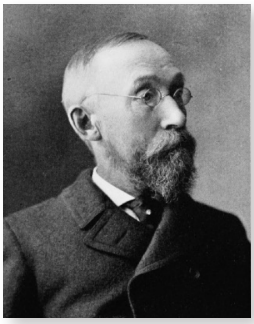
Henry Munson

Clan Jabez

Eureka! A straight barrel at last!

by Lori Hahn

Jabez > Isaac > Lucy > Henry Munson



It was quite a treat to run across a story from Clan Jabez. The clan is very small. I want to start with Henry Munson's mother, Lucy Munson. She was the oldest child of old Jabez Munson, great grandson of Thomas Munson.

Lucy, who has no husband referenced in *The Munson Record, Vol. II*, also doesn't seem to have a husband on record elswhere either. She had one child, born 29 Jun 1807 in Hamden, Connecticut. Hamden was then known as Whitneyville. His name was Henry Munson and he was an industrious individual.

He married Jane Ford on 29 Jan 1834 in Hamden. The couple would go on to have six children.

At this time, there were two big gun manufacturers in the area, Colt Armory in New Haven and in Whitneyville, the Whitneyville Armory. Among Henry's many talents was as an armorer and expert gunmaker. He worked for Whitneyville Armory for many years, but also had other businesses operating at the same time, including his farm.

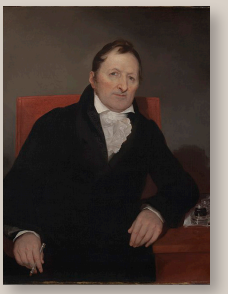
In the later middle years of his life, he took a contract to make guns for a customer. Being a man who wanted to do a good job, he found himself having trouble making a barrel that was bored on center of the cylinder of steel. The custom had been to weld the pieces of the barrel together. He thought on it and come upon a brilliant idea for a small device that would hold the barrel while the bore ran and make it dead center down the barrel! This "little machine" revolutionized the gun making industry. Unfortunately, he did not pass "Go" and collect millions of dollars because he never bothered to get a patent.

A longtime Democrat, the War of the Rebellion caused Henry to change parties to the Republican. He served two terms in the state legislature and served in every position of import in Hamden. During the Civil War he spent a stint helping recruit troops to meet the state's quote to serve the Union and as was reported, did it better than anyone else.

Henry's wife passed away in 1864. He never remarried, but his children remained close by.

Eli Whitney of Whitneyville

But first, a little segue for historical context. Whitneyville was named after Eli Whitney, the inventor of many things, but most famous among them, the cotton gin.



Eli Whitney
(1765-1825)
cotton gin inventor &
owned the Whitneyville
Armory

Sadly, the cotton gin adventure did not travel the trajectory Whitney and his partner had hoped. It made little profit and what little profits he had were eaten up in lawsuits for patent violations. The partners also had not planned to sell the unit, but to have farmers come to them for cotton cleaning.

Whitney died in 1825 but the armory continued on without him. His two brothers ran things until his son, Eli Whitney, was old enough to run it himself. That happened in 1842. He modernized the facility and ultimately sold the armory to Winchester Repeating Arms in 1888.



Eli Whitney
(1820-1895)
eventually sold the
armory

In his post-gunmaking years, he was part of Munson, Morse, & Co., a saddlery in Hamden which he started in 1871. He began purchased many properties throughout Whitneyville, including a piece of land that was ultimately purchased by the Winchester Repeating Arms Co. which they used for munitions storage.

Sadly, in 1888, Henry received word from the Guilford police that a body had washed up on the shores and was discovered by fisherman. Henry realized from the description that the body was probably that of his son Robert and went to Guilford to find that it was indeed his son. It was believed that the body had been in the water for up to one week. The marshall believed Robert died of either suicide or accidental drowning. Henry told the inquest that his son had left two weeks previously to look for work and they had heard from him once during his absence. Robert was supposedly going to Bridgeport. He never reached that stop. The loss of Robert left only two surviving children.

Henry retired about 20 years before his death and spent his last years living with one of his two surviving children, Mrs.

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Henry retired about 20 years before his death and spent his last years living with one of his two surviving children, Mrs. Eunice Gorham. He helped people in Whitneyville settle up their estates and did it faithfully. His son Henry Whitney Munson, Jr., became superintendent of the Whitneyville Armory in 1871 and in 1903, having previously taken on his father's properties and opened up Munson Realty in 1903.

Henry died at age 86 in 1893 of pneumonia that lasted 30 hours. His estate was far from meager, listed at $100,000!

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