

From Whence the Next Clue Comes

by Dani Crossley

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Ten years plus researching the Crossley family and there are still new things to discover. Do not give up hope, fellow researchers! While browsing through the extensive photo collection at the Society in search of the portraits of Joseph Crawford (1782-1844) and his wife Elizabeth Melick (1786-1870) for a friend's family ancestry, I was suddenly struck by two familiar names – Theodore and Alice Montague. When I exclaimed that I knew who they were, fellow Society member, Donna Laubach, casually imparted that they were her husband's great-grandparents.

Backtracking, I explained to her that my father-in-law's cousin, Pearl Crossley, had been adopted by Theodore and Alice Montague after a series of unfortunate incidents left her and her older sister, Gertie, virtually orphaned. Born in the very remote and somewhat frightening area of Devil Hole in northern Columbia County, the two crying girls were discovered by a passerby in their cabin trying to shake their dead mother awake to feed them. Ida Gordner Crossley had succumbed that summer day in 1912 of acute indigestion at age 45. No one knew the whereabouts of father John Crossley. Seven-year-old Gertie ended up in a Lutheran Home for Orphans in Philadelphia and three-year-old Pearl was raised by the Montagues. It is unknown at this point *how* she came to live with them.

I have lamented many times the absence of family photos and official records associated with the Crossley family. You may remember some of my father-in-law's story from previous articles. On this occasion, a couple pictures of his father existed in addition to a newspaper photo of one aunt and uncle who were celebrating their Golden Wedding Anniversary. Out of twelve siblings, that's not much in the way of keepsakes.

Donna thought she might have some other photos of the Montagues, so we made a date to meet the following week at the Society and compare notes. Just a small portion of Donna's incredible treasury of family photos arrived with her that day. And, hidden among them was a family portrait: Alice Montague, grandchildren Hazel Irene and Theodore Robert Montague and a third child: Pearl Crossley!



There she is on the far left.

Pearl is with the Montagues as an “adopted” daughter in the 1920 census. In 1930, she's the housekeeper for Ernie Kriner and his four children. In between the two censuses, she had married at age 17 one Hurley Vognetz and bore son Franklin Larue in 1927. They were divorced by the time he was two and the Montagues took him in when Pearl went to work for the Kriners.

I got up the nerve to contact Mr. Frank Vognet and went to visit him and his lovely wife Shirley just last

week. I always marvel at these kind people who allow such personal intrusions and share family stories and photos. Among his collection were two photos that I never thought I would see. He had one of his grandfather, John Crossley, and another of “some Crossleys,” one of whom was my father-in-law’s Aunt Lil, with whom he had lived for a short while in the late 1930’s. Mr. Vognet generously gave them to me.

Next mission – look out 97-year-old cousin Paul and 95-year-old cousin Mandy! We have some photos for you to look at! Hopefully a few other previously unphotographed Crossleys will be identified.



John Crossley



Lillian Crossley Stackhouse, center, (with arms folded). To the right, Pearl Crossley Vognet with son Frank. Behind her, John Crossley.