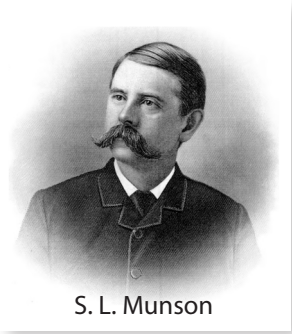
Samuel Lyman Munson

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Munson is Great Success on New York State Business Scene

by Lori Hahn



S. L. Munson

This story had to be written—because who could resist that mustache? Samuel Lyman Munson was born 14 Jun 1844 in what is now Huntington, MA, to Garry Munson and Harriet Lyman. He lived on the farm with his family until he left for the Williston Seminary in Easthampton at about age 12 for three years. His first job after his schooling was as a clerk in a general store, but his health wouldn't allow him to continue, so he returned home.

In 1863, in the midst of the Civil War, he went to Albany, NY, and took a traveling salesman job with Wickes & Strong, which made clothing. He did extremeley well selling and enjoyed the benefit of lots of clean air to keep him in good health. He decided to leave in 1867. He partnered up with two fellows: J. A. Richardson and L. R. Dwight, of Albany, and opened up Munson, Richardson, and Company. They made linen collars. Munson bought his partners out in 1869.

Munson looked to expanding his modest production facility. Finally, in 1884, he purchased the old Hudson Avenue Methodist Church in Albany. He remodeled and expanded the building to over 140 feet wide and five stories tall, which was finally ready to start pumping out collars, cuffs, shirts, and lace neckwear right before Christmas of 1885.



Lace collars, like those the S.L. Munson company made, were all the rage beginning in the mid-1800s for both men and women. Neckwear allowed its wearer to spruce up an outfit or just be seen. Before mass production, such finery was available only to the wealthy. The trend died out in the Edwardian era.

Business was good. Munson employed 400-500 people, and goods were being sold in every state in the country. In 1889, Munson opened another factory in Cobbleskill, NY.

As if his business didn't keep him occupied, Munson was deeply involved in civic matters. He served as the Chairman of the Committee on Manufacturers, served on the board of the Chamber of Commerce, and contributed to or participated in various athletic, masonic, literary and social clubs in the city. He was on the board of the Thepure Baking Powder Co. and the Home Savings Bank of Albany.

As to his family, he and wife Susanna Hopkins had seven children, six of whom are pictured. Annie Hopkins Munson died while still an infant.

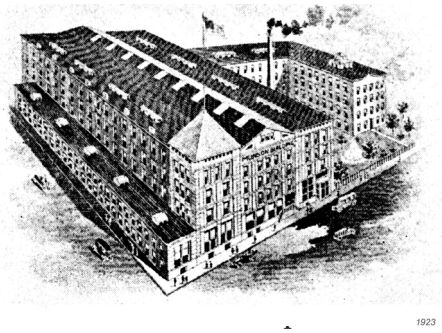


- Harriet (1869-1941) married attorney Robert Hunt Lyman.
- Edward Garry (1874-1949) married Caroline Scott Brewster and was involved in the company business early on.
- Paul Babcock (1875-1912) did not marry. He died after complications of an appendectomy. A graduate of Yale.
- Samuel Lyman Munson, Jr. (1879-1929) married Frances Ludlow Van Deventer, known as Nancy. Jr. was involved in the running of the company with his father. He graduated from Harvard.
- Amy Treadwell Munson (1881-1971) married John Bennett Benson and moved to Connecticut and then Indiana.

- Robert Munson, Sr. (1888-1959) married (1) Mary Kerbin Rowan (div) and then married (2) Marian Eugenie Hubbell.

Munson was well-regarded as employer to his over 1,000 employees. In 1901, upon returning from a trip abroad, the employees threw him a welcome home party, which was reported in the news statewide. Munson declared he had never had an issue with any party he worked with in his entire career. It was a time of workers standing up for better treatment across the country, so whether things were quite this rosy at Munson may or may not be true.

With his sons working with him, the company continued to prosper and grow. In 1925, the company began making children's clothing and opened a retail outlet in Albany.


1923

Even Munsc it struck in 1929. He did not close the retail shop but was forced to liquidate much of its stock. His son, Samuel Jr., died in December that same year from penumonia, leaving a wife and four children.Samuel Jr. had served as vice president for several years.

This seemed to take it out of Samuel Lyman Munson, Sr. He passed away in 1930. The business struggled along until 1931, when it closed its formidable doors.

The building was sold in 1932 for $125,000 and became a furniture warehouse. The Depression went on, and it was decided that the downtown needed to be revitalized. The entire Munson block was purchased by the City and as, part of a WPA project, the area would become the new Public Market. Work started in 1936. All the buildings bordered by Grand, Market, Hudson, and Phillips were razed.

Mrs. Munson lived to the ripe old age of 87. The couple's home at 84 Lancaster Street was right off of Washington Park near downtown. The park is still there, but the homes lining Lancaster are long gone.

While the physical reminders of Samuel Lyman Munson are gone,cthe family has continued to thrive.

Samuel Jr. had a son, Samuel Lyman III, and then came Samuel Lyman IV,cand then Samuel Lyman V (who has every intention of making sure therecis a Samuel Lyman VI). Samuel V (who goes by Lyman) also continued another family tradition. They operate South Carolina's S. L. Munson & Co.
manufactures and import precision abrasives and diamond products used in the production of transportation components: crankshafts, jet engine blades, anything that needs to fit together precisely. He is also a long-time TMF member!



Samuel's wife, Susanna Babcock Hopkins (1844-1932)