

THE ANCESTRY OF GEORGE AND NELLIE CRANDALL - NATURALISTS

by Larry Crandall-Wood *

George and Nellie Crandall are rather famous people. Locally famous in Wisconsin, at least. George's family came from Central NY state and he is among those many descendants of the well documented Crandall family of Colonial Rhode Island. Sadly for George and Nellie, they had no grandchildren, both of their daughters dieing childless, so perhaps nobody took up the task of finding out exactly how this family connects to the better documented Crandall family of NY and RI. From both historical and genealogical viewpoints their story needs to be told. No Crandall genealogy research is possible without reference to John Cortland Crandall's *Elder John Crandall of Rhode Island and His Descendants* [hereafter Crandall Genealogy].¹ This document will be seriously referred to later.

George Humphrey Crandall married Nellie I. Bennett in Wisconsin. Their personal history in that state is well documented by the Wisconsin Historical Society and well worth partially repeating here. The best biography found on them is from "The History of Wisconsin Dells Country" published by the Dells County Historical Society about 1995.² Note that there is no "Dells County" in Wisconsin. The "Wisconsin Dells" is a scenic area of the state surrounding part of the Wisconsin River. The city of Wisconsin Dells, formerly known as Kilbourn City, is located in Columbia County, with a large portion of the scenic Wisconsin River "Dells" located in Adams County to the North.

Here is a quote from the published history:²

In March of 1892, a young man stepped off the train to begin his new job as night operator at the Kilbourn (City) Depot earning \$45.00 a month; good wages for a youth. George Crandall never dreamed that his life would be devoted to the Wisconsin River.

George married Nellie Bennett on November 28, 1893, and was soon looking for ways to add to the family income. In 1894, he advertised as an agent selling sewer and drain pipe. In April, 1895, the Crandalls made their first venture into the summer resort business. They rented Glen Cottage, a seven room house on the southwest corner of River Road and Wisconsin Avenue, and converted it into a small hotel. In 1898, George tried the furniture and undertaking business.

In 1898, the new Dells Resort Company asked the Crandalls to manage their Larks Hotel, later the Dells Inn, at the head of the Narrows between Artist's Glen and Cold Water Canyon. George also managed hotels and properties in Texas.

In 1908, the Dells Resort Company sold their Dells holdings to the Southern Wisconsin Power Company, which was buying riverbank property rather than pay flowage fees for land that would be covered by the water backed up by the power dam. The power company persuaded Crandall to manage these properties, along with other riverfront land threatened by logging. Where trees had been cut, he reforested. His land purchases halted plans for roads, hotels, cottages and signboards along the river banks.

By the time George purchased Stand Rock and the Hotel Crandall in 1914, he was also a partner in the Dells Boat Co., owner of the steamer Apollo and several small launches. Crandall saw that the Dells area was in danger of being defaced by commercial practices.

* Larry Crandall-Wood is a Mechanical Engineer and an amateur genealogist. His address is 5501 Gallant Fox Ln., Racine WI 53402-1853

¹ John Cortland Crandall, *Elder John Crandall of Rhode Island and His Descendants* [hereafter Crandall Genealogy] (1949).

² "Others Before you...The History of Wisconsin Dells Country", page 181, published about 1995 by the Dells County Historical Society, 714 Broadway, Wisconsin Dells, WI 53965

Though he worked to have his and other riverbank property preserved in a national park, it was not to be.

George Crandall died March 4, 1938, on a golf course in Phoenix, Arizona, where the family had spent many winters. Nellie was active until ill health forced her retirement. She died November 22, 1952 after a long illness.

George Crandall's life exemplified his words, "No man can own the Dells. He can only be its custodian for a time."

The Crandall daughters and their families, before and after George's death, were involved in management of the riverfront properties and also the Stand Rock Indian Ceremonial. Lois, born June 30, 1896, married Howard Musson on June 9, 1917. He became associated with the Crandall companies in 1921 and gradually took over management of the Hotel Crandall. Lois entered the family business in 1934, designing the financial structure of the Stand Rock Indian Ceremonial and later serving as treasurer of the Dells Boat Company and G. H. Crandall, Inc.

