

# Garland Landmark Society

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# Garland LANDMARK SOCIETY

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The Landmark Museum and the  
Pullman Railcar are operated by the  
Garland Landmark Society,  
a non-profit and volunteer organization.

Open Thursday, Friday, Saturday

10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Private tours for at-risk patrons available on request

Heritage@GarlandTX.gov 972-205-2992

FREE Admission, Donations are appreciated

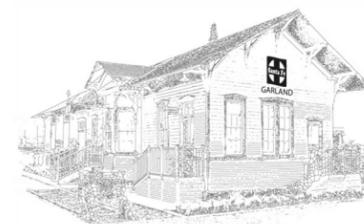
Are you a long-time Garland resident with 1-2 hours to spare?  
Make an appointment to visit the Museum and help us identify hundreds  
of photographs. We are looking for information on WHO is in the picture,  
WHAT they are doing, WHERE the picture was taken and by WHOM, as  
well as WHEN the photographer pushed the button!

Appointments available on

Mondays and Wednesdays at 10 a.m. and 12 p.m.

Email: Heritage@GarlandTX.gov

# ON TRACK



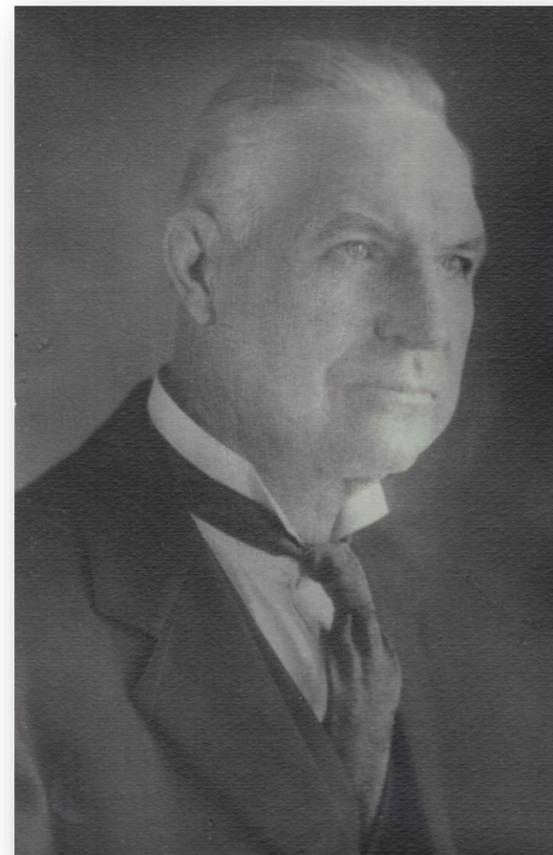
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GARLAND LANDMARK SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

July Aug Sept 2022

## George Wilson Crossman, Sr.

He may not have wanted Garland, but he helped make it great.



Portrait of G.W. Crossman Sr. in his later years.  
Crossman's Chilean origins and dark complexion  
fueled gossip in early Garland.

Garland Landmark Society Archives

George Wilson Crossman Sr., future Garland businessman and mayor, was born in the Chilean port city of Talcahuano in 1858. Crossman's parents purportedly met on their journey to Chile, part of a wave of English immigrants hoping to get rich in Chile's growing wool and shipping industries. Tragedy struck in 1865 when Crossman's father, who worked in the shipbuilding industry, died at sea, leaving behind his wife and five young children. Elizabeth Smith Crossman remarried to Samuel Proctor in 1868, but was once again met with misfortune when her young daughter with Proctor died in 1870. The next year, rather than return to her native England, she decided to reunite with relatives that had landed in New Bedford, Massachusetts. The family journeyed on a whaler around Cape Horn over a seventy-two day voyage that left its mark on a teenaged Crossman, who would recount the trip to children and grandchildren in later years. The family stayed only shortly in New Bedford before settling in Paxton, Illinois, a tiny town twenty-five miles outside of Champaign. While there, Crossman studied at Valparaiso University in neighboring Indiana, a private university that still operates today.

Crossman first landed in the small village of Duck Creek in 1880. Although he bought land in Richardson and worked for a while as a bookkeeper and teacher, Crossman wasn't quite done with his wandering. In 1886, he traveled west and spent a year in El Paso, bookkeeping for the El Paso Tribune, before returning to a divided community that now encompassed both Duck Creek and her rival Embree.

