

# Montgomery Memories

Established December 2010

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## Jealousy Leads to Tragedy

Stories that once made the headlines often get lost to history. That's the case with this month's headline. It is a story of betrayal, jealousy, and murder. Reported in newspapers statewide, I'm sure the details astounded readers.

On May 24, 1929, Mr. Perl Grimes shot two men - Charles Carter and Virgil Young (The Republic Sat, May 25, 1929 ·Page 1). The men were asleep in a bedroom at the home of Mr. Grimes' estranged wife, Alma Iva (Evans) Grimes. Armed with two borrowed revolvers, Mr. Grimes went into the house through a rear window. He shot Carter first. A scuffle ensued and in the fight Mr. Grimes accidentally shot Mr. Young. Mr. Carter suffered a minor wound to his shoulder, while 21 year old Virgil Young, from Tell City, died from a gunshot wound to his head. Sleeping in an adjacent room was Mrs. Grimes and her four children.

What brought Perl Grimes to the farm house six miles northeast of Crawfordsville at 2 a.m. was jealousy (The Edinburg Daily Courier Sat, May 25, 1929, Page 1). He and Alma had been separated for six months, and he suspected that Charles and she were romantically involved. He blamed Charles and Virgil for breaking up his home. It was his intention to kill Charles and Alma.

When arrested, Perl explained that shooting Young was a mistake. His wanted to kill Carter. Perl's trial commenced on October 10, 1929. He entered a plea of not guilty by reason of insanity (The Daily Republican, Tue, Oct 08, 1929, Page 8). Over the coming 11 days, the Montgomery Circuit Court was crowded with spectators. The most compelling testimony was that of Alma, who testified for the prosecution (The Indianapolis Times, Fri, Oct 11, 1929, Page 21).

After 24 hours of deliberation, the jury acquitted Perl on the grounds of "emotional insanity" (Journal and Courier, Sat, Oct 19, 1929, Page 1). Perl was released from jail in December after being held since the May 24th murders (The Indianapolis Times, Tue, Dec 17, 1929, Page 11).

It seems odd to me, but Alma was the beneficiary of Charles Carter and Virgil Young's life insurance policies . She attempted to collect on Virgil's policy that day after he died (ibid).

Soon after Perl's arrest, Alma and Charles were charged with "statutory offenses." Their crime was committing adultery. Although the couple requested a change in venue for their trials, Judge Rice denied the request. The October 25, 1929 issue of the Indianapolis Star announced the request's denial with the headline "Alleged Home Wrecker, Woman, Denied Change of Venue."

Alma pled guilty and was sentenced to 25 days imprisonment. This was in addition to the 60 days she'd served since her arrest. Her absence from her children was taken into consideration in determining the sentence, (Journal and Courier, Tue, Nov 12, 1929, Page 16) Charles, too, served time.

On Saturday, January 4, 1930, Perl was granted a divorce from Alma. He was given custody of their oldest child. Alma was given custody of the three youngest, based on Perl's contention he wasn't their father (ibid, January 6, 1930).

Charles and Alma wed on February 26, 1930 (Montgomery County, Indiana. U.S., Marriage Index, 1875-2010). They made their home at 311 Hamilton Street, Crawfordsville. Alma's three daughters were living with the couple (U.S. Census, 1930). By 1940, two more daughters joined the family. In 1942, the family moved to Cave Creek, Maricopa County, Arizona. Charles died there in 1945 at the age of 54 from cardiac arrest (Arizona, U.S. Death Records, 1887-1968). He was interred in the Darlington Odd Fellows Cemetery. Alma returned to Crawfordsville where she lived with two of her daughters (U.S. Census, 1950). She died at the age of 93, on February 12, 1983. She was buried next to Charles.

Sometime after the trial, Perl moved to Wichita, Kansas. This is where he died on February 3, 1954 at the age of 67 (U.S. Newspapers.com, Obituary Index, 1800-current). He was buried in Darlington, Indiana.

On June 26, 1930, just over a year after Perl's crime, Leonard Todd, the gentleman living in the home where the shootings took place, attempted suicide due to his despondence over his recent divorce (Journal and Courier, June 27, 1930, page 11). He had married his wife Ida, 17 years his junior, when she was 13 years old. The couple had seven children, and he was granted custody in the divorce. Leonard survived and married again. He died at the age of 69 of natural causes. He was interred in Crawfordsville's Masonic Cemetery.

