Lexington, Kentucky, and died at age 48 in Nashville, Tennessee, where he had moved with his parents, and where he married Ida Princesa Morton in 1839.

*Richard Keene Adams dropped the second “d” from the spelling of his surname.



This image of Ida Princesa Morton probably dates from the 1840s.



Ida Princesa Morton probably in the 1850s.

In both the 1850 and 1860 censuses, John Marshall Adams is listed as a tailor. In the 1860 census, his real estate is listed as being worth \$10,000 and his personal property is valued at \$25,000.

John Marshall Adams and Ida Princesa Morton had 10 children.³ The youngest was **Catherine D. Adams (1860–1916)**,

my great-grandmother. Catherine was two years old when her father died.

Ida Princesa Adams became a widow at age 40. After her husband died, she had a rooming house in Nashville for many years. The 1870 census records show that she was born in North Carolina, but we know nothing further about her parentage.

When Ida Princesa Morton Adams died at age 66 in 1888, her obituary⁴ in the *Nashville Banner* stated that she was “an estimable woman, well known in Nashville.” She and her husband are buried on “Willow Avenue” in the Old City Cemetery in Nashville. I have an oil painting of Princesa Adams depicted in the 1860s but created around the time of her death.

Ida Princesa Morton Adams’s distinctive and somewhat regal Christian name has continued in the family. Her granddaughter (my great-aunt) was **Princesa Adams**

Wilkerson Hayley Falls (1880–1966).

Today the name belongs to Princesa Wilkerson Nowell (b. 1948), my first cousin, who is currently president of the Mississippi Historical Society and has been very helpful to me in preparing this book.



Princesa Elizabeth Wilkerson Nowell, my first cousin, at age 22.

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1. OUR ADAMS/ADDAMS HERITAGE

Richard Adams (1635–1717)

John Adams (c. 1656–aft. 1717)

Richard Addams (1676–1747) m. 1698 Gertien Op Den Graeff (1680–1725)

William Addams (1705–1773) m. 1729 Ann Lane (bef. 1710–c. 1773)

Abraham Addams (1732–1803) m. Elizabeth

Abraham Addams (d. 1858)

Richard Keene Addams (1780–1818) m. 1801 Elizabeth Woods (1783–1832)

John Marshall Adams (1814–1862) m. 1839 Ida Princesa Morton (1822–1888)

Catherine D. Adams (1860–1916) m. 1878 George W. Wilkerson (1857–1917)

Jefferson P. Wilkerson Sr. (1878–1945) m. 1905 Caroline M. Montgomery (1884–1957)

Catherine C. Wilkerson (1909–2002) m. 1935 John H. Bryan Sr. (1908–1989)

Our Pennsylvania Adams/Addams heritage contains my only ancestral lineage derived from outside the American South. It also holds one of our rare non-British roots (a Germanic one), and thus links our family into Continental Europe.

My mother accepted a linkage between an Addams family of colonial Pennsylvania and her Adams ancestors from Nashville, Tennessee. I have found several confirming reports for this link, but not positive proof.

We believe that our earliest Adams ancestors lived in Upper Heyford in Northamptonshire, just northwest of London. Sometime in the 1690s, **Richard Addams (1676–1747)** (he added the extra *d* to distinguish his family from other Adams) migrated to America with his family, and they settled near Germantown, Pennsylvania. In 1698 Richard Addams married **Gertien Op Den Graeff (1680–1725)**, the daughter of one of the original founders of Germantown, Pennsylvania. They had nine children, including **William Addams (1705–1773)**. After Gertien Op Den Graeff Addams died in about 1725, Richard Addams married a woman whose name was Alse. It has been reported that Richard Addams was a member of the Great Valley Baptist Church in Chester Springs, Pennsylvania.

In 1729, 25-year-old William Addams married **Ann Lane (before 1710–c. 1773)**.

Ann Lane was the daughter of **Edward Lane** and **Ann Richardson (d. after 1724)**, whose father, **Judge Samuel Richardson (c. 1635–1719)**, was one of the first provincial councilors of Pennsylvania.

