

JOSEPH FRED CRONK FAMILY (#674)

Source: Heritage of Putnam County Tennessee – 2008 by Putnam County Heritage Book Committee and County Heritage Inc.

PG.249 – Joseph Fred Cronk was born June 6, 1882 and died October 8, 1944. He was born and reared in the 13th Civil District of Putnam County. He is the grandson of William Alexander Cronk (abt. 1826-1863) and Malissa B (Roberts) Cronk (abt 1830 – aft. 1906). Joseph’s mother was Melvina Cronk. She was born in 1850 and died about 1892 apparently leaving Joe F. at age 10, along with his six brothers and sisters to live with their grandmother, Malissa. The other children were Richard D (1877), Mary Alice (1878), Lou E (1884), Thomas “Tinker” (1886), Vada (1887) and Martilla “Tulle” (1891). It appears the oldest three lived with their grandmother until they were married. In the 1900 census, Joe F., Lou B Tinker and Tillie were still with their grandmother.

In January 1907, Joe Fred married Effie Lou Prentice (Sept. 1889-Apr 1959). They lived in the 13th Civil District where Joe was a farmer and a Deputy Constable. By 1910, they had moved next door to William Pullum and Jane Anderson Prentice Pullum (Effie’s mother). The house was located on Mill Pond Lane off of Hopewell Road.

At different times the Joe F. Cronk family lived in the 11th, 20th and 16th district. Always a farmer, Joe also engaged in the merchant business having owned several stores. The store and farm located in the 16th district were on the northeast corner of Mine Lick and Ditty. He also ran a mule-drawn “rolling store” with five routes. The drivers blew a conch shell to announce its coming. Senior members of the Putnam remember their excitement as children at hearing the sound of that conch shell. During this time, he was also increasingly engaged in buying and selling real estate.

With all this activity, he became well known in the community. An article in the Herald newspaper described him as follows when it announced him as the Democratic nominee for Sheriff of Putnam County. “he is a selfmade (sic) man and a Christian gentleman who started out in life poor and without advantage and by his energy, industry, honesty and integrity he has won for himself the confidence and respect of all who know him. He has served for several years as a member of the County Board of Education, and has always been an ardent friend of the schools and churches and his influence has...been exerted for the upbuilding (sic) of his community and county.”



To house his growing family, Joe and Effie Lou moved to Burgess Falls Road (Willow and Gould) with a much larger home on a 250 acre farm.

In 1932, Joe purchased a new store in Cookeville on the southwest corner of the Cookeville-Smithville Road (S. Willow) and he added gasoline pumps and bought a grist mill on Spring Street. Yet with operating a large farm, and all

this business activity, he continued to serve the community by becoming a Commissioner. While a member of the First Baptist Church where his oldest son Archie later served as an early Deacon.

With the large family and the larger house, came an even larger dinner table. As his lodes daughter Norman Crook Stewart often recalled, “Daddy was always bringing unannounced guests home for dinner. Even though I knew to prepare more than enough for the family, far too often it still wasn’t enough.”

Joseph Fred died unexpectedly from an ulcer. At the time of his death, he was building a new home near the Stevens Street Church and still actively engaged throughout the community. One of his more exciting projects was exploring the possibility of an airport for Cookeville. As the herald so aptly published, "he did much to help his fellow man."

Epilog: Archie Cronk, Joe's oldest son, celebrated his 100th birthday with many friends and family from Putnam in October 2007.

Post script: There is evidence to suggest that Vada Cronk and Lou E Cronk are sisters. There is also evidence to suggest they are the same person.

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Front Row: Cronk Family in 1931: Ola Cronk, married Gladys Stewart; Grady Cronk, married Nancy Catherine Randolph, Joseph Fred Cronk (1882-1944) holding Heloen Cronk, married 1-Brownie Farley 2-William Parrott; Effie Lou Prentice Cronk (1889-1959); Archie Cronk, married Stella Gladys Harris; Norma Cronk, married 1-Coron Maxwell 2-Lester Ned Stewart.