May all those who experienced anguish over lost love rest in peace.



## Montgomery Memories

### Passage

#### ELIZA SPRUHAN PAINTER

February 9, 1860 to February 6, 1940

On the evening of February 6, 1940, Eliza Spruhan Painter was struck by a car while crossing Washington Street at Wabash Avenue. Mrs. Painter, just shy of her 80th birthday, died while being treated for her injuries at Culver Hospital. The eighteen-year-old driver of the car, Francis Frey of Tippecanoe County, was not criminally charged – Mrs. Painter had crossed against the light (Lafayette Journal and Courier, Wed, February 7, 1940).

It seems a special tragedy when someone dies from this type of accident at a late age. Yet there is much to celebrate about Eliza's long and notable life.

Born on February 9, 1860, she was the daughter of Garret and Margaret Denny Spruhan. The 1860 Census for Montgomery County tells us that the family lived in Union Township. In addition to Eliza and her parents, the census lists her older siblings, John, Henry, and Kate. The youngest, Macie, was born in 1862.

Garret and Margaret were immigrants from Kilkenny, Ireland who came to escape the Irish famine. Garret came on board the ship Mary Ward and arrived on August 29, 1850

(New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island, 1820-1957). The couple married on January 11, 1852 in Hamilton County Ohio. Their ceremony was officiated by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Cincinnati, J.B. Purcell (State of Ohio Marriage Certificates). Soon after their marriage, Garret and Margaret came to Montgomery County. This is where their children were born. Each was christened at St. Bernard's Catholic Church (Margaret Denny Spruhan, [tellinglifestories.org](http://tellinglifestories.org)). At that time, St. Bernard's was a timber structure at the corner of Walnut and North Street.

Garret worked as a miller (1860 Census). The family was financially secure, as indicated by their personal and real estate worth provided by the Census. Margaret died in 1862 following the birth of Macie. She was only 35 years old. Garret remarried in 1864 and began farming north of Crawfordsville. His second wife, Ann McKeritt, was also an Irish immigrant.

**continued on page 6.**

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## Montgomery Memories

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### Notables

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#### February 2, 1880

The first street light was installed in Wabash, Indiana.

#### February 8, 1910

The Boy Scouts organization was incorporated.

#### February 6, 1935

The board game Monopoly went on sale.

Source: *onthisday.org*

### Old News

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#### CRAWFORDSVILLE RECORD

February 27, 1836

#### Six and a fourth cents reward!

Ran away from the subscriber, on the 16th instant, John Nelson Jones, an apprentice bound to me by the Probate court to learn the saddling business. Said J. N. Jones is about 15 years old, small for his age, freckled face, brown eyes, round face, small nose, and thin lips; his dress is a roundabout, vest and pantaloons, of blue mixed jeans, wore a light brown fur cap; he is of a quick turn. Any person delivering to me said apprentice shall receive the above reward, but no extra charges. I do hereby forwarn [sic] all person from harboring or crediting said apprentice on my account.

**JOHN M. FISHER**

Crawfordsville, Feb. 17, 1836

Source: *Hoosier State Chronicle*

“Roundabout” jacket pictured on Page 7.

### Weather Report

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The highest maximum temperature recorded in Indiana during

February:

77 °F on 2/20/2018

The lowest minimum temperature recorded in Indiana during

February:

-21 °F on 2/10/1982

Source: *National Weather Service  
Indianapolis Central Indiana Weather  
History February*



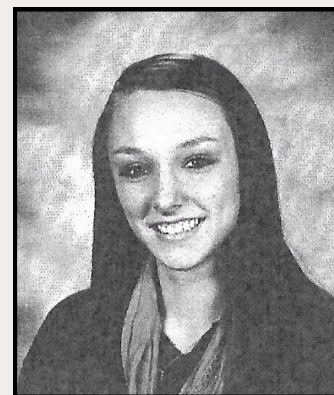
### Butch Dale's FLASH BACK TRIVIA

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Do You Recognize This 2014 North  
Montgomery Graduate?



