

## Marion Eleanor Cross NSCDA - MN Scholarship

Marion Eleanor Cross made an important contribution to the National Society of Colonial Dames of America in the State of Minnesota. In her will, she endowed the Dames' scholarship program for international students at the University of Minnesota. Started in 1951, the scholarship was funded by annual gifts until Marion made a bequest of \$100,000 to endow the fund in 1996. Matched by the University, the fund has helped over 800 students.



Figure 1 Marion Cross  
passport photo 1921

Marion was born on September 17, 1903 in Minneapolis. She was the daughter of attorney Norton Murdock Cross and Martha V. Ankeny Cross. She received a bachelor's degree in English and History from Smith College and master's degrees in French and Italian from the University of Minnesota.

In 1936, she translated Father Hennepin's 1680 *Description of Louisiana Newly Discovered to the Southwest of New France by Order of his Majesty* from the original French. It was published by the University of Minnesota Press for the NSCDA-MN. Over the next two decades, she wrote several books about prominent Minneapolis businesses including Archer Daniels Midland, Patterson Dental Supply, and the Farmers and Mechanics Building. She became a Dame in 1948.

Marion never married. Her philanthropy extended beyond the Dames scholarship: she also established a Marion Cross Fund at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, where she was active as a friend of the MIA, and at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, Smith College and the Minnesota Orchestra.



Figure 3 Marion in 1936  
Courtesy of Hennepin County  
Library

Marion's father Norton, through whom she claimed her colonial ancestry, was born in Lyons, Iowa on June 23, 1866 and died Jan 17, 1944. His wife Martha was born July 28, 1868 in Somerset, PA and died July 10, 1937 in Minneapolis. Norton graduated from the University of Minnesota and pursued his legal education at Columbia Law School.

Norton's father was Judson Newell Cross (1838-1901). Judson had humble beginnings. Born on a farm in upstate New York near Lake Ontario, he left home the day he turned 17 years old for Ohio to attend Oberlin College. He had enough money to begin his studies

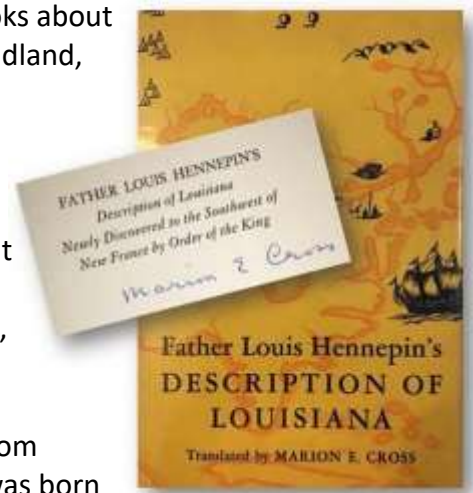


Figure 2 Marion's first book  
with signed frontpiece

but then dropped out and worked as a teacher until he could pay for another semester of college. He continued this pattern of alternating teaching with study until 1861 when he enlisted in the Union Army, Company C of the Seventh Ohio Infantry. He was severely wounded in the battle of Cross Lanes in August 1861 and taken prisoner, but was recaptured by Union forces and sent home for treatment. The battle was considered a confederate victory, as General Floyd's forces took the Ohio regiment by surprise and routed them, and the scattered Union forces retreated.

Although he attempted to rejoin his unit after his recuperation, he was forced to resign and began his study of law in Albany, NY. He was recalled to service several times and ultimately served as assistant provost marshal, mustering 18,000 returned prisoners from Andersonville prison camp. He served there until the end of the war. Graduating from Columbia Law School in 1866, he moved to Lyons, Iowa, where he practiced law for ten years. He served as mayor of the city before moving to Minneapolis. In Minneapolis he practiced law with Judge Henry Hicks and served as City Attorney from 1883-1887. He was a member of the first park commission of Minneapolis and was appointed as United States Immigration Commissioner to Europe in 1891. He died in August 1901 in Minneapolis.

