

The Crawford Family History Part 3 – A Teacher in Belize

The next child of Annie Crawford and John Alexander is Ethel who was born on March 14, 1888 in Amherstburg. She attended the King Street School and the *Amherstburg Echo* mentions on March 15, 1901 that the students formed a club of which Ethel was a member. The article says “The pupils of King St. school formed a Victoria literary society and elected the following officers: President, Leroy McCurdy; Vice Pres., Ethel Alexander; Sec., Annie Foster; Assist. Sec., May Holton; Treas., Benjamin Young; Programme committee, George McCurdy, Mabel Smith, Mary Simpson, Simuel McDowell.”

Just like her siblings Nina Mae and Arthur, Ethel was a teacher and taught at several schools. In 1909, the *Echo* reported that she was a teacher at S.S. No. 9 in Maidstone (now Lakeshore). She also taught at S.S. 11 Colchester South and was also a missionary teacher in Belize (British Honduras) for 28 years. Ethel is featured in several articles from the *Amherstburg Echo* which mentions presentations she gave while on break from teaching in Belize. In June 1935 the *Echo* printed “More Frightened of Detroit Traffic Than Tropical Jungles – Miss Ethel Alexander, Teacher In British Honduras, Tells of Some of Her Experiences – How would you like to go to your cookie jar in the pantry and find a seven-and-a-half foot snake coiled up on the shelf? No? Neither did Miss Ethel Alexander, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J.H. Alexander, of Amherstburg, who was home on furlough from the British Honduras. She didn’t say ‘Shoo!’, or attempt to frighten it away however. She just called one of the native help and let him do the shoo-ing. That’s just one of the things that makes life in the tropics different from the daily routine in this part of the country. We never knew that snakes had any redeeming qualities, but it’s a fact that native hotel-keepers keep these huge reptiles as rat catchers. Most people would prefer rat-traps, however. These snakes are called ‘Wowlers’ by the natives and are not venomous.

To Miss Alexander, walking down Woodward Avenue in Detroit is a great deal more dangerous than going through the jungle in the tropics. That, of course, is because she is used to the jungle, she says. Before being transferred to her present position as teacher in a girls' school in Belize she was stationed at Orange Walk, a settlement in the interior of 1,000 population. To get there from Belize one paddles up a river, whose banks are thick with the luxuriant vegetation of the tropics in which wild animals abound. Once while riding along one of the bush roads, the only highways in the interior besides the 11 miles of railroad, she saw a jaguar crouched beside the pathway. She registered alarm but the native boy who was with her told her the animal was more afraid of her than she was of it. The proof of the statement was shown when the jaguar gave the strangers the once-over and scurried back into the bush ... Miss Alexander left on Friday to return to Belize and we asked her which she preferred, this country or British Honduras. Her reply was that her work lay in that land but she would enjoy it much more if it had a few more of the modern conveniences of Canada."

In June 1951 the *Echo* also wrote about Ethel being the guest speaker for the Women's Missionary Society of the Wesley United Church. The *Echo* writes "Wesley W.M.S. Hears Former Missionary From Br. Honduras – The W.M.S. of Wesley United Church met at the home of Mrs. Roy McKim on Wednesday afternoon last. Mrs. E.E. Keith, president, took charge of the business and stressed the need for clothing overseas ... Miss Ethel Alexander, who has spent 28 years as a missionary in British Honduras; 10 years in Orange Walk and 18 in Belize, was the guest speaker. She told a great deal about the work of the women there; where there has been a great influx of people from other countries, the women learn to do work very much as they do in other countries – knitting, crocheting, etc. She showed samples of their work and also showed samples of beautiful work made out of their own materials as mahogany and straw, also work of

weaving, the same type as done by Indians 2,000 years ago. She told many incidents of her work there; she spent the last three years of her stay in Belize in charge of a book shop, the first of its kind there to supply books, Bibles and hymn books for Christian education. Her talk was very much enjoyed by all.”

Ethel also did story hour at the Public Library in 1953 as part of Young Canada Book Week. This was in addition to being the guest speaker at the Windsor Business and Professional Women’s Club in December 1953 where she spoke about Christmas in British Honduras.

