

A EUREKA MOMENT

By Dani Crossley

I was so inspired by the article I read in the March-April 2021 Lycoming County Genealogical Society newsletter, I hurried through the rest of the issue and grabbed my laptop to begin something I should've done months ago! My thanks to Valerie J. Bieber and her "Christmas in September!" article. I quickly found the James V. Brown library's newly published digital archive newspaper collection and the search was on. Here is the website where the newspaper collection can be found: (<https://jvbrownpublic.advantage-preservation.com/>)

Just some background information about the subject of my search. My great-great-grandfather, Myron E. Alexander (1860-1886) died in Liberty, PA on January 6, 1886, just one day after his mother, Magdalena Reed Alexander (1821-1886) passed away on January 5th. What happened to them? For well over a decade, I have been searching for an explanation in area newspapers. I have paid subscriptions, but have come up empty every time. Was there a flood? Was there a disease epidemic? Was there a fire? What caused mother and son to perish within one day of each other?

JANUARY 12, 1886.

A SAD OCCURRENCE.

A Double Funeral and a Sorrowful Birthday

On Friday, January 8th, was the Rev. Jeremiah Alexander's sixty-fourth birthday, and he was called to celebrate it in a most sorrowful manner, by burying his wife and one of his sons. Mrs. Magdalena Alexander had been afflicted with dropsy for several months, and was expecting and anxiously awaiting her end. She passed away calmly on the night of the 5th, at the age of 64 years, 11 months and 17 days. But her son, Myron E., was only a short time ago afflicted with softening of the brain and died of paralysis just twenty-five hours after his mother's departure, aged 25 years, 4 months and 21 days, leaving a wife and one child to mourn his loss. Sad indeed was the scene at the home of Mr. Alexander, with two of its members lying side by side sleeping the sleep of death, and tears were brought to many eyes as they looked upon this double bereavement. At 11 o'clock the funeral procession left the house and the dead were borne to their final resting place in the cemetery at Salem's Lutheran church, which church was too small to accommodate the vast audience of sympathizing friends.

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On the home page for the digital collection there is a place to enter your keywords and date parameters. I entered Myron Alexander, 1/1/1886 through 1/31/1886. Within seconds, two results were returned (the same article in the daily and weekly version of the same paper). I couldn't believe my eyes! The title immediately confirmed that I had found the right article in the January 12, 1886 edition of the Daily Sun and Banner on page 1 (Williamsport):

A SAD OCCURRENCE. A Double Funeral and a Sorrowful Birthday. Since it is a little hard to see, I've transcribed it for readability.

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To Bury George Crossley at Lungerville
Special Dispatch to Carr
Bloomsburg, Pa., April 24.—George Crossley, 86 years old, who died Thursday night at his home in Jordan Township, Lycoming County, will be buried Sunday afternoon in the Lungerville Cemetery. The children surviving are Perry Crossley, of Newberry; Elijah Crossley, of Jersey Shore; Mrs. W. F. Hoss, of Bloomsburg; Mrs. William Morgan, of Mount Carmel; Mrs. J. D. Stackhouse, Mrs. John Boyer, and Charles Crossley, all of Jordan Township.

Of course, I didn't stop there. I also found my husband Wally's great-grandfather's obituary. George Washington Crossley (1839-1926) had been a mystery for so long, until the death certificates for Pennsylvania were made available online at ancestry.com. I knew he had died in 1926 and was buried in Lungerville, unfortunately with no marker. I was a little surprised that his youngest son, Lafayette (Lafey) Crossley was missing. George's four remaining sons—Perry, Elijah (Wally's grandfather), Charles and Lafey all died in 1944.

If you haven't yet had a look through this magnificent newspaper collection and you have ancestors in the Lycoming County area, I encourage you to give it a try at your earliest opportunity. No telling what Eureka moment might be waiting for you!