Crossman was joined in the region by his mother, brothers Robert and Arthur, and sister Jennie Crossman Marsters. A third brother, Charles, died of an infection in a port in Cuba in 1917 on a business trip from Mexico to New York, although it would be almost one hundred years before members of the Crossman family would discover his fate.

G.W. Crossman resumed his work as an auditor and occasional teacher, and also edited The Embree Enterprise. In 1888, Crossman bought the building that had housed Harper & Watson Grocery in Embree's Business District, Garland's current downtown area, and started Crossman Brothers' Grocery with his brother Robert. Unlike many other small merchants who struggled to stay afloat, the grocery grew in 1890 to include an insurance business. The insurance side of the business quickly overtook the grocery, and within a few years

Crossman, who subscribed to the philosophy “It is better to wear out than rust out”, was also working as a realtor, offering to buy and sell land and houses in the local paper.

Crossman was an ardent Republican, an unusual choice in a Democratic stronghold like Garland. His Republicanism likely had its beginnings in the conflict between Duck Creek and Embree over the location of the towns’ shared post office. While most Embree or Duck Creek factionists went along begrudgingly once Congressman Joseph ‘Joe’ Abbott stepped in to settle the quarrel, Embree businessman Crossman was so perturbed he went as far as to try to have Abbott delisted by the Democrats.

Whatever his initial feelings about the creation of Garland, Crossman would go on to become one of its most notable citizens. As a member of the board of stewards for the First United Methodist Church, Crossman was part of the committee that oversaw the church’s move from its initial location south of the Masonic cemetery to its current location at 801 West Avenue B at Ninth Street. He served as the school board secretary and was appointed postmaster in 1905, a position he held for eight years under Republican presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft. In 1916, he was elected Garland’s tenth mayor. The aldermen who served alongside him included Dr. G.W. Newman, W.H. Gandy, W.P. Peavy, B.L. Maxey, and J.W. Buchanan.



The Crossman house, shown circa 1960, stood at the southwest corner of present Glenbrook and Ave. D from roughly 1893 until it was demolished in 1968 to provide room for the First Baptist Church’s parking lot. The Queen Anne/Victorian structure was built for his bride by insurance and real estate broker George W. Crossman, Sr., who also served as mayor and as postmaster. *Garland Landmark Society Archives*



Like many immigrants, Elizabeth Crossman Proctor’s life was filled with both joy and hardship. Family legend holds that she danced with the future Edward VII at a ball held in the British embassy in Chile. *Garland Landmark Society Archives*

During a brief sojourn back north, Crossman married the former Ellen “Nellie” Farrar on October 21, 1888. The newlyweds relocated back to Garland, but Nellie died just six months later. She shares a headstone with Crossman’s mother Elizabeth at the Garland Masonic Cemetery, and is also listed on a family headstone in her native Paxton. Crossman remarried to the Garland-educated Ella Sparks in 1894, a union that produced three sons: G. W. Jr., Curtis, and Robert. Their iconic Gingerbread house, built by Crossman for Ella circa 1893, cost them \$1,800 in a story that became part of the family lore. Recounted by Wayde Brite Cloud in the *Garland Daily News*, “...the Crossmans secured a loan to build their palatial two-story home, and later repaid it. They failed, however, to get their note marked paid and the loan company also failed to give them credit

for the payment. The loan company finally went broke and sold their accounts to another firm, which collected again.” Two generations, the Crossman sons as well as grandson Curtis Crossman Jr., were born in the home.

Crossman’s busy life was dragged to a halt by illness in 1935. By then the village of a few hundred souls Crossman had stumbled upon in 1880 had grown into a bustling city. His second son Curtis, more commonly known as C.D., took over the family mantle, heading the insurance agency and serving as postmaster as his father once had. During his retirement Crossman and his wife enjoyed ‘automobile rides through the countryside’, and although retired he worked tirelessly on an invention to reuse corn stalks instead of burning them, an idea that never came to fruition. Crossman succumbed to illness in 1942, passing away in the house he had begrudgingly paid double on. He and Ella are interred side by side in the Crossman section of Garland Memorial Park. Crossman’s legacy lives on in the memories of Garlandites who fondly recall the family insurance agency nestled in the “Crossman Block”, which one stood on the east side of the square, and in descendants who live in the area still.

*-Jeanette Manning*



Crossman pictured with his sons, from left to right: C.D., G.W. Sr., Robert, G.W. Jr. When their father became ill in 1935, C.D. took over the family business. Robert made his home in Jacksonville, Texas and G.W. Jr. worked as a realtor in Dallas. *Garland Landmark Society Archives*