



Kitty T. Jones

**The Crossman Grey-House
Built 1892
Photo 2001**

Moving into History

The Crossman-Grey House

By KITTY T. JONES

In the summer of 2000 my husband and I moved. I still refer to the Crossman-Grey house (2501 North Underwood Street) as my “new” house, despite the fact that it is almost 110 years old. The late Victorian farmhouse with its wrap-around front porch, twin-gabled roofing, and original stained glass windows immediately struck us. While touring inside, not only did we discover pocket parlor doors, ornate wooden moldings, and three sets of stairs off the kitchen, but we also learned it had been designated an historic district by Arlington County in 1986. We were intrigued and impressed at learning this. After we decided to buy the house, I anxiously looked forward to visiting the Virginia Room at the Central Library to read about our new house.

First came the move; it was a challenge. It felt as if we were back in the 1860s and had traveled all the way from Pennsylvania in a covered wagon with half dozen children to embark on a new life in a new place. But in reality we only moved a few miles across town in a huge truck with just one little boy. I was eager to learn stories about the house and the Crossman family that was behind it all. Needless to say, we eventually got unpacked and since then have had time to learn about the Crossman family’s move to the Falls Church area of Virginia in 1864.

The property on which the Crossman-Grey house sits changed jurisdictions from the town of Falls Church to Arlington County in 1936, which led me to three different research libraries: the Virginia Rooms at Arlington’s Central Library, Fairfax County’s Regional Library, and Falls Church’s Mary Riley Stiles Library. The Arlington Department of Community Affairs completed a Historical American Buildings Survey in December 1984 which describes the property’s significance. The survey covers the physical history, the historical events and persons connected with the structure and the architectural information. Stephen B. Grey, owner of the Crossman-Grey house from 1955 to 1991, was instrumental in getting the historical designation; hence the name Crossman-Grey. In April 1986 the Historic Affairs and Landmark Review Board voted to designate the house as an historic district. The survey explains that the house was built for George Grant Crossman, son of Isaac Crossman who originally owned 126 acres of farmland he purchased in 1864 in Fairfax and Alexandria Counties.

Isaac Crossman played an important role in developing the Town of Falls Church. He was one of seven aldermen (councilmen) for the first city council

when Falls Church was incorporated as a town. The members of the Methodist Church who were “northern” in sympathy were left without a church after the Civil War and they primarily met at the home of Isaac Crossman, who later donated land for the Crossman United Methodist Church. It still exists on Lee Highway in Falls Church, but is now called the Christ Crossman United Methodist Church. Oakwood Cemetery, located near

Seven Corners, was once a Methodist Cemetery and Isaac along with five others petitioned the judge of the Circuit Court of Fairfax to transfer the property to the public. He was a director on the board of the Fairfax and Georgetown Turnpike Railway and was also an incorporator in the Falls Church and Potomac Railway Company. In 1890 Isaac Crossman deeded 60 acres to his son George, upon which he was a dairy farmer and in 1892 built this house.

The story of what brought Isaac to Falls Church before the move in March of 1864 and the purchase of over one hundred acres of land in what was then Fairfax County and Alexandria County began this way. Isaac was the second of seven children, born to Asa and Mary (McHenry) Crossman March 8, 1824 on a large farm in Indiana County, PA. In the mid-1840s he married Mary Ann Mutersbaugh, who also came from a large local family. They settled on a lumbering farm near his father’s in Indiana County. Over the next fifteen years they had seven children: Eveline, John Milton, James McHenry, Marilla Jane, David Clark, Flora Belle, and George Grant Crossman. After the Civil War many from the north came to the northern parts of Virginia to purchase cheap land and start new lives. The Crossmans were part of this movement. In the beginning of 1864 the family prepared for its move to Falls Church during which time Mary Ann (Mutersbaugh) Crossman gave birth to their eighth child, Isaac Mutersbaugh Crossman. It was reported that a week later Mary Ann died from complications of childbirth and the strain of packing. The infant died a month after his mother. Isaac was able to continue with his plans to move to Falls Church. He traveled in a covered wagon, left his children with relatives in Pennsylvania, and began searching for a farm to purchase. The children came in the following year when George was only three years old. At first glance it appears the Crossman family must have moved to this new state without any extended family and feeling quite alone. But upon closer inspection you will see there were plenty of relatives already settled in Fairfax County at the time of their move.

