

Paternal Grandparents: Robert Bruce & Mary Frances (Maher) Gardner



Engagement picture: Bruce Gardner and Mary Maher

Paris, KY. Grandpa died just a few months short of their 60th wedding anniversary.

The love story that was her's and grandpa's was special.

My paternal grandmother: Mary Frances Maher, was born July 18, 1906, in Millersburg (Bourbon Co), KY.

My paternal grandfather: Robert Bruce Gardner, was born Aug 13, 1906, in Paris, (Bourbon Co), KY.

My paternal grandparents were both 19yrs old when they married on April 30th, 1925, in the "Church of the Annunciation" in

COUNTY COURT CLERK'S OFFICIAL CERTIFICATE OF MARRIAGE RECORD

STATE OF KENTUCKY. SCT.
COUNTY OF BOURBON.

I, Betty Jo Denton, Clerk Bourbon County Court, Kentucky, certify that Robert Bruce Gardner (Age 19) and Mary Frances Maher (Age 19) were married in Bourbon County, Kentucky, on 30th day of April, 1925, by O. B. Crockett in the presence of J. H. Gardner and Mrs. E. L. Bramel as shown by the record in my said office in Marriage Book No. 4 (w), page 390.

Given under my hand this 21st day of July, 1971.
Betty Jo Denton Neich
Clerk Bourbon County Court, Ky.

D. C.



50th Anniversary

They were married four years when the Great Depression hit. Keep in mind there was no “welfare” at that time.

Grandma told me about their “final silver dollar” they kept in a coffee cup on top of the refrigerator. But during those most difficult years, the milkman and the bread man never stopped delivering and they never went hungry.

Grandpa got a job working for the L&N (Louisville & Nashville) railroad. Latonia, KY was a junction of lines going south toward Lexington toward Knoxville, Southeast toward Louisville and Nashville, and north through Cincinnati.

Grandpa was in some form of management at the local

office.

My maternal grandfather also worked for the railroad, the B&O. They also had a large yard in Latonia, very much a railroad center.

There was a railroad strike in the mid 1930’s. Grandpa Gardner, as management, drove some trains during that time. Because of that, Grandma and Grandpa, who had helped start two mission churches from Latonia Baptist Church (Ashland Ave and Rosedale), were asked to leave the church. Grandma told me about the two deacons who visited their

house. My father and his brother and family all left the church — all church. There was much bitterness.

Grandma and Grandpa joined a small Episcopalian church in Latonia and stayed with that faith when they retired to Florida. They are buried in a small church lot at St. Giles' Episcopal Church in Pinellas Park, Florida. Burial there requires cremation with the cremains in a biodegradable box. A small hole is dug for the box. No marker on the ground, but there is a wall plaque with the names of who is buried there. Grandma donated regularly to that church and we made the recommended donation to cover the funeral service and burial there.

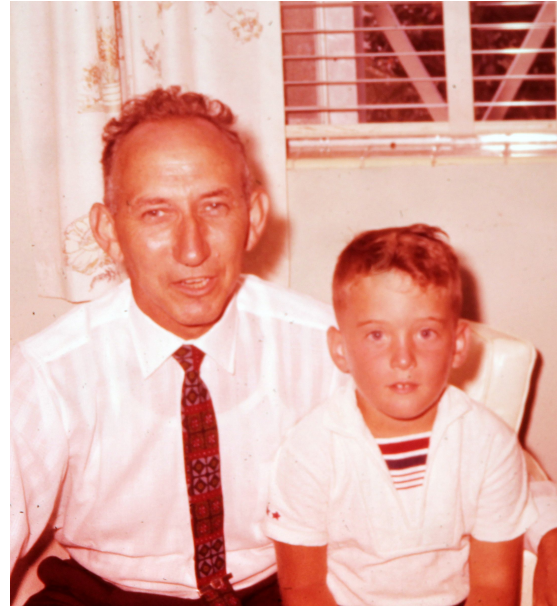
It was while Grandma was living her final years with us in the late 1990s that I contacted Latonia Baptist Church and asked for them to issue an apology to my grandparents. I thought it would have been a nice touch for grandma. All they would do was acknowledge that they were members and had the date that they “left the congregation”. No reason why. No apology. I was disappointed. I was baptized in that church.