HINT: She was an honor student and after college became a nurse.

**Answer on Page 7.**



## Montgomery Memories

### Memories

#### It's Complicated

Howard Charters, a 23-year-old teacher in Montgomery County's Union Township, had particular interest in one of his students - Opal Marie Whitecotton (Marion News-Tribune, May 4, 1909). Thirteen year old Opal was the oldest of William and Elizabeth "Lizzie" Whitecotton's five children. William worked as a carpenter in Crawfordsville.

Howard, committed to Opal's affection, went so far as to get the answers for her eighth grade final exam. To do so, he went to Ladoga, where he was unknown, and using the pseudonym "Okal M. Whitecotton," he requested to complete the exam. He told the story that he was a dropout who needed to take the test to get into business school. He returned to Crawfordsville with the answers for his love interest.

The two married on August 30, 1909 (Montgomery County, Indiana, U.S., Marriage Index, 1875-2010). Opal, who was born on August 22, 1895, had just turned 14. That may be why the couple eloped to Kentucky. The marriage was short lived. By the date of the census in 1910, Opal was back at home, as was Howard. He was again living with his parents, William and Ruth Charters. Because he'd lost his teaching license, he was working as a farm laborer for his father.

Opal married again on December 27, 1911 (ibid). Her husband, Fred Ferrell, was 12 years her senior. They had three children who lived to adulthood. Their first, born in 1912, died at birth. After Opal and Fred

divorced, Opal married again in 1934. She and her third husband, George Gilbert, raised an adopted daughter Ann, as well as his two daughters, Beth and Ruth. George died in 1951. Opal never married again.

Opal worked a variety of jobs. In the 1930s, she was as a saleswoman for Montgomery Ward. In the 40s, she worked a clerk at J. C. Penneys. In the 50s, she was an elevator operator at the Ben Hur Building (U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995). And in the 1960s, she again worked as a clerk for J. C. Penney.

On October 12, 1968, Opal passed away from heart disease. She was buried in the Ferrell family plot at Waveland's Freedom Cemetery. (Indiana, U.S., Death Certificates, 1899-2017).

Howard also married again. On January 30, 1915, he wed Jessie Seigler (ibid). Jessie was eleven years younger than Howard. They divorced in 1918. Jessie went home to live with her parents in Green County. Howard, as he done in 1910, returned home too. He married a third time on September 16, 1919. Age 35, he wed Ruth Booher, age 20. They, too, divorced. No children were born to these unions. Howard lived with his mother for the rest of his life. During his final years, he worked as a bricklayer. He passed, at age 51, from influenza and pneumonia (ibid).



*Burkhart Funeral Home*

Charles, Carl & Craig Burkhart

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765-362-5510

[www.BurkhartFH.com](http://www.BurkhartFH.com)





# Montgomery Memories

## Sports Story

In the early 20th century, basketball wasn't only played at Montgomery County area high schools or at Wabash College, it was also played at the Y.M.C.A. The import of these games to the community is illustrated in The Lafayette Sunday Time article dated February 25, 1900. The headliner, "Pandemonium Reigns" indicates just how important! The Lafayette Y.M.C.A. team came to Crawfordsville, "with the best of spirit and feeling toward their opponents." Yet as soon as the game started, the fans for the "Hoosier Athens" began booing and hissing the Lafayette Star Cityites. The behavior of the Crawfordsville fans was so egregious that the Lafayette coach, "in the name of decency," had to insist that the Athens fans act more gentlemanly. (Note that this was a time when only men could attend male contests, and vice versa). Things got so bad at the game, a Crawfordsville team member smacked a Lafayette player across the face! Things continued to spiral when fans shouted racial epitaphs at the Star players. The article concluded that "...never in the history of Crawfordsville sport... had any visiting crowd there been [denied] even the common decencies of life and society." I guess things weren't always fun at the Y.M.C.A.



## Recipe

### Old Fashioned Hot Chocolate

#### INGREDIENTS

- Six tablespoons of grated chocolate
- One pint of water
- 2 tablespoons water
- One pint of milk
- 2 teaspoons of sugar

#### INSTRUCTIONS

- Put the pint of water on to boil.
- Smooth the chocolate into the 2 tablespoons of water.
- Stir the chocolate mix into the boiling water, boil for 20 minutes.
- Add the milk, boil for 10 more minutes stirring frequently.
- Add sugar when hot chocolate is served.

