

EWING FAMILY NEWS

Descendants of William Alexander Ewing

Father of Salome Almira (Coxley) Ewing

The life of Gustavus Adolphus Coxley

Editor's note: In 1983 Mabel Fetterman spent considerable time and effort researching our Kryder, Coxley and Welch ancestors. Some of the following is from her findings.

I truly appreciate her good work.

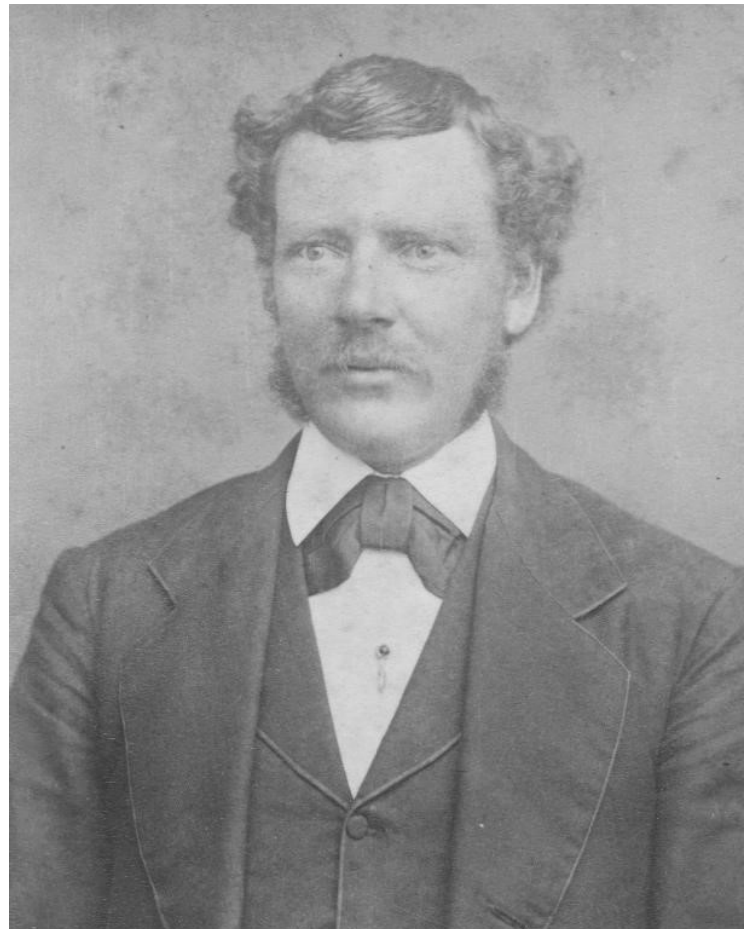
One could wonder how an Ohio boy, the product of a noticeably German heritage, would be named after a 17th century Swedish monarch. Gustav II Adolf (1594-1632) ascended to the Swedish throne as a teenager, leading the country to a position of superior European power and becoming known for his great military strategies, being victorious in numerous wars in the Baltic states ... mostly religious wars in which Protestant populations were struggling to be separated from the ruling Roman Catholic forces.

In English cultures, Gustav Adolf's name became Latinized and was known as Gustavus Adolphus. And, perhaps it was his efforts on the behalf of German Lutheran forces in 1630 that would make an impression 200 years later on a United Bretheran minister, who would give the revered name to his son.

Born March 16, 1851, in Stark County, Ohio, Gustavus Adolphus Coxley was the first child of Joseph and Saloma (Kryder) Coxley ... or, more accurately, Cochley. The family's last name would change spelling when Gus was in his early teens, after his father mustered out of the Union Army.

Joseph Cochley joined the Ohio Volunteer Infantry early in the Civil War, December 1861. But the recruiter spelled his last name the way it sounded instead of actually getting it right ... making it "Coxley." The mistake was never corrected in military records and Josheph chose to keep the new spelling after his stint in the Army ended.

When Joseph joined the army his family included five other children besides Gustavus, five girls. Mary Elizabeth, Ida May, Adelia M. (Dill), Carrie B., and Sarah A. (Sadie). Since Gus was the oldest, and the only boy,



Gustavus Adolphus Coxley

he was entrusted with the responsibility of being the “man” of the family while his father was away.

Joseph Coxley actually served two hitches in the army, his first ending after a long, disabling bout of dysentery that started just months after he joined. He spent most of 1862 and part of 1863 in military hospitals and was discharged in the spring of 1863. After recovering for a few months at home, he once again volunteered and served from July, 1863, until July, 1865, as a chaplain, tailor and harness maker.

After the war, Joseph purchased land in Hartland Township, Huron County, Ohio. He had changed his occupation to farming and wood-cutting many years earlier to support his family. His early training as a minister hadn’t provided enough income.

Two more children were born into the family after the war; another son, Burtis E., and a sixth girl, Metta A. The family now included eight children.

Gustavus started helping his father with the farming as soon as he was big enough to work, learning the skills at an early age. And some of the lessons were hard-taught. In a letter to her brother, dated March 29, 1869, Saloma wrote: *“Now I will tell you what luck Gustavus had a week ago last Saturday. He went to town with a load of wood and when he was crossing the railroad, the cars came and caught the hind part of his wagon and broke it all to pieces. But it did not hurt him nor the horses. It was our new wagon that cost us a hundred dollars.”*

Ouch! That’s painful. But a lesson that’ll last.

Time moved on, and found Gus Coxley still living at home with his parents when his mother passed away in 1875 ... or 1876. Some sources show that Saloma Coxley died January 1, 1875, but cemetery records indicate it was 1876.



