

## Adventures in Research, Episode Four—A Soap Opera Mystery

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In April 2014, I received a request concerning a brother and sister who moved from Wisconsin to Clarke County, Washington. The researcher was interested in land records, probate records and any other records about the brother and sister.

Peter and Mary Courtion and their neighbors the Hugon Family moved to Wisconsin from Switzerland. After spending some time in Manitowoc County, Wisconsin, Emile Hugon moved to Clarke County, Washington in 1885. While in Clarke County, Emile Hugon acquired property and he is joined by friends Peter and Mary Courtion, their four children, and his sister Josephine Hugon.

### Josephine's Story:

While in Washington, Josephine married Andre Croteau at St John's Mission in Clark County on April 30, 1898. She later divorced Andre for "cruel and inhumane treatment." One of the incidents she described in her deposition recounted a time in 1909 where Andre grabbed her by her hair and threw her down a stairway. The other incident in 1912, Andre threatened to strike her. She filed for divorce in June 1912 and her brother Emile died in July 1912. The divorce is final September 9, 1912. Josephine wrote her will on March 24, 1913 and leaves Andre all of her land. She referred to him as her former husband but through a strange twist of fate she remarried Andre Croteau on March 25, 1913. Josephine died December 16, 1913.



### Emile's Story:

We can only guess why Emile decided to leave everyone behind and go to Clark County, Washington. It is not long before he is joined by his neighbors from Wisconsin and his sister Josephine. While he works in Clarke County, he also owns property. The Clarke County Census lists him as a laborer in 1885 and a farmer in 1887. His first court summons involves a Lis Pendens filed against him and Mary C. Courtion by her husband Peter Courtion. Peter Courtion filed for divorce in June 1890 and in August 1890 naming Emile Hugon in the divorce for the "existence of adulterous or improper conduct." Mary answered both accusations with a denial and said she, "has always been a true and faithful wife." Mary C. Courtion filed for divorce after Peter apparently abandoned the family and it was granted July 13, 1895. Peter and Mary's youngest child was named Emile.

As the stories unfold, this seems more and more like a soap opera, with all of the twists and turns. Why would Josephine remarry her abusive husband, did he have something on her? Not only does she remarry him but she leaves him property in her will. And Emile, what was going on between he and Mary Courtion? Did he father the youngest son that is also named Emile? There are still many questions, but now the researcher has a few more pieces of the puzzle thanks to some records at the archives.