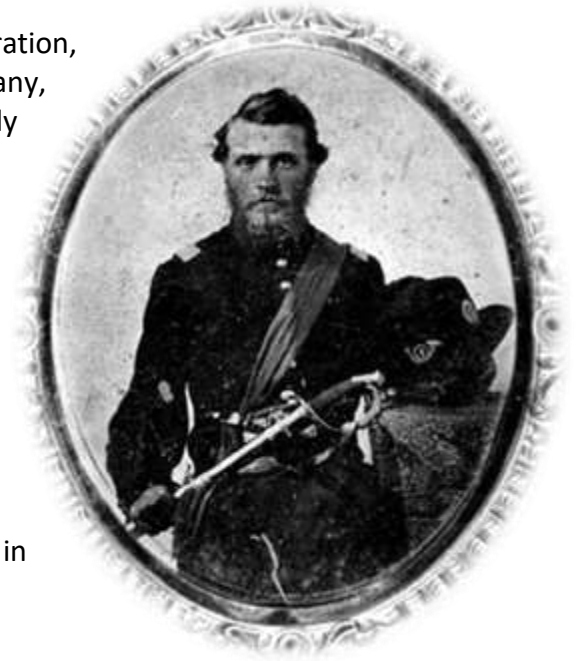


Figure 4 Judson Cross 1861 Courtesy MNHS

Judson was profiled in the 1901 annual report of the Minnesota Horticultural Society as “prominently identified with the forestry movement and among the most prominent of those laboring for the preservation of forests in the United States.” He was President of the Minnesota Forestry Association from 1890-1900 and author and champion of the Forest Reserve Law, which allowed the U.S. President to set aside lands as National Forests.

Judson's wife Clara Steele Norton, a descendant of the Colonial ancestor John Steele, met Judson at Oberlin College, where she graduated with a degree in Classical Studies in 1862. Judson and Clara married quickly as Judson had joined the Union Army and they wished to marry while he was home on leave. A college friend of Clara's, African American/Ojibwe artist Edmonia Lewis, drew a sketch for them as a wedding gift. Currently in the collection at Oberlin College, it is the only surviving sketch of Lewis's early work. It includes a spot of wax, dripped from a candle as she drew by candlelight. Lewis went on to be a noted sculptor in Rome. In 1905, Clara died in a train wreck covered on Page 1 of the newspapers of the day. A train carrying cattle broke loose and struck the train in which she was a passenger, ripping cars from the passenger train and hurling them 20 feet into a gully below. Clara was the only one killed, though others were injured.

## Colonial Ancestor

Marion is descended from John Steele (1591-1695). Born in Fairsted, Essex County, England, he came to America in 1633. He was the Deputy to the Massachusetts General Court in 1635, and served on the commission to govern Connecticut in 1636, and became a magistrate. He was the leader of the "Adventurers Party," a group of 25 men who left Cambridge, MA to explore the area that would become Hartford, CT. They arrived several months before the Reverend Hooker and his party arrived in 1636. He became the recorder (town clerk) of Hartford and later, was the recorder for Farmington when he arrived there in 1645. His name appears on the monument to the founders of Hartford.

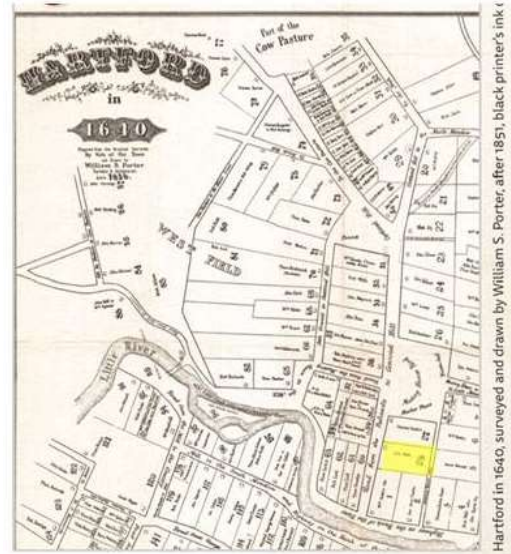


Figure 5 Map of Hartford 1640 showing John Steele's plot

## Resources

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