On April 1, 1923, Phyllis, born November 19, 1894, married Ralph "Doc" Connor, a dentist from Wilmette, Illinois. Phyllis designed and directed the Stand Rock Indian Ceremonial from its inception in 1929 until the year of her death. She and her assistants sought out talent and staged the lighting effects which still dramatize the production.

In 1933, Phyllis, assisted by Lois, was asked to direct a group of 200 American Indians from various tribes at the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago. They were joined by 75 Dells Indians. The welfare of native Ho-Chunks was an abiding concern to the family. "Doc" Connor managed the Dells Boat Company and its operations. He was also known as an excellent golfer.

Since neither couple had children, they grew concerned over the future of their properties. In the early 1950s they took up George's efforts to have the Dells riverbanks become a national park, but were again refused. The state noted the many small unconnected parcels owned by others and expressed concern for existing commercial involvements. State officials did, however, lead them to the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation.

On January 16, 1954, after much thought, the Connors and the Mussons gave most of their Dells properties to WARF. These holdings included 1200 acres of land along the river, mostly in the Upper Dells, the Dells Boat Company with three launches, the Clipper Winnebago and supporting equipment, the Crandall Motor Inn, the Stand Rock amphitheater and interests in the Lower Dells. Provisions were made that these operations would continue to pay federal, state and local taxes in the four counties and five municipalities. The only building allowed on the river bank would support tour boats and their passengers. All of the donors received a small income during their lifetimes, but their greatest reward was in the knowledge that their legacy was secure.

A bronze plaque erected in Witches Gulch sums up the profound contribution of the Crandall-Connor-Musson family to our community: "This beauty is yours because others before you loved the Dells."

Most of the Crandall and Bennett genealogy research starts with this article. It gives birth, death, marriage dates and relationships for the entire extended family. One thing it oddly leaves out is George's father George O. Crandall, who is even included in a photo on the same page. George Senior will be reviewed later.

Before leaving the history section of this article, it would not be appropriate to proceed without a short biography on Nellie's father, Henry Harrison Bennett (1843-1908), well known landscape photographer. His work is prominently displayed on the Wisconsin Historical Society Website and in the state of Wisconsin retains an almost mystical reverence usually associated with the

works of his contemporaries John Muir (1838-1914) and Ansel Adams (1902-1984). H.H. Bennett also had a bio in the same publication, which is reprinted here: ³

H.H. Bennett, Pioneer Landscape Photographer

Henry Bennett, the oldest child of George and Hariett, was born January 15, 1843 near Farnham in lower Canada. The family soon returned to Brattleboro, Vermont and by 1857, hard times had hit the area and they moved west to Kilbourn (WI). The railroad and the town were being built, promising work for Henry and his father George, who were carpenters.

When the Civil War broke out, Henry and his brother Ed joined Co. E of the 12th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry. A crippling injury to his right hand forced Henry to seek a new career when he returned home. In 1865, he and his brother George purchased the photographic gallery of Leroy Gates in Kilbourn. George soon returned to Vermont and Henry built his studio at 215 Broadway. By 1875, he had achieved national prominence as a landscape photographer.

Three dimensional stereoscopic views were at the height of their popularity as parlor entertainment and when Bennett's views began circulating, increasing crowds of visitors came to Kilbourn to see the Dells for themselves. Bennett also showed his magic lantern slides to groups in many cities. With photography still in its infancy, Bennett had to build his own cameras and other equipment. He perfected a rubber band shutter to stop action, a revolving printing house to follow the sun and increase his time for printing and a method for printing his 18" x 66" panoramas.

The riverlands of the Dells were his first love and he returned to them year after year to get even more artistic angle or lighting effect. He also pictured the countrysides of Devil's Lake, Mirror Lake, the rocky bluffs of Adams and Juneau Counties and the Upper Mississippi. His camera caught scenes in Chicago and St. Paul and his collection of Milwaukee views of the 1880's and 90's is the largest still in existence.