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I find it interesting that Mary Ann and Isaac Crossman were following many of her immediate family members to Virginia. Her three brothers, mother, several half-siblings, and maternal uncles had already settled in Virginia prior to the time of Crossman's move. David Mutersbaugh, brother of Mary Ann Crossman, moved to Fairfax and purchased a large farm near Lewinsville. He was a Methodist minister who would later be an assistant pastor at the Crossman Church. The oldest brother of Mary Ann Crossman, John B. Mutersbaugh, came to Fairfax County in 1861 and settled near Chesterbrook on a large farm named Thriftland. Abraham Mutersbaugh, the youngest brother, and his wife Rachel are both buried at the Oakwood Cemetery and it is believed they came to Fairfax County in 1858.

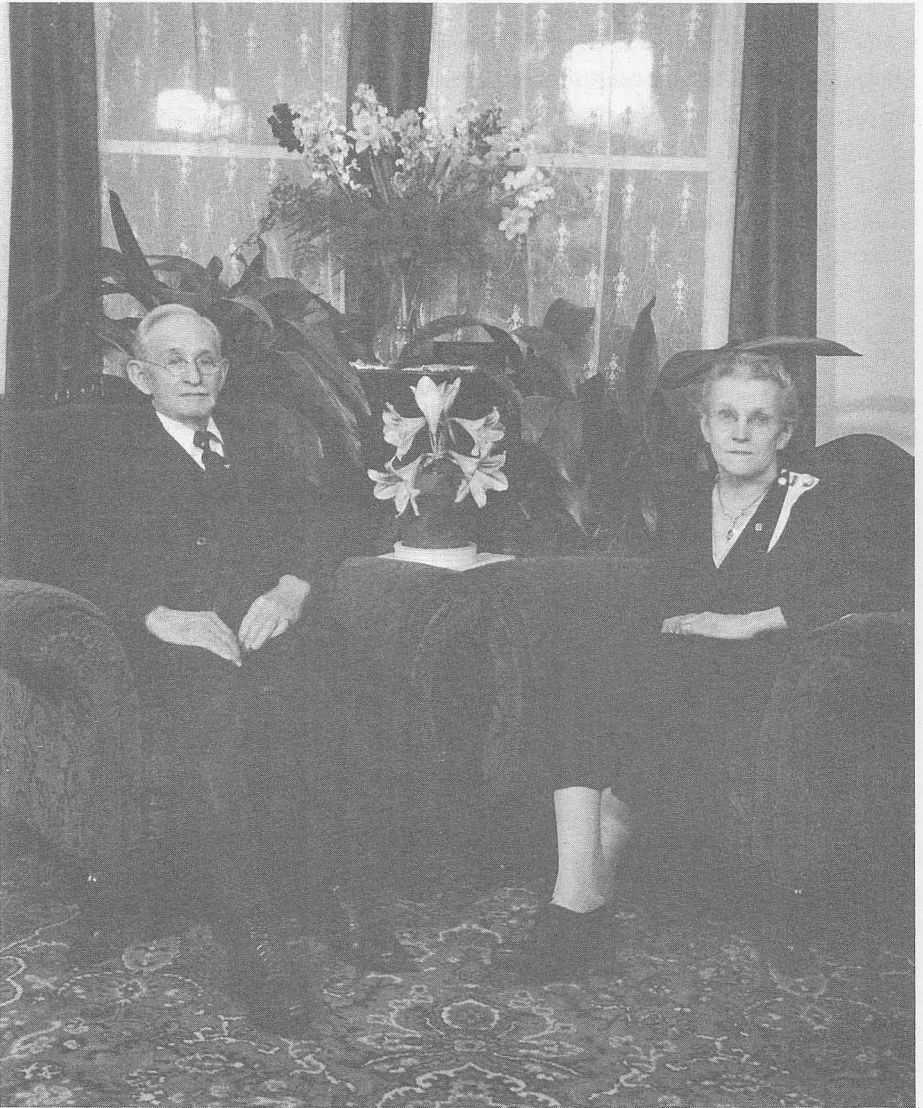
The late Mrs. Crossman's mother was Barbara (Sprankle) (Mutersbaugh) Watkins, born in 1804 in York County, PA. Her eldest brother, Solomon Sprankle, and his family moved in 1858 to Fairfax County, between Falls Church and Chesterbrook. Barbara Watkins, known as Widow Watkins, also came to Fairfax County in 1858 with her daughter, Maria Watkins. During the Civil War Maria Watkins operated a tobacco and candy store in Falls Church and was known to be a spy. Barbara Watkins lived out her days in Virginia and is buried at Oakwood Cemetery next to her son, Abraham Mutersbaugh.