Source: *American Frugal Housewife: Dedicated to Those Who Are Not Ashamed of Economy*,  
 Author Lydia Maria Child

### WORD SEARCH

The Shortest Month

P W V A L E N T I N E  
 C Y A D H T R I B P Y  
 Y H W S L S L N R P G  
 R I O Z H O T E V R M  
 A S D C V I S R O N N  
 U T A E O I N U A L M  
 R O H K D L N G O E G  
 B R S E J D A C T D H  
 E Y N B H Z N T D O X  
 F T Y O L I T M E P N  
 S T G M L N L Q M S B

February  
 Groundhog  
 Shadow  
 Presidents  
 Lincoln  
 Washington

Birthday  
 History  
 Valentine  
 Love  
 Hearts  
 Chocolates



## Montgomery Memories

### Passages, continued from page 2.

Garret died from consumption in 1869 at the age of 48. After his death, the children were sent to live with various families in the area. This is likely why I couldn't find record of Eliza during the 1870s.

In the 1880s, Eliza was a teacher (*Lafayette Indiana Directories*). She lived with her sisters Kate and Macie at 203 S. Green Street. Kate and Macie, who never married, worked as dressmakers (*U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995*). Admitted to the bar on September of 1897 (*Crawfordsville Review, 25 Sep 1897*), Eliza was the second woman from the area to do so (*Crawfordsville Weekly Journal, 24 Sep 1897*), although several sources indicated she was the first. She practiced law in Chicago. This is where she befriended the famous criminal lawyer, Clarence Darrow (*Lafayette Journal and Courier, Wed, February 7, 1940*). Mr. Darrow was known for the Scopes "monkey" trial and the Leopold and Loeb murder trial (Wikipedia).

Eliza was not without family in Chicago. Her brother, Henry, lived there and worked as a broker. Eliza's oldest brother, John, lived in Waveland and worked as a railroad operator and later an insurance salesman. And as indicated above, Kate and Macie were dressmakers in Crawfordsville. This is confirmed by the 1900 and 1910 census.

Eliza won her first case in October of 1898 (*Elkhart Daily, Oct 8, 1898*). She was affiliated with the Chicago law firm, Clodfelter and Fine (*The Indianapolis News, Wed, Feb 07, 1940*). She also worked with the Varnum group, insurance attorneys (ibid).

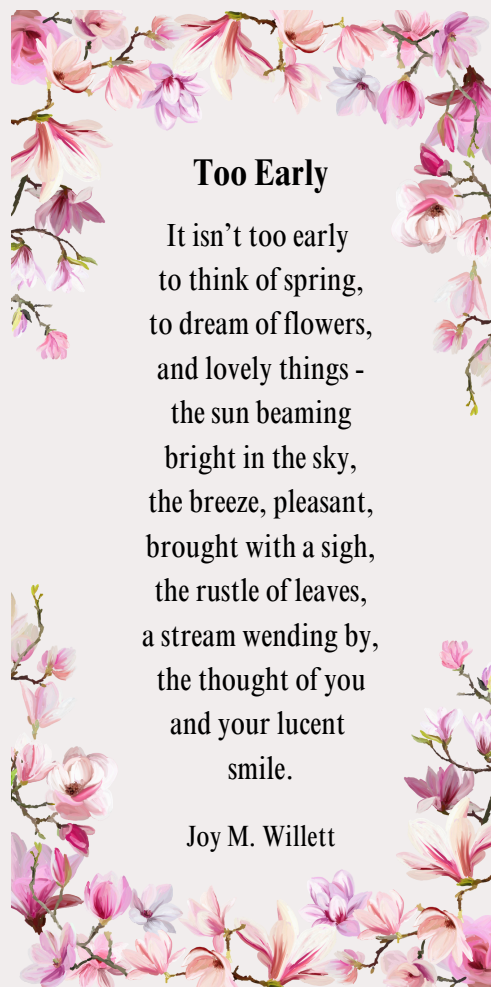
On May 1, 1905, 44 year old Eliza married Thomas Painter. The record gets murky after their marriage. I couldn't find the couple in census records or phone directories. I did find Eliza in Crawfordsville as early as 1922, again living on South Green Street with sister Macie. Now widowed, she was active in patriotic organization, and was a member of the Women's Relief Corp. Eliza established the practice of lowering the courthouse flag to half-staff at the death of a veteran (*Waveland Independent, Waveland, Montgomery County, Indiana Thursday, Feb 8, 1940, courtesy of Indiana Gen Web, Montgomery County, Indiana*).