Henry Bennett married Francis Douty in 1867 and they were the parents of Harriet (Richards), Ashley, and Nellie (Crandall). Francis helped Henry in his studio until she died of tuberculosis in 1884. In 1809 he married Evaline Marshall and they had two children: Miriam and Ruth (Dyer).

H.H. died in 1908. At the end of his life, when the power dam threatened to cover much of the beauty he loved, he wrote, "My energies for near a lifetime have been used almost entirely to win such prominence as I could in outdoor photography, and in this effort I could not help falling in love with the Dells." Today H.H. Bennett's fame as a pioneer photographic artist continues to grow and his beloved Dells is enjoyed by more visitors each year.

Both George Humphrey Crandall and Henry Harrison Bennett are of significant historical importance, but no known work on their genealogy has been accomplished. H.H. Bennett's genealogy will have to await another article, possibly by another author, but George's ancestry is uncovered here.

Taking nothing printed in these articles as certain fact, I began a serious genealogy research project to verify and document the correct ancestry. Many articles have been written about the ancient Rhode Island Crandall family attesting to the one-name status, purporting to demonstrate all Crandalls in the USA are descended from one Elder John Crandall born about 1612 who married first Mary Opp and second Hannah Gaylord. This is likely true, but I remain a skeptic and needed facts to convince me this was a true lineage for my subject person, George H. Crandall.

My first step was to research the death of George Crandall on 4 Mar 1938. I found it in the Milwaukee Journal ⁴. The Obituary states "King of the Dells" dead in Arizona. George Crandall

³ IBID, page 70

died Friday, 4 Mar 1938 after being stricken with a heart attack on the golf course. The obituary was listed as being a reprint from the Phoenix AZ paper.

I applied for a death certificate from Arizona to confirm some of the family information and perhaps locate a burial location. Arizona law is apparently different from most other states because they will only release this information by court order or to an immediate family member. Since all of his immediate family are also dead this was not an option.

Thanks to the kind help from Jeanne Reese, granddaughter of H.H. Bennett and niece of George & Nellie, I was able to locate the Crandall family burial location at Spring Grove Cemetery, Wisconsin Dells, WI. This yielded the following records: ⁵

Spring Grove Cemetery, Block 71 Lots 11&12

George Humphrey Crandall born 22 July 1869 died 4 Mar 1938

Nellie Bennett Crandall born 1871 died 1952

Phyllis Crandall born 19 Nov 1894 died 14 Dec 1954

(Note: Phyllis' husband, Ralph "Doc" Connor, is reportedly buried in Calvary Cemetery, Baraboo, WI, but I could not find his gravesite.)

Lois Helen Crandall Musson died 9 Mar 1972 age 75 yrs

HR Musson died. 24 Oct 1971

Next step was to find the family in the Federal Census Records. With almost all of the census records being listed on the local library access it is an easy task, but one should be careful to always check the actual scanned image of the census and not rely on the synopsis provided by the data source, in this case Ancestry. ⁶

Federal Census records, working backward in time:

The 1910 Census ⁷ Shows George H. Crandall “head” age 40 born WI. Nellie “wife”, born Dec 1872 WI, George O. Crandall “father” born Sept 1833 NY, father born in NY mother born in CT, Phyllis “daughter” born Nov 1894, Lois H. “daughter” born Dec 1893. The important facts gleaned from this include confirmation of George O’s birth location as NY as well as both his parent’s birth locations. His mother’s birth in CT becomes very important later. Living with the family in 1910 was Harriet M. Snyder age 42 “sister-in-law” (Widow), who I suspect was Harriet Bennett, Nellie’s older sister, as reported in the Bennett bio above as Harriet Richards. Perhaps Snyder was a second marriage, but at least her age seems correct.

