

COX, Ray Wilbur

Submitted by Debbie Schleiffer, daughter of Margaret Ann (Cox) Erdevig

COX – Ray Wilbur is the second son of Oliver Calvin and Florence (Ogburn) Cox. Oliver was a successful cattleman with a farm west of Toulon. For years he operated a grocery store and meat market on Main Street in Toulon. That shop is the current location of Cover Insurance.

“Ollie” and “Flo” had five children, Harold, Ray Wilbur, Morrow “Skeet”, Lucille and Leslie, and were enormously active in the Toulon Baptist Church, being married there in 1902.

Second son Ray must have been quite a rascal. No record is found of Ray’s high school graduation (though he did sing in a musical production) or of his marriage. Ray played a part in the Toulon Baptist Church scandal of 1927 that was long remembered. The events are well documented in The Stark County News.

It seems that the Toulon pastor, Reverend Ray Starr, went missing one August day. A search ensued and he was “found” by Ray Cox lying unconscious in the church steeple. A doctor pronounced heat prostration as the cause though many suspected drunkenness.

The story continues with the resignation of Rev. Starr. For months his reputation was in question both inside and outside of the church with back to back indiscretions that snowballed, the newspaper reports. He vanished in December 1927 after confessing to forging checks and lying to the congregation. His luggage was found in Beaumont, Texas though he claimed to be preaching in Terra Haute, Indiana. Mrs. Starr went to be with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Cox, in Chicago. The pastor avoided formal arrest and was never held accountable for these crimes. Both Ray and Rev. Starr made frequent trips to Chicago for undisclosed reasons.

Just months after the scandal, Ray was obliged to marry 19-year old Madelin Cullom. The plan to have Madelin leave town and attend distant Rockford (IL) College to avoid associating with Ray failed. Madelin, whose grandfather was minister at the Toulon M. E. Church, was pregnant. Few details remain of their 1927 winter elopement, but a child was born in April 1928.

On January 11, 1928, a brief note in the social column of the newspaper reads that a “Mr. and Mrs. Ray Cox” were playing cards with friends. It is the first and only mention of their marriage as found to date.

It is interesting to note that this story was brought to my notice in the 1980s by Ray’s brother, Leslie Cox while we were visiting the Toulon Historical Society. Leslie made a point to open the newspaper files and display these questionable incidents with a twinkle in his eye. I guess we will never know the full story, but it certainly is titillating.

I understand Ray’s second long time marriage to Edna Webb Goskins and life as a Peoria city bus mechanic were much mellower.

Cox Meat Market – Ollie Cox, second from left



Oliver Cox Family: L to R
Back: Lucille, Morrow "Skeet", Leslie
Front: Ray Wilbur, Oliver C., Florence, Harold

