

Western Kentucky University

TopSCHOLAR®

Research Collections

Special Collections Library

1991

Crews Family

Department of Library Special Collections

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/dlsc_kl_non_mat



Part of the **Genealogy Commons**

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Research Collections by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.

Crews

(Revised 1991)

Bobby Anderson
7965 Ridgewood Road
Goodlettsville, Tenn. 37072



C R E W S

By BOBBY ANDERSON

Though the family name "Crews" is non-existent in Muhlenberg County at this time, it still lives in the lineages of the McDonalds, Bartletts, Barbees and others. Once the name "Crews" was synonymous with commerce, trade, sawmilling and coal mining in Muhlenberg and Butler counties, but those bearing that family name are now gone the way of many others, to post-war industrial areas, where many still live.

Currently, in Muhlenberg County, Nancy June Crews McDonald, widow of the late Elman McDonald, and Louise Crews (Elmo) Bartlett, both of Beech Creek, are the two local survivors of the family of the late Evan Estell and Nettie Barbara Free Crews of Mud River, Penrod and Beech Creek.

Others in the family included Eldon, who is deceased, as is Shirley Neal. Two other sons, Paul Truman and David Ray are living out of state. Paul resides in Dayton, Ohio and David in Santa Ana, Calif.

But much history precedes them.

Evan Crews was the son of James B. Crews, a prominent land owner, timber merchant and sawmill owner-operator. His mother was of pioneer Gardner stock of Butler County. James B. Crews was the son of Virginian William B. Crews and the grandson of prominent Virginian, Littleberry Crews.

* * *

Littleberry Crews was born in Virginia in 1776 and died in 1871, at the age of 95. He was married to Rachel Davison, who died in 1856. Littleberry Crews served with General Andrew Jackson at the battle of New Orleans in 1814. He had come to Kentucky sometime prior to 1810, best guess being around 1808.

A son, William B. Crews was born in Virginia in 1804, and died in October, 1878. He, of course came to central Kentucky with his parents when he was four years old, and subsequently married Frances Mullins, daughter of John H. Mullins. Frances lived until the 1880s, dying at near the age of 75.

* * *

James B. Crews, the son of William B. and Frances Mullins Crews was born in Marion County, Ky. (near Lebanon) on March 1, 1829. His first marriage was to Sarah J. Mullins on Oct. 7, 1851. Sarah J. Mullins was the daughter of Winston and Teresa Mullins. Her birthdate has not been located, nor do historians favor us with information as to whether she was related to James Crews' mother, who was also a Mullins. Sarah J. Mullins Crews died in 1864, before James B. Crews moved westward into Butler and Muhlenberg counties. She bore five children prior to her death. They were Littleberry, namesake of his grandfather, Joseph, Frances, Isabel and Dulcinia. There is no record to indicate they came to Butler County with their father.

James B. Crews, a farmer's son, garnered a meager education during winter months, laying the foundation for his business efforts. Working as a carpenter's apprentice in his early years,

he established a sawmill business in 1861. By 1875, he had migrated to Butler County, where the lumber and timber business was flourishing. He was listed in the 1880 census of Butler County (name spelled Cruise) as a boarder in the home of Cohuliah and Idume Taylor at Woodbury. Apparently he was using the busy riverport at Woodbury as his shipping point for the lumber he "manufactured". His census listing termed his trade as "lumber manufacturer".

On Nov. 1, 1883, James B. Crews remarried, taking Elizabeth A. Gardner of Butler County as his wife. She was born in November, 1849, the daughter of James E. Gardner (an uncle of the longtime Baptist minister of the same name) and his wife, Elizabeth. She was also the granddaughter of John A. and Elizabeth McBee Gardner, early Butler County settlers.

In 1900, James B. and Elizabeth Gardner Crews were living at Mud River in Muhlenberg County, his age being 71 and Elizabeth's 50. He was still listed as a sawmill operator.

There is no record currently available as to when James and Elizabeth died, but it was, of course after 1900. Tradition is that they are buried in the Mud River Cemetery, near Mud River Mine. At least one child, John A. Crews is buried there, the marker listing him as the son of J. B. and E. A. Crews. He was born Jan. 6, 1890 and died March 5, 1894. Two unmarked graves are beside his, and they may well be those of James B. Crews and his wife Elizabeth.