The U.S. 1900 WI Census ⁸ shows George H. Crandall, “head” born Jul 1833 in WI, Nellie B. Crandall “wife” age 38 born WI, Phyllis M. Crandall “daughter” born Nov 1894, Lois H. Crandall “daughter” born June 1893 and George O. Crandall “father” age 76 born NY (parents born NY and NY). This is certainly the correct family and to our luck, even have George’s father George O. Crandall living with them. This relationship becomes more strongly supported later. As previously stated, George H. Crandall’s father was reported in historical articles as George O. Crandall and even survives in some of the photographic work of the time, undoubtedly due to work by H.H. Bennett and family. An important error in this 1900 Census was the reporting of

⁴ Milwaukee Journal Newspaper Saturday 5 Mar 1938

⁵ Spring Grove cemetery Records, City Building, Wisconsin Dells WI (608-254-2012)

⁶ Ancestry Plus Library Edition

⁷ 1910 U.S. Census Milwaukee, Milwaukee Co WI p. 13

⁸ 1900 U.S. Census Kilbourn, Columbia Co WI p. 8

George O's mother as being born in NY, the 1910 census accurately reports it as CT, as we shall see later.

The 1880 census leaves much to be desired, because none of these people, except Nellie and her family are initially found with complete certainty. In fact, I could not find anyone at first, moving on to the 1870 census and later returning to the 1880 after finding more about them in 1870. Confusingly, there is a George Crandall of the right age for George O. Sr., (47) as a single boarder living in Milwaukee "Collector for the Railroad"⁹. We finally found Emma Crandall "niece" age 15 born NY, H. George Crandall "nephew" age 10 born WI, and M. Mollie Crandall "niece" age 7 born WI, living in Ixonia, Jefferson Co, WI with their Uncle E. H. Humphrey age 55 born Wales & his wife Mary age 52 born in Wales¹⁰. Ixonia, WI is the city where George's bio lists as his birth location. Most likely, their mother Anna had died after Mollie was born in 1873 and they were living with an Aunt and Uncle, while the father, George O. tried to get his life back together. E. H. Humphrey has not been traced, but I will later list George O's siblings and there was no Mollie among them in any other document so perhaps she died soon after the 1880 census. I did find a Mary Humphrey born 1823 died 22 Jul 1891¹¹, perhaps she was a couple of years older than the 1880 census indicated and her age was misreported? This is not the first time I have encountered reported age errors, although usually with adult women. In the genealogy research I have performed on my own Irish family I have traced some adult Aunts who reportedly aged only 3 years each decade. This 1880 census information leads me to suspect E.H. Humphrey was likely a brother-in-law of George O's and possibly related to wife Anna W's family. Since the subject of our search "George Humphrey Crandall" shares his middle name with his Uncle it is easy to see a strong family connection there. George's mother (Anna W.) may have even been a Humphrey.

The 1870 Milwaukee, WI Census¹² was where the search really started to get interesting. It lists George O. Crandall age 35 "Ret. (Retail?) clothing" born in NY, Anna W. age 34 (wife) born in NY, Emma W. age 5 born in NY, George H age 9/12 born in WI. This all agrees with previous information and now gives us a mother and sister for additional help. Sister Emma was the key to finding her brother George in the above 1880 census. I had searched the 1880 census in vain until I found Emma in 1870, then this led me to "H. George Crandall" her brother in 1880. The index searching does not allow you to search by middle names and I was not finding George anywhere. We can conclude from the ages and birth locations of the family members in 1870 that George O. and Anna W. were married in NY about 1865 and moved to Wisconsin between 1865 and 1869.

The 1860 Census¹³ Richland, Oswego County, NY gives us Mary Crandall age 58 born in CT (Widow), George O. age 26, Charles A. age 24, Eugene L. age 17 and Sara A. age 10. There are many George Crandalls living in NY state in the 1860 census and it became very difficult to find the correct family. At first, I was looking for a male head of family, but thanks to having a good birth date age for George O. and knowing his mother was born in CT, I was finally able to narrow it down to this family after many hours of searching.