Ethel Alexander was also honoured by the Anglican Women’s Association in September 1953 when she was made a Life Member. The *Echo* reported “Miss Ethel Alexander Made Life Member Of Anglican W.A. – About fifty members of the Women’s Auxiliary of Christ Church Amherstburg, Christ Church Colchester and St. Alban’s Malden met at St. Alban’s Church for an eleven o’clock Communion Service last Wednesday morning. Rev. R. S. Skinner was the Celebrant assisted by Rev. M.C. Davis, St. George’s, Walkerville and Rev. D.S. Henry of Amherstburg. During the service Miss Ethel L. Alexander was made a Life Member of the Diocese of Huron Women’s Auxiliary to Church of England in Canada. Mrs. Frank Miller presented Miss Alexander. Miss Bertha Staddon, Colchester W.A. presented the Certificate and Mrs. John Shand, Windsor Deanery Secretary for the Life Members of Essex County pinned on the gold W.A. Badge of Membership. Upon the conclusion of the Church Services the guests of honor Miss Alexander and Mrs. Fred Call Deanery W.A. President were presented with corsages by Mrs. F.W. Manning, Christ Church W.A. president, Amherstburg. The group then repaired to the friendly home of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Levergood where a luncheon with lovely appointments was served. A social hour was enjoyed enlivened by a few remarks from Rev. H.A. Wright and the Rev. D.S. Henry followed by an inspiring missionary talk from Mrs. Fred Call. The members

of the three Women's Auxiliary branches take great pride in presenting this Life Membership Certificate and pin to Miss Alexander for her faithful years of missionary work in British Honduras and her worthy example here at home."

Ethel sadly passed away in 1974 as was reported by the *Echo* on September 4, 1974. The article, titled 'Missionary Dies' said "Miss Ethel Alexander of Amherstburg died at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Toronto on Friday in her 87th year. Miss Alexander was a daughter of John Alexander a prominent educator in old Amherstburg. She, a teacher also, spent many years in Belize, British Honduras as a missionary-teacher. A service was held for Miss Alexander in St. James Cathedral in Toronto. Of this prominent old family a brother, Arthur Alexander of North Buxton and a sister, Mrs. Marjorie Foster of Sarnia, survive. A memorial service will be held in Christ Church, Amherstburg, Sunday, September 8th, at 2 p.m."

The *Amherstburg Echo* shared that while on a trip to Belize, a former Amherstburg resident, Harold Pillon, recalled that Ethel worked as a missionary there and asked one of the residents if he remembered Ethel. As the man's face lit up, he said "I remember her with affection."

Ethel's sisters Anna Louise and Marjorie are the last children of Annie Crawford and John Alexander. Anna Louise was born on May 20, 1890 in Amherstburg. She married Charles Anderson Webb, the son of Charles R. Webb and Mary Anderson, on July 4, 1917 in Amherstburg. In 1917 Anna Louise's wedding to Charles was the subject of a detailed writeup in the *Amherstburg Echo* which wrote "On Wednesday, July 4th, the anniversary of the day when our neighbor across the border severed her tie with the mother country, Canada, surrendered to Uncle Sam one of her daughters when Anna Louise, third daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J.H. Alexander, Alma street, became the bride of Charles A. Webb, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. C.R.

Webb, Detroit, Mich. Rev. Levi Wells, pastor of the First Baptist church, Windsor, officiating. At high noon, to the strains of Lohengrin's wedding march, played by Miss Marjorie Alexander, the bridal party descended the stairway ushered by Bertram Webb, brother of the groom, followed by the matron of honor, Mrs. J. Harold Alexander, gowned in cream duchess satin; after her came the two bridesmaids, Miss Mae Alexander, sister of the bride, in cream georgette crepe, carrying yellow flowers, and Miss Rachael Webb, sister of the groom, in white net with pink flowers. Miss Inez Alexander, niece of the bride, acted as flower girl carrying a floral basket of pink and white roses, and was followed by the bride and her father. The bride's dress was of ivory duchess satin with tunic of white chiffon, caught at the shoulders with pearl banding. She wore the regulation veil of white tulle and orange blossoms, and a pearl sunburst, the gift of the groom. Her bouquet was of bride's roses and lilies of the valley. Just after the bridal party took their places beneath an arch of roses. Miss Ethel Alexander sang 'Beauty's Eyes,' by Tostl. After the ceremony Miss Marjorie Alexander sang 'A Perfect Day' very sweetly. After congratulations the bridal party and the guests proceeded to the dining room, where a luncheon was served by girl friends of the bride, Misses Ada Kelley, Violet Hyatt, Eloise McDowell, of Windsor; Blanche Montgomery, of Sandwich and Marguerite Nall of Amherstburg. Toasts were given by Rev. Levi Wells, F.H.A. Davis, Dr. Turner of Detroit, and C.H. Webb, father of the groom. Responses were made by Virgil Richardson, the groom's attendant and J.H. Alexander, the host. The dining room was prettily decorated with smiling and pink roses. The bride's favors to her attendants were ivory fans, while the groom presented tie pins to the ushers and best man. The bride was the recipient of many valuable and useful presents. After luncheon an informal reception was held from three to five to guests from Amherstburg, Windsor, Detroit, and Cleveland. Amid showers of confetti and good wishes the