Second Row: Alma Lucy Cronk, married 1-Rufus Brown 2-Paul Isom; Evelyn Cronk, married Fred Bussell; Audrey Cronk, married Benton West.

Third Row: Howard Cronk, married Doris Jane Allison; Haywood Cronk; Benton Worley Cronk, married Opal Smith; Gelema Cronk, married Harry McCully; Joseph Fred Cronk Jr. married Johnnie Pearl.

GROWING UP IN PUTNAM COUNTY, TENNESSEE (#673)

Source: Heritage of Putnam County Tennessee – 2008 by Putnam County Heritage Book Committee and County Heritage Inc.

PG.248 & 249 – Almost a century ago, Archie Cronk (1907), holding his father's hand and Norma Cronk (1909) being proudly shown by her mother were the beginning of the Joe Fred Cronk (1882-1944) and Effie Lou (Prentice) Cronk (1889-1959) family. Both children were born in Silver Point along with their brother Grady Cronk (1910) whom Effie Lou was expecting in the photo. Being the oldest of thirteen

children, their young lives would far too soon entail a great deal of responsibility, which translated into a great deal of work.

Archie, Norma and Grady were the only children born in Silver Point. Joe moved his family several times over the years, eventually living in five different Civil Districts. Archie, Norma and Grady went to several schools as they grew up. The first was Carr's Chapel. The last was Oak Grove.



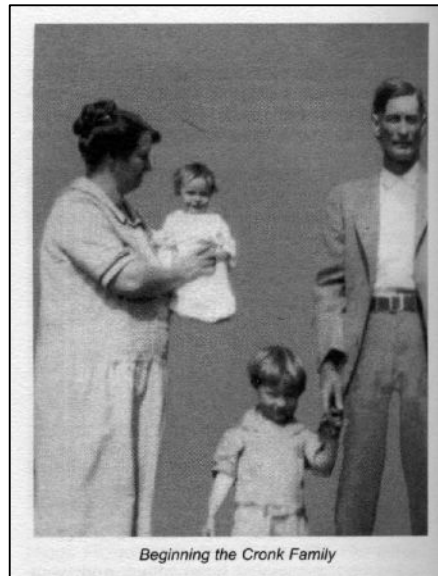
The family lived at Mine Lick and Ditty during the formative years of the oldest kids. Joe F. started out a farmer, as did most folks in Putnam, but he gradually turned farm responsibilities over to the kids, as he and Effie, developed a burgeoning mercantile trade. This meant Norma assumed primary responsibility for “tending to the house” which included cooking, cleaning, laundry, caring for the younger kids and seeing that they did their chores while Archie, with help from Grady, was responsible for the outside work and all that went with it including plowing, planting, weeding, harvesting and putting up the crops; feeding the livestock, milking the cows; and endless stream of chores.

Life was tough. As was the norm at the time, the house had no electricity and water was hauled by bucket from a spring in the back. After rains, especially in the spring, wagon wheels were often mired axle deep in the mud. Walking or riding into town was a major effort. Much of what was used around the house and farm was made there. Norma made her own soap from hog fat, lye and fireplace ashes.

Water was hauled from the spring to large black iron kettles. A large fire would be lit to bring the water to a boil and the grimy farm clothes for 1 – 3 kids were washed, stirred, and then rubbed and scrubbed on washboards, then rinsed, and hung to dry, all by hand.

Grady was primarily responsible for the firewood, the uses of which were almost endless. Wood was used in the fireplaces to heat a poorly insulated house; for cooking on a wood stove that was going for three large meals a day; and for the outside fires, including wash days.

Over the years, as they became adults, they scattered, but the family remained close knit. When they got together as adults, they often reminisced, recalling the “hard times” in their youth. And yet, they always spoke of those times with much fondness. While it was tough, “It was just what you did”. After all, it was with and for the family.



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