

## EARLY HISTORY OF THE CRANDALL FAMILY

From a talk given by Myron L. Crandall, M. D. 1952

A part of the Crandall's early history has been obtained through the efforts of John Cortland Crandall of New Woodstock, New York. He compiled the "History of Elder John Crandall" of Rhode Island and his descendents - nine generations - covering a period of about 300 years. This has been a Herculean task collecting the information from monuments; private, public, and church records; fragments of stories; traditions and passages from books; and from different state and national historical societies. Truly the Crandalls must have been a very industrious people and makers of history. For as Netherlink says, "Men who make history have no time to write it." Very little has been written on the early history of the Crandalls in America. Notwithstanding the limited amount of information recorded, John Cortland Crandall has made a valuable contribution to the geneology of the Crandall family; we owe him a debt of gratitude and expression of deep appreciation for his wonderful work. Also we should extend our thanks to Mrs. Blanch Tattersoll of American Fork our Utah family geneologist, for her interest and the efforts she has made to compile a history of the Utah Crandall.

The first record we have of the Crandalls in America is the biography of Reverend John Crandall, Baptist Elder of Rhode Island. He was born in Monmouthsharer, England, on the line between England and Wales in 1609. He was initiated into the Christian Church without delay, being baptized in one of the parishes in England on the day of his birth. His father was a styled gentlemen, Sir John Crandall, and his mother was also of noble extraction and descended from ancient Scottish Kings, the Malcolms which Shakespeare mentions in his *MACBETH*. Now we Crandalls can boast of gentility and nobility, being descendents of Kings and Queens in Scotland and England.

There is no record of how many brothers and sisters John had; however, this illustrious son was impressed with the sense of religion and trained for the ministry in the Congregational Church in England. At the age of twenty-five he left England; the cause of his leaving to come to America is unknown. He landed in Boston in 1634, fourteen years after the landing of the Pilgrim fathers in 1620. He settled in Salem, Massachusetts, a few miles north of Boston. In this Mass. Bay Colony there was much opposition to the dissentors of the authorized tenets of the Puritans. John was the first minister of the Salem, Mass. church. He adopted the opinions of the Baptists which were very obnoxious to the Puritans and Congregationists. In 1635 he was imprisoned for a time in Boston for holding religious services and preaching against infant baptism; he believed in baptism of the believer only. As did so many of the early Baptists of the New England Colony, he left Massachusetts and went south into Rhode Island to the Narragansett Bay Area. The Indians proved friendly and with Roger Williams he founded Providence, which later was the capitol of Rhode Island. John Crandall, Roger Williams, John Clark, and Ovidiha Holmes went to England in 1663 and obtained from King Charles II a charter which secured the Colony of Rhode Island as a free state, where there was a guarantee forever from the King and all his successors that all the inhabitants of Rhode Island should be given political and religious freedom, no matter what country they came from.

The Colony at Rhode Island founded by the Baptists and the Colony of Pennsylvania founded by the Quakers were the only colonies that guaranteed absolute liberty. It was the constitution of these colonies, and especially Rhode Island with its democratic manner of handling public affairs, that was declared by Thomas Jefferson to be the "leaven" of liberty and democracy of the American continent. This was quoted from the memoirs of Thomas Jefferson.

It is interesting to note that with the struggle for liberty and independence in the growth of our democracy came the Revolutionary War. The colonies of Rhode Island and the men who started it, namely John Crandall and Roger Williams, should be looked upon as the first pioneers of religious freedom in America.

Reverend John Crandall was not only active in the religious affairs of the community but also took a very active part in the political life. He was a great leader possessed with talent and willing to suffer injustices for the sake of his devoted followers.

He was appointed as the commissioner representing Rhode Island in settling the boundary disputes between Rhode Island, Connecticut, and especially Westerly Rhode Island, and New Port, Connecticut. Reverend John Crandall died as he lived - full of resignation, strengthened in faith and joyful in hope. The place of his death was New Port, Connecticut, November 29, 1676 (100 years before the signing of the Declaration of Independence.) He was buried at Westerly, Rhode Island, in the orchard near the old home. His house still stands and is occupied by some of the ninth and tenth generation of Crandalls. If any of us happen to be in this area we should visit Westerly, Rhode Island, and see the old



cemetery and the Crandall homestead, which is nearly three hundred years old. Westerly Rhode Island, should be the Shrine of the Crandall family.

Ford Crandall, while in Boston on a mission, told me he visited this cemetery where Reverend John Crandall and some of our descendents were buried, and he copied several epitaphs from some of the tombstones. One epitaph reads:

Here lies Amos Hope Crandall  
 He heard the angels calling him  
 From the Celestial shore.  
 He flapped his wings and away he went  
 To make one angel more.

Now that is just like our Crandall line -- to be so self-assured and confident of reaching the Celestial glory. This shows us the value of records, even tombstones, in revealing the characteristics of a family.

