



Alice Josephine Kerrigan Connelly “Alice K” in front of her door, behind her was a Victory wreath made by her son, John E. Connelly.

Alice Josephine Kerrigan Connelly

NOVEMBER 7, 1897 – MAY 16, 1981 / GRANDMOTHER

The Storyteller

Alice Connelly, known simply as “Nanny” to her grandchildren, was born on November 7, 1897, in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. She married John Henry Connelly in 1918 and was widowed while still a relatively young woman. Despite the hardships she faced, she remained the heart of a close-knit family whose children and grandchildren never doubted they were loved.

Nanny possessed a warm, outgoing personality with a spark that naturally drew people to her. She loved family gatherings, delighted in telling stories, and enjoyed the little stage they provided. Whether sharing a family memory, delivering a well-timed remark, or simply making others laugh, she brought warmth, humor, and energy wherever she went.

For many years, Nanny lived with Uncle Charlie and Aunt Pat in their home in Montvale, New Jersey. She also spent time visiting her daughter, Aunt Eleanor, in Ridgefield. It was a wonderful arrangement that allowed her to remain closely connected to her family rather than living alone.

She was always impeccably dressed. Whether she was at home or visiting family, her dress was neat, her hair carefully done, and she carried herself with quiet dignity. Looking back, she always seemed put together.

Nanny was a gifted storyteller, an entertainer who loved the spotlight. She had an instinct for timing and genuinely enjoyed having an audience. Family gatherings became her little stage, where stories, memories, and playful observations brought everyone together. Every now and then she would make an innocent-sounding remark—usually directed toward one of her daughters-in-law—that stirred the conversation just enough to keep everyone smiling. Somehow, she always managed to smile her way out of it.

One family dinner captured her personality perfectly.

When the breadbasket was nearly empty, she quietly asked for some bread. Looking into the basket she said, “I’ll be okay with eating the crust.”

Of course, no one was about to let Nanny eat only the crust. Someone immediately went into the kitchen and returned with a fresh basket of bread. She knew exactly how to get everyone’s attention without ever asking directly. It was vintage Nanny—part storyteller, part actress, and completely charming.



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Portrait of Gustave Kirchner—"Grandpop Kirchner," as identified by his granddaughter Margaret Tuckmantel Zimmerman on the reverse side of the photograph.

Gustave Adolph Kirchner

OCTOBER 24, 1850 – MARCH 1, 1927 / SECOND GREAT-GRANDFATHER

An Entrepreneur, Journalist, and Voice of Philadelphia’s German-Americans

Gustave Adolph Kirchner was born on October 24, 1850, in Vilbel, Grand Duchy of Hesse—present-day Bad Vilbel, Germany—the son of Johann Georg Kirchner and Margaretha Elisabetha Stier. He spent his childhood in a close-knit German community where skilled trades, faith, and family helped shape everyday life.

At eighteen, Gustave made the courageous decision to leave his homeland and begin again in America. Passenger records show that he departed Hamburg aboard the steamship Holsatia and arrived in New York on August 3, 1868. The passenger manifest identifies him as an eighteen-year-old craftsman traveling alone to the United States, one of thousands of young Germans seeking opportunity during the great wave of nineteenth-century immigration.

Gustave soon settled in Philadelphia, one of the largest centers of German-American life in the United States. There he began building a new life while remaining deeply connected to the language, traditions, and culture of his homeland.

His early years in America reveal a young man eager to participate in his new community. A Philadelphia newspaper reported that he served as chairman of the women’s school committee for the Philadelphia Turngemeinde’s annual Christmas celebration, helping to organize gifts and festivities for hundreds of German immigrant children. The event reflected the strong mutual support within Philadelphia’s German community and suggests that Gustave quickly earned the confidence of those around him.

On September 22, 1870, Gustave married Margaret A. Young, the Philadelphia-born daughter of respected carriage manufacturer and inventor Edmund Young. Their marriage united a young German immigrant with a family whose Pennsylvania roots extended back through several generations. Margaret brought Gustave family connections and a sense of belonging in his adopted country; together they joined two very different American experiences.



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Clara Cordialia Kirchner Tuckmantel, remembered for her independence, warmth, and the freedom she gave children to simply be children.

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FEBRUARY 14, 1877 – APRIL 19, 1954 / GREAT-GRANDMOTHER

The Woman Who Made Family Her Legacy

Clara Cordialia Kirchner was born in Philadelphia on February 14, 1877. She was the daughter of German immigrant Gustave Adolph Kirchner—a funeral director, entrepreneur, and newspaper editor—and Margaret “Maggie” Young Kirchner. Although born in America, Clara was also raised in a home shaped by German language and culture, as well as the traditions of the Young family whose American roots extended back to the colonial period.

Clara’s middle name, Cordialia, was not traditionally German. Best known through Shakespeare’s King Lear, the name had become familiar in nineteenth-century America. Its pairing with Clara offers a small but intriguing reflection of her family’s evolving identity: she was the Philadelphia-born daughter of German immigrants, raised within German traditions but belonging to a new American generation.

Clara’s childhood was marked by profound loss. Her brother John died in 1890, her sister Mary Ellen in 1892, and her sister Katie in 1896. In 1897, Clara also lost her mother, Margaret. By the time she reached adulthood, Clara was the only surviving child of Gustave and Margaret Kirchner.

On October 19, 1898, Charles and Clara married in Philadelphia, uniting two established German-American families. A contemporary newspaper listing announcing the marriage license preserved their names together at the beginning of a partnership that would last thirty-five years.



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Photograph of William Fredrick Kerrigan

William Frederick Kerrigan

JANUARY 1857 – AUGUST 24, 1900 / GREAT GRANDFATHER

Building a Life Along the Main Line

William Frederick “Bill” Kerrigan was born in January 1857 in Humphreysville, Pennsylvania, the rural community that would later become Bryn Mawr. He was the son of Irish immigrants Patrick H. Kerrigan and Sarah Flanagan Kerrigan, whose determination and hard work established the family’s American foundation.

Bill grew up on the Kerrigans’ five-acre property along what became Kerrigan Lane. His father operated a successful livery stable and hauling business, and family life revolved around the work required to sustain both the household and the enterprise. According to memories preserved by my father, John “Jack” Connelly, the family lived without electricity or indoor plumbing. A large vegetable garden supplied much of their food, chickens provided eggs and meat, and vegetables were preserved in glass jars sealed with wax for the winter.

After completing the eighth grade in a one-room schoolhouse, Bill joined his father in the family business. He cared for the horses, assisted with hauling, and later unloaded coal delivered by rail. Through this work, he learned the practical skills and responsibilities necessary to serve a community that was gradually changing around them.



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