At least three more children were born to James B. Crews and his wife, Elizabeth. They are Alma, born November, 1885; Annie, born September, 1887 and Evan Estell, born March, 1890, (though his marker at Mt. Moriah states he was born in 1888.)

* * *

Evan Estell Crews married Nettie Barbara Free on Dec. 24, 1916 in Muhlenberg County (39-93) when he was 28 and she 23. Both resided at Mud River at the time of marriage. Shortly afterwards, World War I and the fighting in France moved the soldier, Evan E. Crews, away from his home and his new bride. Evan Crews served with distinction in France, being a corporal in Company H of the Sixth Infantry Division.

Nettie Crews was the daughter of Thomas C. Free and Nancy S. Hall Free. She was born May 5, 1893. Thomas Free was a native of Georgia, born in April 1857. He migrated to Kentucky around 1880, or slightly before. His father, William Free, born in 1827 in Georgia, also came to Kentucky at the same time. William Free and his wife, Aretta, who lived in the Mud River Union area, are the forebears of all Frees in Muhlenberg County.

Nancy Hall was the daughter of A. J. Hall and Charity A. Davis, and was born June 18, 1869. A. J. Hall was the son of James and Cynthia Hall, all Mud River area residents.

Thomas and Nancy were married Dec. 21, 1882, and became the parents of Nettie, Alice (1885); Willie (1890); Dellar (1887); Lonnie (1896) and Katie (1899). (The Free family history will be explored more deeply in a subsequent article.)

Before World War I had ended, Evan Crews and wife Nettie had become the parents of their first child, Eldon, born on May 26, 1918. Others to follow were: Louise, Aug. 22, 1920; Nancy June on April 23, 1923; Paul Truman on Oct. 16, 1925; David Ray, March 25, 1931 and Shirley Neal on July 1, 1935.

Evan and Nettie Crews lived out their lives and raised their family in a well-situated coal company house about equidistance from the Beech Creek and Kirk's company stores. Mr. Crews was a coal miner. He died April 2, 1968 and she Nov. 15, 1966. They are buried in Mt. Moriah cemetery, not far from their respective places of birth.

* * *

Their children:

Eldon, the eldest child was born May 26, 1918, and died Dec. 30, 1987. He was married to Helen Pruett of Princeton, Ky. They resided in Clarksville, Tenn. at the time of his death. He is buried in Cedar Hill cemetery at Princeton, Ky. His wife, Helen, died at the age of 71 on June 20, 1989, and is also buried in Princeton. They had one son, James, who lives in Fairfax Station, Va.

Louise, born Aug. 22, 1920. She was married to Elmo Bartlett, and still resides near Beech Creek.

Nancy June was born April 23, 1923, and married Elman McDonald, who is now deceased. Nancy June resides at Beech Creek.

Paul Truman was born Oct. 16, 1925, and married Marcie Hornik. They reside in Dayton, Ohio.

David Ray was born March 25, 1931. He married Ruth Cowherd of Cecilia, Ky. They currently live in Santa Ana, Calif.

Shirley Neal, the youngest, was born July 1, 1935, and died two years later, on Sept. 18, 1937. He is buried beside his parents at Mt. Moriah.

* * *

Evan's older sister, Alma, married J. A. Barbee. He was 34, from Yost (Belton) and the son of Frank (born in Virginia) and Abbie Johnson (born in Butler County, Ky.) Barbee of Yost. She was 27, lived at Gus (Mud River) and was the daughter of Tom and Nannie Hall Free. Their wedding took place on April 17, 1912 (34-37) with B. W. Penrod and Owen Hunt as witnesses. The Barbees lived for many years at Beech Creek.

* * *

(Information other than that gained through printed and official records was given by Nancy June McDonald of Beech Creek, and from family records kept by the late Flora McMillen Free of Penrod. Correspondence may be addressed to the writer, 7965 Ridgewood Road, Goodlettsville, Tenn, 37072.)

