Miles Standish Munson & Genevieve Mather

Clan William

Early Kansas and Suffrage

by Lori Hahn

Capt Thomas Munson > Samuel > Samuel James > William > William II > David > Stephen > **Miles Standish Munson m. Genevieve Mather**

Today's article is about a fellow who left his New England home and went pioneering to Kansas. His name intrigued me—Miles Standish Munson. Along the way, I found some interesting tidbits about him, but moreover, about his wife, Jenny Mather.

Miles Standish Munson was born to Stephen Munson, originally of Litchfield, Connecticut and his wife, Nancy Nash. An early account of the Munsons mentions that Nancy was related to a Virginia governor, but I don't know if that's true. Her lineage does go directly from the early Connecticut freeman, Thomas Nash, immigrant of England, who was a blacksmith.

By the time Miles was born on 05 Jul 1841, his parents lived in Sandisfield, Amherst, Massachusetts. Miles was the youngest surviving child. Stephen was a carpenter and during the mid-1800s—many sawmills had popped up along the nearby river. A planned railway stop in nearby Farmington Hills failed and most industry in the area failed.

Reportedly, Miles went to Chicago to work for S.P. Brownell on South Water Street and later at Board of Trade for "several years." He worked for John Lake's company that provided the grain and hay for the street car horses. (see next column). He came to Kansas to find pasture for retired street car horses at both Burlingame and Council Grove, where he was buying corn for the Chicago market

Miles was in Sheffield, Massachusetts in 1860. In 1862, he enlisted in the 49th Infantry Regiment of Massachusetts where he engaged in some minor skirmishes before being mustered out in Sep 1863. Miles arrived in Kansas in 1875 as a result of his Chicago business.

Genevieve "Jenny" Mather's parents were Jebediah Peck Mather and Sara "Sally" Amelia Deming who originally hailed from Watertown, New York. Jenny was born in 1859 in Kansas City, Missouri. Her family had lived in Butler County, but were living in Council Grove in Morris County, Kansas in 1877.

After securing a large payment for lumber, Jebediah bought mill machinery and planned to move it to Council Grove near the Kaw Indian reservation. When he arrived at Westport, the border war was raging with such fierceness that he decided to remain where he was for a while.

However, the following year, in 1860, he continued his journey with his mill machinery and erected a mill at Council Grove, along the Neosha river, according to his plan.

The brick mill building was a three-stories and located near the old Kaw mission. The edifice was a great wonder to the 3,000 Kaw Indians who lived on the reservation. Jebediah also built a large home of 12 rooms; considered a mansion in its day.

Mrs. Mather, who was active in the early suffrage movement in Kansas, entertained in this house, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and other prominent women of the times.

Jebediah Mather spent the last six years of his life in Emporia, where he died on May 8, 1905 at 90.

Jenny had an opportunity to observe much of the early life in Kansas, living in such close proximity to the Kaw Indian reservation. She has seen three thousand "Cheyenne

Now you know

Retired streetcar horses were the hard-working animals of 19th-century urban transit. Due to grueling 14-hour daily shifts and steep incline climbs, the average streetcar horse had a life expectancy of only 2 to 4 years. To keep a single streetcar running all day, transit companies relied on a pool of multiple horses. A single horse generally only worked a few hours at a time before being swapped outt. When replaced by electric trolleys and cable cars, these loyal animals were typically auctioned off to farmers or private owners.





49th Infantry Regiment of MA



Kaw Nation

redskins" on the warpath, and at one time a drunken Indian came to the Mather home and threatened to scalp her, demanding $5 and some flour. Her sister covered the Indian with a revolver which caused the inebriated visitor departe. Jennie could speak the Kaw language fluently, and knew a lot about the tribe. When she was a girl she owned an Indian pony and was a great rider. Lots of things to love.

Miles and Jenny married in Council Grove on 09 Apr 1877. A year later, they moved on to El Dorado, Butler County. At that time, he and Captain J.T. Anderson had a lumber business. Miles bought him out at some point and continued to operate the business for an additional 14 years.

Miles had his fingers in lots of pies and was a leading citizen of El Dorado. He ran the coal works for many years, had real estate holdings, and loaned money to folks to help finance the purchase of homes and farms, and owned a 640-acre well improved farm. Things were going so well, that Mrs. Munson had a housekeeper. Munson reportedly never foreclosed on anyone. His humor was described as dry and sparkling with a wide swath of philosophy.

About the time Miles sold his lumber yard, he built a market on lots he owned east of the lumberyard. He continued to farm and raise horses and cattle and his coal yard continued to flourish. Around the turn of the 20th century, Miles sold the coal yard.

All through this period, his wife, Jennie, would participate in all sorts of women's clubs, beautification projects, and good works and built a stellar reputation as a lady of substance.

The couple raised five children; four sons and a daughter. On 10 Oct 1906, Miles died of heart disease at age 49. Jennie was named executrix.

This loss did not slow Jennie down. In 1908, she was the local representative to the state-level Woman's Federation of Clubs meeting. She also served as the treasurer of her local club. This was also the year her mother, Sally Deming Mather, died in Emporia.

Events, they were a'changing in the country. Women were battling all over the country to get the right to vote. Wyoming was the first state to grant women that right. Kansas was the eighth state to grant women equal rights to vote in November of 1912. Reform was moving at the speed of molasses—it had been since 1867 when the idea was first proposed in the US. It still would not be until 1920 when the the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution would be ratified.

A strange thing happened in Butler County in 1912, shortly after women received their rights. A judge in Butler County sat the first all-women jury for a trial, which included Jenny Munson. And here's what happened:



Women's Suffrage Win in Kansas!

Reportedly, the case in question was originally tried with a jury of men, who could not reach a verdict. The judge felt the only option he had was to empanel a group of women.

"The first jury composed of women to sit in a case in district court in Kansas was empaneled in El Dorado, Butler County, part of the 19th judicial district on Wednesday morning, November 27 (1912), the case before the court is H. H. Boeck vs Carrie M. Schreiber, et al. The case is a damage suit where the plaintiff alleges he purchased a tract of land from the estate of Carrie M Schreiber and when he received the land, it was not the tract which he alleges was shown him when he made the deal."

El Dorado Republican (El Dorado, KS) 06 Dec 1912, Fri, p1

After the two days of testimony, the panel went to the jury room to deliberate. Three hours later, at 11 pm, the forewoman handed the verdict to her husband, the bailiff, and he to the judge. The plaintiff won $1,200 dollars. Each juror received $2 for each day of service.



Members of the first women's jury empaneled in Kansas

The next year, both plaintiff and defendant attempted for a new trial. Part of the argument was based on the process by which an all-women panel was selected. The verdict stood. Also in 1913, the mayoral race was heavily weighted for the elected Citizen's Party, but Mrs Munson managed to pull in one vote!

In 1917, Mrs. Munson and her five children were beneficiaries of a Munson uncle's will. The amount was not known. I believe this money came from Albert Munson, who died in 1915 by way of his wife Sara Heath Munson, who died in 1917.

Mrs. Munson continued to work in the community for the rest of her life. She bought and sold real estate like a champ. Her daughter lived with her until her death in 1938. Her daughter would never marry and never have a career, so I would assume assets were such that the children were left comfortable.

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