Isaac was instrumental in opening access to the Oakwood Cemetery for both the northern and southern sympathizers of the Methodist church. He was made a trustee for the cemetery and his son George also became a trustee. Then George's son William worked as a caretaker at Oakwood Cemetery after he retired as a dairy farmer. Another of Arlington's last dairy farmers, Nelson Reeves, wrote in the *Arlington Historical Magazine* [Ed. note: Vol. 5, No. 3, October 1975, p. 43] about how he enjoyed his second career working at the cemetery with one of his good friends, a fellow retired dairy farmer. Mr. Reeves could only have been referring to William Crossman.

Isaac remarried, to Elizabeth Peffer from Pennsylvania, and they had three children born in Falls Church. These children were Mary, Susie and Charles. Mary married John Mutersbaugh, who was a nephew of Mary Ann (Mutersbaugh) Crossman. Charlie married Pansy Paine and they were parents to Clark Crossman.

George built his house in 1892, according to the Fairfax Herald in that same year. George married Nellie Dodge of Lewinsville. The Fairfax Herald stated that the bride was set up in a brand new house that was fully furnished and decorated awaiting her arrival. It also referred to George as a lady's man!

The dairy farm was closed by 1950 and the land was divided. Land was donated for Steward Elementary School, which is now a park. Land was sold to build Tuckahoe Elementary School and Bishop O'Connell High School. Much



Photography by George Studio, Arlington, Virginia. Courtesy Mary Riley Stiles Public Library
George C. Crossman and his wife, Nellie (Dodge) Crossman in their home's (Sunday) front parlor.

of the original tract of land is now a stretch of Interstate 66, specifically around the Westmoreland and Lee Highway exits in Arlington. The East Falls Church neighborhood voted to be part of Arlington County instead of the City of Falls Church just prior to World War II. The street names changed then, turning

Crossman Street into Underwood Street. The 1950s brought new subdivisions, named Heather Heights and Tuckahoe.

It appears the house was vacant for about five years from 1950 until the Greys moved in in 1955. They lived in the house until 1991 and Steve Grey was responsible for pursuing the historic designation. Margie Samp and Rick Filkens, who owned the house from 1991 to 2000, restored many parts of the house and were awarded the 2000 Arlington Heritage Award for restoration. As my husband and I walk the hallways, staircases and rooms of this old house we can only imagine the events that took place in its 110-year existence.

Kitty Jones is an accountant at Road Runner, an AOL Time Warner company specializing in high speed cable Internet service, located in Herndon. A resident of Arlington for the past ten years, Kitty hails from Tidewater, Virginia and is a graduate of Mary Baldwin College in Staunton. She and her husband, Allen, and stepson Christopher, enjoy researching the history of Arlington County and the city of Falls Church.