From Reverend John Crandall sprang a long line of descendants, many of whom have filled positions of high responsibility. From Reverend John Crandall to our great grandfather, David Crandall, there were six generations covering a time of two hundred years, and during this time it has been stated that there were at least three thousand ministers of religion in the Crandall family -- mostly Baptists.

It would be impossible to give a biography of all the important Crandalls during these first generations in America. Therefore, I will only delineate the life of one in order that we may have an idea of the character of the Crandalls in the early days of this country. I have selected as a representative a woman, for the Crandalls have women that accomplish things in society as well as men.

In the 1830's there was a great unrest in America, new ideas were springing up like mushrooms, temperance leaders scouring the country for pledges, various ministers were expounding airy theories which even they could not define. This was during the time Joseph Smith was translating the Book of Mormon and organizing the L. D. S. Church. However, the most disconcerting problem in those days was the question of negroes. In 1830 the major champion of the negro was the American C Colonization Society with leaders such as Henry Clay, Francis Scott Key, General Andrew Jackson, and John Randolf, from Roanoke. In those days the majority of people regarded the negro as unfit for intellectual training and improvement.

In a small industrial city of Canterbury, Connecticut, was a school mistress of marked ability and sterling character by the name of Prudence Crandall. She believed in the principles of universal brotherhood -- equality and brotherhood of all mankind, which was also drilled thoroughly into the Crandall family. Prudence became an ardent apostle of the equality of all races. Inspired by her lofty ideals she longed to do something for the unfortunate colored people. But what could a mere woman do? For days she meditated on the first verse, fourth chapter of Ecclesiastes, which reads: "So I returned and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun; and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of the oppressors there was power." These words made a deep impression upon her. She felt that she was destined to be the Comforter to the Black. How and when she did not know. One thing, however, was certain -- God would reveal the means and the opportunity in His own way and in His own good time. And He did. In Canterbury, and various places in America, there were negro girls who were anxious for education to become teachers for colored children. There was no place for them to get an education. To meet their need, Miss Crandall opened a school for young ladies and little misses of color. Twenty-five in number was the first enrollment. The town folks were furious and threatened her life. Her own father begged her to give up the mad project. Miss Crandall patiently heard them all; then quoted scriptures and the Declaration of Independence in defense of her actions and refused to give up her plan. Town meetings were called to consider the matter of Miss Crandall's school.

In desperate straits, the citizens of Canterbury arrested Miss Crandall while teaching and put her in jail in Brooklyn, New York. A few days later her friends posted bonds, and she was released. As she returned to her home town in Canterbury, Connecticut, people shouted and jeered at her, and threw stones at her. In spite of all the hostility and hatred, Miss Crandall's friends and the attendance at school were increasing. By word of mouth and mail, the story of the first negro school at Canterbury was being spread throughout America and Europe. Miss Crandall's struggles to educate the colored people were praised by few notables. The anti-Crandallites decided to stop the education of the colored people, and took matters into their own hands. In 1839, they burned down the school, and Miss Crandall was forced to flee from Canterbury -- westward.



Canterbury's history was at last complete, and at a town meeting a resolution was passed which declared America belongs only to the whites, and they would never tolerate racial equality. However, fifty-five years later, a calmer and more contrite generation rejected this decision of its ancestors. The State of Connecticut expressed their regrets for the past to Miss Crandall, who was living in Kansas, and gave her compensation and an annual pension of \$400.

Prudence's virtues were so extraordinary that the more her character is considered, the more she will be regarded by her posterity and the present age with admiration and reverence.

Courage of one's convictions when issues involve life and death is an exceedingly unusual quality. Doing what one believes is right without help from wisdom of the past makes a great person -- so Prudence Crandall rose to greatness. It is probably great sacrifices by individuals such as Miss Crandall to give equality to the colored race that inspired Abraham Lincoln to fight for the freedom of the Negro.

Miss Crandall will long be remembered in the annals of the History of America for establishing the first negro school. Today a portrait of Prudence Crandall hangs in the halls of the library of Cornell University in New York State. Thus she was honored for being one of the first persons to try to solve a problem that is with us even today, that of inspiring equal opportunities for education for all persons. She was one of the leaders in the movement that culminated in the recent momentous decision by the Supreme Court banning racial segregation in all schools.

The progeny of John Crandall was not great in the sense of popularity and receiving the plaudits of their day, which passes with time, but they were great characters on the human stage because they made contributions which would add to the happiness of mankind. Reverend John Crandall helped lead the way to religious and political freedom; Prudence Crandall showed the need for equality of races, if we were to be a great nation. This country's real value to mankind is in immaterial things such as ideals, not in wealth, size of country, or armies. Great nations in the past, which have fallen, such as Rome, have had great wealth and power, but lacked high ideals. If we hold fast to the doctrines of America formulated by our forefathers, we need not fear Communism or any other ideology.

May we of the ninth and tenth generations of the Crandall family meet the challenge today in helping to preserve our democracy.

May we dedicate ourselves to high ideals and strive to make a better society in which to live.