Joseph Coxley and Saloma (Kryder) Coxley, parents of Gustavus Adolphus Coxley



**Adelia Coxley
1857 – 1919**



**Carrie Coxley
1859 – 1880**

**Sarah Coxley
1861 - 1931**

A few years later, Gus Coxley became interested in a young neighbor girl, Nancy Ann Welch. She was only 15 so when the couple decided to marry in March, 1880, Nancy was too young by Ohio law. They eloped to Adrian, Michigan ... three months before Nancy’s 16th birthday, and two weeks before Gus’s 29th.

The young couple wasted no time in starting their family. At the end of that year their first child, a daughter, was born. They named her Salome Almira Coxley, in honor of Gus’s mother (Saloma) and Nancy’s mother (Almira).

Two years later, on January 31, 1883, a son was born. They named him Dean Arthur. And a second son, Ezra K., was born in May, 1885. Their family was growing and things were changing in Ohio. Large numbers of people were being drawn from the eastern states into the central plains and further west as wild regions were becoming settled, providing new opportunities.

One of Nancy's older sisters, Alfratta (known as "Ett"), married Ben Skadden. Along with some of his family, Ett and Ben moved from Ohio to the plains of Kansas in 1883. Then, in 1886, Joseph Coxley moved from Ohio to Indiana, near Indianapolis, where he established a harness-making business. One of Gus Coxley's sisters, Carrie, had died in 1880 and the rest of his siblings were establishing their own families. So, when Ett Skadden urged them to join her and Ben in Kansas, Gus and Nancy decided to follow the westward flow of people.

Arriving in Marshall County, Kansas, in January of 1888, Gus Coxley and his family settled on a farm southwest of Frankfort near the Skaddens. They quickly adapted to their new environment and established themselves as successful farmers. They also expanded their family with the addition of a third son, Alexander, born in 1889.

It's not known if the Coxleys lived on more than one farm during their first years in Kansas, but land records show that Gus bought a quarter section which bordered the Wells Township homestead of William Alexander Ewing in October, 1892. Had they been living there since 1888? We don't know.

They lived and farmed next to the Ewing homestead until spring of 1901 ... two months after their daughter, Salome, married Ira Ewing.



**Nancy (Welch) Coxley and Gus Coxley
with Adelia Coxley standing behind**



**Front, left to right: Nancy, Alex and Gus Coxley.
Back: Ezra, Dean and Salome Coxley**

Gus and Nancy actually sold their Wells Township land and bought 400 acres in Clearfork Township near the Reserville school in October, 1900, with possession being given the following March. Two years after making the move, Gus bought an additional 80-acre farm that adjoined them on the south from James and Elmira Shedden. His grandkids would refer to that later as "the Shedden place" or "Granddad's 80." Although no one lived there, Gus left the buildings standing and kept milk cows there ... daily walking the distance from home to milk the cows and then carrying the milk

back for use. Some theorized that it was his “quiet place” where he sought time to himself.

The early 1900s were a time of disturbance for Gus Coxley. His wife was not happy with their daughter’s marriage which led to friction with the son-in-law. And in 1904 Gus’s father died and was buried in Ohio.

Then, in August of 1905, his youngest son, Alex, suddenly became very ill. The diagnosis was a ruptured appendix and the local doctor decided there was not time to transport him to a hospital which was many hours away by train. So Dr. Shoyer, along with a couple of other doctors from the area, turned the Coxley’s kitchen into an operating room. Using the kitchen table as their base, the three docs performed the delicate procedure, but to no avail. The infection was too advanced and Alex Coxley died early the following morning, August 28, 1905, at the young age of 15.

The disturbance continued three years later, when Nancy’s conflict with the son-in-law resulted in her having him committed to the State Hospital. Salome and three small children were back, living with her parents for the next year until Ira’s release from Topeka.

From 1910 until October, 1914, life was relatively normal for Gus again. But suddenly, Ezra became very ill, much the same as Alex had. This time the patient was sent on the train to a Kansas City hospital. Ezra endured the long and painful trip, and upon arrival, was found to also have a ruptured appendix. And, just like his younger brother, the infection was too far advanced to be treated. Unbelievably, at age 29, Ezra also died of appendicitis, October 21, 1914.

Life for Gus Coxley quieted down again for a few years and in 1917 he decided to retire from the farm. His only remaining son, Dean, was getting married to Ila Mills so Gus and Nancy bought a house in Frankfort and moved to town. Dean and Ila took over responsibilities at the farm.

Gus and Nancy bought a car and did a little travelling in their early retirement years. But the leisurely life was still punctuated by Nancy’s conflict with Ira, which came back to court action again in early 1922. Ira was sent back to Topeka and Salome, pregnant with her tenth child, remained with the children on a farm that Dean Coxley had bought a few years earlier next to his Reserville property.

As Salome’s pregnancy neared term, she stayed with her parents in town to await the birth. But a severe hemorrhage occurred and the blood loss took the lives of Salome and her baby, June 11, 1922. The baby was given his grandfather’s name... Gustavus Adolphus.

Salome’s remaining eight children stayed on their uncle Dean’s farm for the next year or so... the older ones caring for the younger. But they were eventually made wards of the court, separated, and doled out to foster homes. The youngest, 4-year-old Mary, remained with her grandparents in Frankfort.

Gus and Nancy Coxley lived in their Frankfort home for the rest of their lives in reasonably good health except for the last few years. Gus was hampered at the end by the loss of his eye-sight. When he died December 31, 1946, at age 95, he had outlived all of his siblings except his youngest sister, Metta. He had also outlived all of his children except his oldest son, Dean, who died just four years later.

Nancy Coxley lived until December 7, 1953. She died at age 89.



**Gus Coxley and his youngest sister, Metta...
the only one of his siblings to outlive him.**