The 1850 Census¹⁴ gives us the last best clues to this family. Because we now have mother and siblings with ages and located in Richland, NY, we can match the entire family unit up in the 1850 census. We find Caleb Crandall age 57 born NY, Mary Crandall age 48 born CT, Chancy

⁹ 1880 U.S. Census Milwaukee, Milwaukee Co WI p. 250D

¹⁰ 1880 U.S. Census Ixonia, Jefferson Co WI p. 77B

¹¹ Jefferson County, (Ixonia), Welsh Methodist Cemetery Rootsweb website
<http://www.rootsweb.com/~usgenweb/wi/cemetery/jeff-welshmethodist.html>

¹² 1870 U.S. Census Milwaukee, 5th Ward p.20

¹³ 1860 U.S. Census Richland Oswego County NY p. 59

¹⁴ 1850 U.S. Census Richland Oswego County NY p. 226 & 227

B. age 19, Orlando age 17, Charles A. age 14, Eugene age 7, Sarah age $\frac{3}{4}$ and Rachel Peck “mother” age 85 born CT. I looked long and hard trying to find George O. Crandall in the 1850 census, until, like the problem in the 1880 census, I realized I was looking for the wrong name. When I realized he was called Orlando, for George Orlando then things started to fit together. I can guess his mother liked his middle name and that was how he was known early in life. There is very likely a clue here for other research because I have not found where the “Orlando” came from yet. Now we have a father’s name (Caleb) and a mother-in-law, Rachel Peck, giving us a maiden name for Mary.

An internet search through the Richland Oswego County NY “Rootsweb” website ¹⁵ gave me a partial cemetery listing for the Pulaski Village Cemetery, Rt.11, Town of Richland, Oswego Co., NY.

Pertinent Burial listings are:

Crandall, Mabel, wife of Alden, died May 13, 1838 age 38 yrs

Crandall, Minerva A., wife of Alden, died July 19, 1842 age 34 yrs

Crandall, Henry S. died July 3, 1853 age 28 yrs (Son of Caleb D. & Mary)

Crandall, Caleb D. died Feb. 11, 1852 age 52 yrs

Peck, Rachel, wife of Subrint, died Dec. 16, 1857 age 92 yrs

The records for the Pulaski Village Cemetery and the 1850 census were independently verified by the Pulaski Historic Society. Internment dates for the Crandalls are as follows: ¹⁶

Mabel - May 13, 1838

Minerva - July 19, 1842

Henry S. - July 3, 1853

Caleb D. - Feb 11, 1852

Now we have a death date for Caleb, middle initial “D”, another son “Henry S.” of Caleb and Mary and a name for Rachel Peck’s husband - Subrint. According to the Crandall Genealogy ¹⁷, Alden Crandall, Crandall Genealogy #1778, “husband of Mabel” was a distant relative of Caleb D. Specifically: Alden ⁷ Crandall born 6 May 1794 (Alden⁷, Abner⁶, Eber⁵, Eber⁴, Samuel³, Samuel², Elder John¹). I believe the family relationship for Alden ⁷ works out to a 5th cousin to Caleb D, but sufficiently distant to be of little value to our research here. This geographical area and era contained many Crandall/Crandal/Crandle people, who for the most part did not know they were related. Only the Crandall genealogy published in 1949 finally began to link these distant cousins up in an organized, believable manner.

This finally brings us to the Crandall Genealogy ¹⁸, which does list Caleb D. Crandall, husband of Mary Peck and having a son named George Orlando.

The Crandall genealogy states:

George Orlando Crandall, Crandall Genealogy # 2245 ¹⁹ of Pulaski & Richland, NY, son of Caleb D. and Mary (Peck) Crandall born Pulaski, NY married Anna W.

¹⁵ Richland Oswego County NY “Rootsweb” website <http://www.rootsweb.com/~nyoswego/> New York State Coordinator, Robert Sullivan.

¹⁶ Pulaski Historical Society, 3428 Maple Ave., Pulaski, Oswego Co NY 13142-4502

¹⁷ Crandall genealogy p. 363

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Ibid p. 426

“In 1867 G. Orlando and Anna W. of Richland NY QC a deed to Mary Crandall of Richland for \$100.00 land once belonging to Caleb D. Crandall. In 1868 Mary Crandall and Eugene L. Crandall of Richland, NY to Sylvester Goodrich and William D. Goodrich”.

