

June W. Crandall (1878-1910)

June W. Crandall was born on December 1, 1878 in Richmond, Madison County, Kentucky.¹ His parents were Jerome and Juliana (Rice) Crandall.² In 1896 June moved to Illinois where he lived and worked in Atlanta for two years before coming to Bloomington. On December 10, 1898 he married Mary L. Carlson in Bloomington. The next year their only child, Beulah, was born in Bloomington. The family resided at 1311 West Chestnut Street.

June worked as a coal miner for the Bloomington Coal Company. June was active in the local coal miners union and was an officer and delegate to national conventions. He also participated in the Trades Assembly as an officer. Coal miners had no safety laws to protect them and they worked long, hard hours. Carl Ekstam, a Bloomington resident, said, "My uncle always said if it was cloudy on Sunday and rainy, they didn't see the sun for two weeks because they'd go in the mine in the morning before the sun come up, and they'd come up after it went down." Then as now, coal mining was a dangerous occupation. At least five separate but fatal incidents occurred in Bloomington mines from 1883 to 1909. Interestingly, Illinois was the first state to pass legislation providing for mine firefighting and rescue stations in coal mining centers.

Socialism can be defined as an ideology which critiqued the social and economic problems generated by capitalism and industrialization. Socialists deplored economic inequalities and the exploitation of labor; they agitated for change and for a more equitable standing between the workers and the owners.

It was almost certainly due to his occupation and labor union activities that he chose, politically, to become a member of the Socialist Party. Capitalists looked upon socialists as extremists who were a threat to American society. The public painted socialism as a dangerous and radical threat to the capitalist way of life. Embracing this political view, Crandall sought public office.

June Crandall didn't succeed, although he tried over and over again. He ran for city treasurer in 1903, alderman in 1904, mayor in 1905, alderman in 1906 and 1908, mayor in 1909, and county clerk in 1910 (his name would appear on the primary ballot after his death). Based on descriptions of his character, he probably would have made a good public servant but his views and membership in the Socialist Party resulted in his defeat time after time.

In character, he was well respected. He favored temperance and sobriety and was considered to have good judgment. Both labor and management relied upon him in helping to resolve labor disputes. He was a member of the Knights of the Maccabees and the Improved Order of Red Men which were fraternal organizations.

In 1910 the coal mine closed. June was able to find work at the Bloomington Water Works. On August 29, at age 31, his life ended tragically in a preventable accident. He was foreman on a job where he and several other men were digging a trench when the wall caved in. Only minutes before, one of the workmen warned him that the 13 ft. wall looked dangerously unstable. Crandall had attempted to brace the ditch with some extra timber supplied by a contractor but the contractor had told him not to use it. He was crushed when the wall caved in and died later that night at a local hospital.³

¹ Birth record for June Walker Crandall, Kentucky, U.S. Birth Records, 1847-1911, Ancestry.com, Date Accessed June 9, 2023.

² June Walker Crandall family tree, Ancestry.com, Date Accessed June 9, 2023.

³ "June Crandall is Killed by a Cave-In," The Pantagraph, August 30, 1910.

His death was noted in several newspaper articles which cited him as a prominent leader of the Socialist Party. One article cited him as a self-made man of well-balanced temperament, intelligent reasoning, a sense of justice, fair minded, and conservative. He was eulogized by Frank Albert Walker of Normal in a poem entitled "Fulfillment."

His wife never remarried and she and their daughter continued to live in the home he had built for them on West Grove Street. Mary followed him in death in 1956 and was buried next to him in Evergreen Memorial Cemetery in Bloomington, IL.