

The Crouse Family

By Barbara Glakas

The Crouse family was one of a number of northern families that relocated to Herndon during the Civil War era.

Our last article, “Private French Dulany, C.S.A.” (March 25), was about a young Confederate soldier who was killed in Herndon during the Civil War. He was buried on a hill where the Crouse house now stands, at the corner of Madison and Monroe Streets. Herndon residents may remember the property as having one of the oldest trees in Herndon, which came down during a storm in 2009. The Crouse family came to Herndon right after the Civil War.

In the early 1800s, Herndon was a nameless village that was surrounded by farms. Before, during, and after the Civil War there was an influx of northern families who relocated to the area from Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Vermont, Maine, and Nova Scotia. Many of those who came to Herndon settled around the railroad station. In 1858, the post office located in that building was named Herndon. The town was officially incorporated in 1879.

Lottie Dyer Schneider, a local resident who was born in 1879, recalled a number of northern families who migrated to Herndon. She said, “Many of the men from the North commuted to Washington daily where they held government offices.” Amos Crouse was one of those men—he worked at the Treasury Department for 42 years until he eventually retired at an advanced age.

Crouse was born in New York in 1836. At age 26 he was the owner of a farm, but when the Civil War broke out he left the farm and enlisted in the 152nd Regiment of the New York Volunteers. He was wounded in the Battle of Prospect Hill in 1864, necessitating the amputation of his left hand. Due to his disability, he was honorably discharged from the military the following year. It was sometime in the post-war period that he moved to the Herndon area. His obituary stated that he lived here “since the war.”

The 1878 Hopkins Atlas map, the earliest map of the village of Herndon, shows that the Crouses owned several parcels of land in downtown Herndon between Monroe and Quincy Streets and extending from Jefferson Street northward, past Madison Street, up to the southern edge of the Yount property (now the Monroe Hill subdivision). Current area residents confirm that the Crouse house was built in 1879. It is not clear where the Crouse family lived prior to that time.

Amos Crouse, who according to Town Council minutes became a member of the Town Council in 1880, was married to Bella Crouse. They had seven children: Leona, Fred, Jennie, Amos, Hattie, Olive, and Donald. Early pictures of Herndon school children from the 1880s and 1890s, which are on display at the Herndon Depot Museum, include some of the Crouse children.

Amos died in 1920 at age 83. Bella died three years later. Amos is buried at Arlington National Cemetery. Bella and all seven of the children are buried at Herndon's Chestnut Grove Cemetery.

The oldest child, Leona, was born in 1871. In 1887, at the young age of 16, she married one of her teachers, Edgar Kidwell, who was 17 years her senior. Leona had a child two years later. Unfortunately, Mr. Kidwell died of typhus prior to the baby's birth. The young widow took a job at the Treasury Department in Washington D.C., leaving her baby with her parents in Herndon. At some point she married J.P. Yoder.

After 25 years at the Treasury Department, Leona had to retire due to an aggressive form of rheumatoid arthritis that left her needing a wheelchair by the age of 45. Cared for by her husband and daughter, she moved to various places including Arlington Virginia, Florida, and Illinois. She died in 1956 at the age of 85.