Author’s Note ²⁰: Eugene L. was a brother of George O; and Mary Crandall was their mother, Caleb having died 11 Feb 1852 (Pulaski Village Cemetery, Rt.11, Town of Richland, Oswego Co., NY).

Caleb D. Crandall, Crandall Genealogy # 1029 ²¹ of Bridgewater and Pulaski, NY son of Peter and Abigail (Nabby) Crandall, born Bridgewater, 24 Oct 1797; bap. May 1822; died Pulaski, 11 Feb 1850 married Bridgewater, 17 Mar 1824, Mary Peck. (Note that the birth and death dates for Caleb D. do not exactly agree with the tombstone dates from Pulaski, but we do not know the Crandall source data. Even so, this is undoubtedly the correct family unit as confirmed by location and the Peck maternal surname.)

Peter Crandall, Crandall Genealogy # 411 ²² & Abigail Crandall. Peter born 6 Jul 1776 West Greenwich RI son of Peter and Elizabeth Wells, married 19 Jan 1796 Abigail “Nabby” Crandall born 29 Mar 1778 (parents unknown).

Peter Crandall, Crandall Genealogy #140 ²³ & Elizabeth Wells. Peter born Abt 1740 West Greenwich RI son of Peter & Sarah (Unknown), married Elizabeth Wells.

Peter Crandall, Crandall Genealogy #46 ²⁴ & Sarah. Peter born 4 Jul 1713 Exeter RI son of Peter & Susannah Tefft, married Sarah (Unknown).

Peter Crandall, Crandall Genealogy #14 ²⁵ & Susannah Tefft. Peter born Abt 1685 prob. South Kingston RI son of John & Elizabeth Gorton, married Abt 1705 Susannah Tefft.

John Crandall, Crandall Genealogy #2 ²⁶ & Elizabeth Gorton. John born Abt 1649 Newport RI son of Elder John & Mary Opp, married 18 Jun 1672 Elizabeth Gorton. (John was eldest son of his father John).

Elder John Crandall & Mary Opp. Crandall Genealogy #1 ²⁷. John born Abt 1612 Monmouthshire England 1st married Mary Opp born Abt 30 Jan 1647.

²⁰ Editorial comment, author, not part of Crandall genealogy

²¹ Ibid, p. 222

²² Ibid p. 106

²³ Ibid p. 38

²⁴ Ibid p. 17

²⁵ Ibid p. 9

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Ibid



Crandall Hotel, Wisconsin Dells WI

Conclusion for the ancestry of George Humphrey Crandall:

Thus:

George H. ⁹, George O. ⁸, Caleb D. ⁷, Peter ⁶, Peter ⁵, Peter⁴ Peter ³, John ², Elder John ¹

George Humphrey Crandall ⁹ born 22 Jul 1869 Ixonia, Jefferson CO, WI died 4 Mar 1938 married Nellie I. Bennett born 1871 died 22 Nov 1952, daughter of Henry Harrison Bennett born 15 Jan 1843 died 1 Jan 1908 Madison WI and Francis Douthy. Owners of Crandall Hotel, Kilbourne, WI (aka Wisconsin Dells WI) burned down in 1974.

Children:

1. Phyllis M. Crandall ¹⁰ born 19 Nov 1894 died 14 Dec 1954 married 1 Apr 1923 Dr. Ralph Connor (Dentist). No issue
2. Lois Helen Crandall ¹⁰ born 30 June 1896 died 9 March 1972 married 9 June 1917 H. Howard Musson died 24 Oct 1971. No issue

(George Humphrey Crandall and Larry Crandall-Wood are 7th cousins 2 times removed.)

The following people added significantly to this effort and I gratefully acknowledge their contribution:

Mary Maureen Campbell-Wood - Co Editor
Mary Lou Morrow – Pulaski Historical Society
Jean Reese – Resident of Wisconsin Dells WI