On July 4, 1761, William Addams founded the borough of Adamstown (originally called Addamsbury), Pennsylvania, which is about 60 miles northwest of Philadelphia. Adamstown, with a population of about 1,200 residents, is called the Antique Capital of the United States.

William and Ann Addams had a son, **Abraham Addams (1732–1803)** who was an American Revolutionary War soldier. Their grandson, also named **Abraham Addams (d. 1858)**, lived in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, and may also have served in the American Revolutionary War. We know very little about these two ancestors, and so they are the weak link in this heritage.

In several genealogical accounts, Abraham Addams is shown to be the father of **Richard Keene Adams (1780–1818)** (he dropped the extra *d* when he moved from Pennsylvania to Kentucky). He is known to be my third great-grandfather.

Richard Keene Adams was the first of our Adams family to migrate to the South after he married **Elizabeth Woods (1783–1832)** in 1801. She was born in Tyrone County in Northern Ireland. After 1801 they moved from Carlisle, Pennsylvania, to Lexington, Kentucky. There he was a contractor and builder for a number of years and participated in the construction of Ashland, the home of Henry Clay (1777–1852). Sometime after 1814, Richard Keene Adams moved to Nashville where he died in 1818, at age 37. He fell from the Union Bank Building, which was under construction at that time.

John Marshall Adams (1814–1862), my great-grandfather, was the son of Richard Keene and Elizabeth Woods Adams. John Marshall Adams was born in Lexington, Kentucky, but grew up in Nashville, Tennessee. In 1839 he married **Ida Princesa Morton (1822–1888)**. Her family, we believe, came from North Carolina. John Marshall Adams and Ida Princesa Adams had 10 children, the youngest of which was **Catherine D. Adams (1860–1916)**, my great-grandmother. She is the last of my Adams heritage.

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2. OUR OP DEN GRAEFF HERITAGE

Herman Op Den Graeff (1585–1642)*	m. 1605	Grietjen Platjes (1588–1642)
Isaac Op Den Graeff (1616–1679)	m.	Gertjen Peters (1620–1683)
Abraham Op Den Graeff (c. 1658–1731)	m.	Katrina Jensen (1658–1700)
Gertien Op Den Graeff (1680–1725)	m. 1698	Richard Addams (1676–1747)
William Addams (1705–1773)	m. 1729	Ann Lane (bef. 1710–c. 1773)
Abraham Addams (1732–1803)	m.	Elizabeth
Abraham Addams (d. 1858)		
Richard Keene Addams (1780–1818)	m. 1801	Elizabeth Woods (1783–1832)
John Marshall Adams (1814–1862)	m. 1839	Ida Princella Morton (1822–1888)
Catherine D. Adams (1860–1916)	m. 1878	George W. Wilkerson (1857–1917)
Jefferson P. Wilkerson Sr. (1878–1945)	m. 1905	Caroline M. Montgomery (1884–1957)
Catherine C. Wilkerson (1909–2002)	m. 1935	John H. Bryan Sr. (1908–1989)

Our Op Den Graeff ancestors represent a decidedly different cultural group than our usual Southern colonial British forebearers. The Op Den Graeffs came from the town of Krefeld in a Dutch German area west of the Rhine River, near present-day Düsseldorf, Germany. They were true pietists who alternated between being Mennonites and being Quakers.

The Op Den Graeff family arrived at the port of Philadelphia on October 6, 1683, aboard an English schooner called *Concord*. Their journey had taken 75 days. Among the 13 original families on that journey was a 33-year-old linen weaver, **Abraham Op Den Graeff (c. 1658–1731)**, my eighth great-grandfather. He was accompanied by his two older brothers, Herman and Dirk; his mother, **Gertjen Peters (1620–1683)**; and his three-year-old daughter, **Gertien Op Den Graeff (1680–1725)**.

These early settlers were oppressed religious pilgrims who came to America to answer a call from William Penn (1644–1718). William Penn was seeking righteous and pious men to be a part of his “holy experiment” in building Pennsylvania. After their arrival, these German Dutch Krefelders settled on land six miles north of newly founded Philadelphia. Thus, they were the founders of Germantown, Pennsylvania, the first sizeable and distinctly German settlement in America.