My earliest childhood memories, Grandma was retired from her job at Pogue's Department Store in Cincinnati and Grandpa was still coming home from working at the railroad, but he retired early in my memories. They lived upstairs in a house that had a ground-floor apartment where Grandma's mother lived. Ollie Barber, I called her Ollu.

42nd Street, Covington, KY

Grandma and Grandpa took me on a vacation to Florida when I was 6yrs old. I got to experience the ocean, fly in a helicopter, amusement park, and more. They never did that again for any of their other grandchildren.



I never saw my grandparents argue. Grandma was domineering, so maybe she had Grandpa trained well. She taught me how to play card solitaire. I got to cut their grass with a power mower.



After Great-Grandma Ollie died, they down-sized into a nice double-wide mobile home outside the city. I got to cut her grass there too. And about the time Joan and I married and they were moving to Florida, they gave me their lawnmower, which lasted several years in Huntington.

When my first sister was born, Grandma's feelings were irreparably damaged when Mom didn't name her daughter after Grandma. So intense

was Grandma's displeasure that she refused to call my sister by her name (Melissa) and called her Lisa until Missy wouldn't answer. My second sister is named "Mary", but with a different middle name. I suspect both names revealed a little of Mom's pushing back against a difficult mother-in-law.

Grandma and Grandpa started spending winters in Clearwater, Florida. Every few years they would have a bigger vehicle pulling a larger camper until, eventually, they left the camper there and finally moved to Florida to live out their retirement. Her son, Bob, and family followed them.

After Grandpa died, Grandma moved in with Uncle Bob and Aunt Phyllis. Six years later, when Uncle Bob died, I helped Dad move her to his home in Tennessee. Dad died five years later. Joan and I moved her in with us. She outlived her husband and both sons. And then there was me.

Grandma had \$300 in her checking account when she moved in with us. All the pages in the registry prior to that page had been ripped out. We turned our dining room into her bedroom, moving our table and chairs to the garage and adding a privacy closing at the entrance.

We went through the process of getting her qualified for Medicaid as her medicines and medical bills were significant. She had a pretty good retirement (railroad plus social security) and we repeatedly had to "spend her down". She had paid my father \$500 in rent and paid the Florida Gardners \$450. That was reasonable as she had a private room in both homes. We could have charged her rent but never did. When she moved in with us she told me to use "all of it". Because of Medicaid, we pretty much had to.

At the advice and insistence of the government worker, we used her money for things she could use or benefit from. We had our downstairs bath remodeled to add a shower and raise the floor to eliminate the step down for her. She kept trying to help Joan with the dishes, but she couldn't see what she was doing and Joan would re-do them every time,

so we used her money to purchase our first dishwasher. We bought a small kitchen dinette set where she could sit, a nice chest of drawers for her clothes. We could not justify a television because she could not see it, nor a radio as she seemed nearly deaf. We did use her money to prepay her funeral expenses, including the cost for Joan and me to take her cremains to Florida for burial.

Grandma always had a sweet spirit and things went well the first of her years here. But our boys were in high school and we were spending a lot of time at concerts, competitions, and swim meets. Grandma would sit in a rocker and watch out our living room window until we returned. She told us she was afraid to be alone, and this was the first time in her life she ever had been, but I explained we could not sacrifice our sons' high school experiences for her.

Two things influenced our decision to move her to a nursing home. She started falling and we were afraid she might fall when we were gone. And also, as her mind started to



L/R: Mom, Great-grandmother Ollie, ME, Grandma Mary

deteriorate, she started accusing the boys of stealing money from under her pillow. She spent the last two years of her life in the nursing home and died at age 98.