Eliza was interred next to her sister Kate in the Oak Hill Cemetery. Her passing was noted in the Indiana Law Journal ("*Proceedings of the Mid-Winter Meeting*," *Indiana Law Journal: Vol. 15: Iss. 4, Article 10*.)



Courtesy of R. & S.  
Fine via  
[findagrave.com](http://findagrave.com)

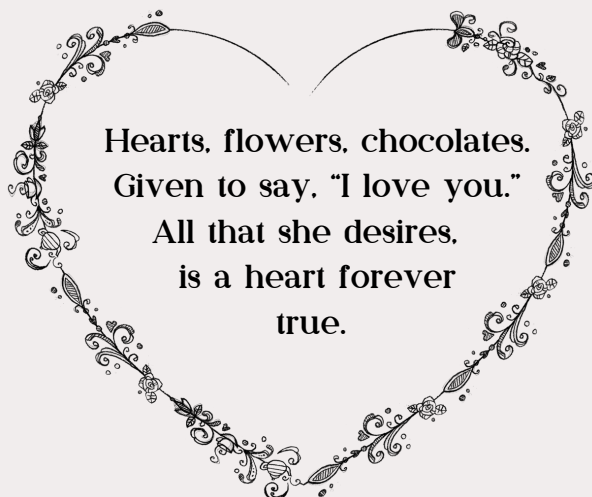
## Poetry



### Too Early

It isn't too early  
to think of spring,  
to dream of flowers,  
and lovely things -  
the sun beaming  
bright in the sky,  
the breeze, pleasant,  
brought with a sigh,  
the rustle of leaves,  
a stream wending by,  
the thought of you  
and your lucent  
smile.

Joy M. Willett



Hearts. flowers. chocolates.  
Given to say, "I love you."  
All that she desires,  
is a heart forever  
true.



# Montgomery Memories

## Extras

### Butch Dale's FLASH BACK TRIVIA

Answer:  
Shelby Delp



“Roundabout” jacket, worn in the early 1800s

Source: *Casco Bay Auctions*

### Ads from the Past

The Y.M.C.A. was more than a place to stay,  
it also provided barber services!

**Y. M. C. A. Barber Shop.**

WEATHER REPORT—Fair, colder

**5—BARBERS—5**

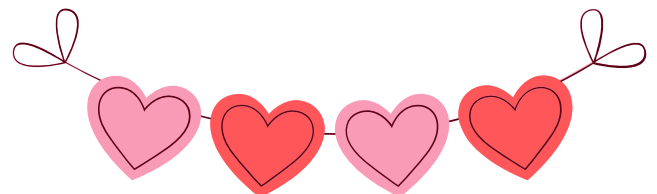
All good workmen. You will never have to  
wait at the Y. M. C. A. Barber Shop.

**FRANK M'CALIP.**

Crawfordsville Daily Journal, Crawfordsville,  
Montgomery County, 1 February 1894

### WORD SEARCH Solution

P	W	V	A	E	N	T	I	N	E	
C	Y	A	D	H	T	R	I	B	P	Y
Y	H	W	S	L	S	L	N	R	P	G
R	I	O	Z	H	O	T	E	V	R	M
A	S	D	C	V	I	S	R	O	N	N
U	T	A	E	O	I	N	U	A	L	M
R	O	H	K	D	L	N	G	O	E	G
B	R	S	E	J	D	A	C	T	D	H
E	Y	N	B	H	Z	N	T	D	O	X
F	T	Y	O	L	I	T	M	E	P	N
S	T	G	M	L	N	L	Q	M	S	B





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## Montgomery Memories

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