bride and groom left by auto for their new home. The bride's travelling suit was navy blue serge with a white hat. They will be at home after August 15th at 319 Canfield? Avenue, Detroit."

Charles and Anna had at least four children, Charles, Donald, Violet and Marilyn. I was able to find a marriage announcement for Violet Patricia Webb in the September 27, 1940 issue of the *Echo*. It says "Graham – Webb Wedding – Miss Violet Patricia Webb, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. C.A. Webb, and Mr. Charles Graham, son of Mrs. Matilda Graham and the late Mr. Graham, all of Detroit were united in marriage Saturday, September 14, at St. Cyprien's Church Detroit. Reverend Father Daid officiated. The bride was lovely in a soldier blue suit with matching hat and veil, with winter berry accessories of suede and a corsage of talisman roses. She was attended by her sister, Marilyn, who chose navy and wore a corsage of rapture roses. The groom was attended by Mr. D.E. Polle Friende of Detroit. The immediate families were present at the nuptial bonds. The dinner was later served at the home of Mrs. Mary Webb, parental grandmother of the bride. After a short trip Mr. and Mrs. Graham will take up residence at 1040 Scotten Avenue, Detroit. The bride is niece of Mrs. John A. Foster, Alma Street."

On October 18, 1961 *The Windsor Star* printed an obituary for Anna L. Webb which said "Mrs. Anna Webb, 71, formerly of Amherstburg, died Monday in Detroit after a lengthy illness. She was born in Amherstburg and lived there until she moved to Detroit in 1917. She was a clerk at the Michigan Employment Services Commission until she retired in 1959. Surviving are two sons, Charles R. and Donald A., of Detroit; two daughters, Mrs. Violet Graham and Mrs. Marilyn Graham, also of Detroit; one brother Arthur Alexander, of North Buxton; two sisters, Mrs. Marjorie Foster and Miss Ethel Alexander, of Amherstburg; 10 grandchidren. Funeral services will be held on Friday, at 10:30 a.m., at St. Mathew's Episcopal Church, Detroit. Burial will be in Rose Hill Cemetery, Amherstburg."

The last child of Annie Crawford and John Alexander is Marjorie Katherine Laura Alexander. She was born on August 10, 1896 and later married John A. Foster, the son of John Arthur Foster and Annie Elizabeth Stevens, on February 7, 1921 in Walkerville. Their marriage record states that John worked as a decorator and Marjorie was a stenographer. John and Marjorie had at least two children, John (married Sarnia Jones) and Patricia.

According to the site *Find A Grave* Marjorie passed away on January 23, 1984 in Sarnia, but I was not able to find her obituary. I did find the obituary for Marjorie's husband in *The Windsor Star* on March 21, 1958 which says "Ex-Lake Ship Sailor, J.A. Foster Dies – A lifelong resident of Amherstburg district John Arthur Foster, 66 of 209 Alma St., died Thursday in Essex County Sanitorium following a long illness. He was a former wheelsman on great lakes ship and also a decorator and painter in Amherstburg and Windsor. Surviving are his widow, Marjorie (nee Alexander); a son John A. with the Canadian Army at Sarnia; a daughter Patricia Anne, Sarnia; two sisters, Mrs. Ella F. Bell, Mrs. William Zimmer (Bessie), both of Detroit and two grandchildren. The body will be at the James H. Sutton Funeral Home, Sandwich and Gore Sts., Amherstburg, Saturday. Further arrangements are incomplete."

What we publish is not a complete history of any family and is based on the documents that are available. We welcome photos and information to fill in the gaps. See you next week for part 4.