Notably, the antislavery movement began in Germantown, and Abraham Op Den Graeff was one of the original signers of the Slavery Protest of 1688. He was in the House of Burgess in Pennsylvania.

The poet John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–1892) used Abraham as the subject of a poem entitled “The Pennsylvania Pilgrim.” Two stanzas are noted below:

*Or, talking of old home scenes, Op Den Graaf
Teased the low back-log with his shodden staff,
Till the red embers broke into a laugh*

*And dance of flame, as if they fain would cheer
The rugged face, half tender, half austere,
Touched with the pathos of a homesick tear!*

In 1698 the 18-year-old daughter of Abraham Op Den Graeff married **Richard Addams (1676–1747)**, a 22-year-old English immigrant in Germantown, Pennsylvania.

*There is available an extensive line of antecedents of Herman Op Den Graeff, whose great-grandfather was Ferdinand II of the Holy Roman Empire and whose third great-grandparents were Ferdinand (1452–1516) and Isabella (1451–1504), the King and Queen of Spain, who are my fifteenth great-grandparents.

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3. THE 10 CHILDREN OF JOHN MARSHALL ADAMS AND PRINCELLA MORTON ADAMS

Over the two decades from 1840 to 1860, **John Marshall Adams (1814–1862)** and **Ida Princella Morton Adams (1822–1888)** had 10 children. They all lived their lives, mostly in the same household, in Nashville in Davidson County, Tennessee.

Richard K. Adams (1840–1887)	River pilot 1870; magistrate 1880
William L. Adams (1841–1894)	Mayor's secretary 1880; died unmarried
Senora Adams (1843–1871)	m. Christopher Lewis 1869
Nathaniel D. Adams (1845–1845)	Lived six months
John Harry Adams (1847–1930)	Unmarried; bartender 1870; liquor dealer 1880; 30 years at City Hall
Josephine S. Adams (1850–1913)	m. Francis N. Boensch (1847–aft. 1910) 1867; superintendent of state prisons in 1880
Jennie B. Adams (1854–1885)	Unmarried
Frank Lee Adams (1856–1911)	Telegraph operator 1880
Nannie W. Adams (1858–1936/40)	Unmarried
Catherine D. Adams (1860–1916)	m. George Washington Wilkerson 1878

In the 1880 census Princella Morton Adams is listed as head of a household that includes seven unmarried adult children and her son-in-law Frank Boensch.

Only Catherine, who married in 1878, is not listed.

In the 1900 and 1910 censuses Harry, Frank, and Nannie are listed in the household of Frank Boensch. Catherine Adams Wilkerson died there in 1916.

4. PRINCELLA MORTON ADAMS: AN ESTIMABLE WOMAN

The obituary of my great-great-grandmother appeared in the *Nashville Banner* on December 20, 1888.

Mrs. Princella Adams—Death of a lady who was well-known in Nashville, Mrs. Princella Adams, widow of John M. Adams, died of pneumonia at 9:45 o'clock this morning at her residence, 410 North Summer Street, aged sixty-six years. Mrs. Adams was an estimable woman and well-known in Nashville. She had been a widow a number of years. Her husband was a well-known citizen. She leaves six children, three sons and three daughters. They are J. Harry Adams, Lee Adams, Frank Adams, Miss Nannie Adams, Mrs. Frank Boensch, and Mrs. George Wilkerson. The latter is of Bolivar County, Miss. The late Esquire R. L. Adams was a son of the deceased. Mrs. Adams was a member of the First Presbyterian Church.



An oil portrait of Ida Princella Morton Adams (1822–1888), painted around the time of her death. The portrait was likely executed from a photograph taken after her husband, John Marshall Adams, died on December 24, 1862. She is depicted in widow's clothes.*

*This portrait was once owned by my great-aunt Princella Wilkerson Hayley (1880–1966), the granddaughter of Ida Princella Morton Adams. It was next owned by Catherine Stewart Hayley (1907–1992), my mother's first cousin, and then was inherited by William Hayley (b. 1946), her heir and cousin. The portrait was given to me by William Hayley in January 2011.