

Crelia, the Name

Irish Roots to County Meath

By Ray Crelia



Editor's Note: See stories by Ray Crelia about Raymond Theodore and Alta Fern Mitchell Crelia, Isaac Denton and Sara Elizabeth Clark Crelia, and Joseph Elmer Crelia under the Stories pages.

"What kind of a name is that?" "How do you spell it?" "I've not heard of that name." How many times I have heard comments like that in my growing up years I cannot begin to count. My father, Raymond Theodore Crelia always said that "anyone with that name was kin to me." Also, both he and my uncle Elmer Crelia pronounced their name "Creely." They never said "Cree-Lee-ah" as I did. I assumed they were just being too slack and casual to pronounce it properly.

What would be the national origin of such a name? Daddy always told me that his uncle Alvin was a "full blood Irishman." That generated more questions than answers. Was Alvin born in Ireland? I surmised that daddy was just passing down some family lore that he had been told. Considerable enlightenment came in 2001 when my wife Judy and I traveled to Van Buren County, Tennessee to do some genealogical research. The librarian in the city of Spencer was most helpful to us. She loaded us up with more family history than we could deal with in a short visit. We discovered that the family had, indeed, spelled the name either "Creeley" or "Creely." Most of the information came from county census records of both 1850 or 1860 – and, not a "Crelia" spelling to be found.

When the family moved to Collin County, Texas around the turn of the century, it seems that the spelling was changed. The old spellings from the Tennessee records were gone. Why change the family name to some other spelling? Well, that mystery still persists. And, just how Irish are we?

I had found on a map of Irish surnames some variant spellings of our name that may place our origins around County Meath, just north and west of Dublin, Ireland. But saying we have strong ties to the old country may be a bit of a stretch.