



Local couple plans May wedding

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LIFESTYLE

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Jerusha Bailey Mussina: Williamsport Crusader for Temperance

By **MARY L. SIEMINSKI**
Special to
the Sun-Gazette

Jerusha Bailey Mussina was the leader of the "Woman's Crusade" for temperance in Williamsport.

The local Crusade was part of a nationwide protest against the liquor trade and occurred almost 50 years before Prohibition became law.

During the winter of 1873-74, tens of thou-

Williamsport Women



by MARY SIEMINSKI

sands of women in small towns and cities marched on local saloons, hotels and other liquor outlets.

In Williamsport, it was said that there were 30 of these dens of iniquity within walking distance

of Market Square. This is how Jerusha Mussina described the Williamsport Crusade, which took place from March to June 1874: "Every afternoon bands of women, after meeting in prayer, started from the Pine Street M.E. Church in different directions, visiting hotels and saloons, kneeling and praying on cold, damp and often filthy pavement, or breathing the offensive air of bar rooms, sometimes being subject-

ed to abuse, and even endangering their lives in some instances."

The Williamsport Woman's Crusade might have been forgotten if not for a 30-page booklet held by Lycoming County Historical Society, with the title "A true record of the Temperance

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Jerusha Bailey Mussina: Williamsport Crusader for Temperance

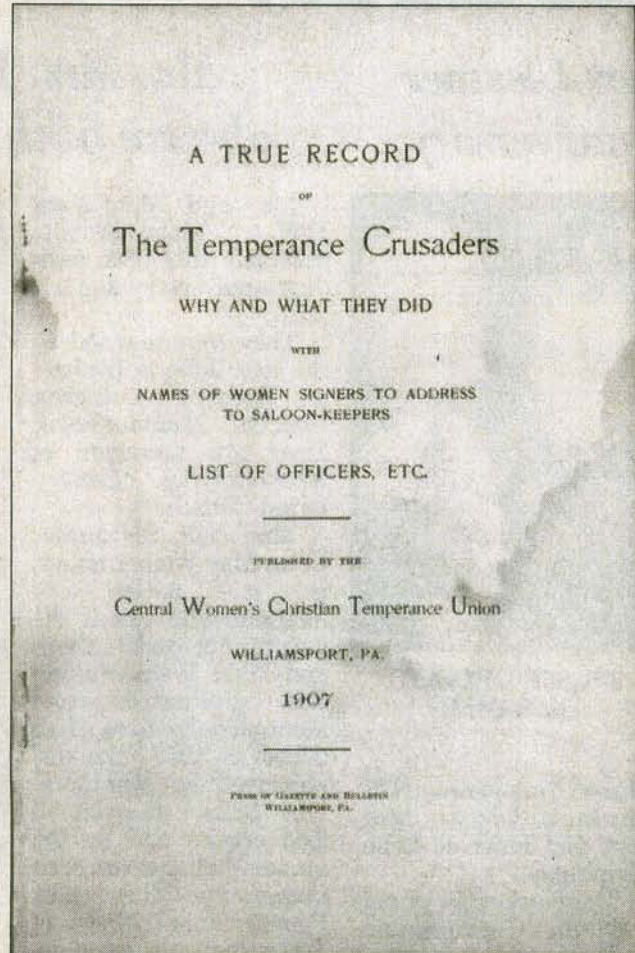
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Crusaders, why and what they did, with names of women signers to address the saloon-keepers, list of officers, etc." That booklet has been digitized and is included in the Lycoming County Women's History Collection (www.lycoming.edu/library/lcwhc), an online archive of primary source material relating to the history of women in Lycoming County.

On the front of the booklet is a portrait of Jerusha Bailey Mussina with the caption "Mother Mussina." She has a solemn expression, far-seeing eyes and a determined chin — all of which held her in good stead all of her life. The title "Mother" was bestowed on her and Crusade leaders in other cities and towns by their followers to honor their courage and leadership.

Who was Mother Mussina?

As with most women of her time period, we have few details about Jerusha Mussina's life. As also is typical, we know more about her husband, Jacob Lyons (J.L.) Mussina. Jerusha Bailey was born in Lycoming County on April 20, 1813.



J.L. Mussina's list of accomplishments is long — he had a daguerreotype gallery in Williamsport; he organized the first band; and was a leading supporter of the fledgling Dickinson Seminary (now Lycoming College).

J.L. Mussina is probably best known for the jewelry business that he

saloons that the "praying band of women" visited, following in the footsteps of Mother Mussina.

The City Hotel was their first stop on Day 1 of the Crusade — March 1, 1874. The next day they gathered again and visited the Herdic House, which at that time was Peter Herdic's Hotel on West Fourth and

To stand guard in these saloons all day required some courage, I'll assure you. In one instance, I well recollect, the saloon-keeper tried to force us out by command, but finding this of no avail, he said to the room full of patrons who were waiting to quench their thirst: "Here, boys, take these cigars and smoke the women out," and he handed down boxes of cigars, and they all went at it with a will. The atmosphere of the room soon became almost unendurable, and had we not been close to the door, where we could open it for fresh air, they certainly would have gained a victory. But the result was, the men back in the room, who were doing the smoking where they could get no air, had to rush out of the door, some of them with their tongues hanging out, so nearly suffocated were they. But we "held the fort" until market was over, and the farmers returned to their homes. One man said we had damaged him to the amount of four hundred dollars in one day. We felt this was a glorious day's work, as that money, instead of being in the saloon drawer, was in the homes of those who needed it.



Crusaders were treated with respect, proprietors and patrons sometimes slammed doors in their faces, insulted them threw water on them, and tried to smoke them out,

Crusade in 1874. She was well known for her charitable and church work in Williamsport. She was a long-time member of the Pine Street Church, where she was a Sunday

TEMPERANCE TRUMPET

A FIERCE WAR AGAINST WHISKY

Strong Demonstration Yesterday

The Herdic House Visited

Thousands of People Line the Streets

The Meeting at the Court House

Largest Ever Held in Williamsport

The Bidding Fails to Hold the People

Second Meeting at Pine Street Church

The women's crusade against whisky yesterday, for the first time in this city, created general excitement. About three

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE LYCOMING COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Above is a headline about the Temperance Movement in the March 3, 1874, Williamsport Gazette and Bulletin. At top left is an excerpt from "A True Record of the Temperance Crusaders." The title page of that booklet is at far left. Also shown is the "Ladies Sing for Temperance," a popular cartoon of the period.

families, women filled with the zeal of Protestant evangelism. The rallies that Mother Mussina organized filled the courthouse.

The Williamsport Daily Gazette and Bulletin reported that

towns by their followers to honor their courage and leadership.

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According to Williamsport historian Emerson Collins, her father was John Bailey, who fought in the War of 1812 and died as a result of his service. Jerusha's mother reportedly remarried and moved away, and Peter Vanderbelt, a Williamsport blacksmith, adopted Jerusha.

On March 18, 1834, when Jerusha was 20 years old, she married Jacob Lyons (J.L.) Mussina, a native of Aaronsburg, at the Pine Street M.E. Church. They had three daughters and five sons over the next 20 years and for most of those years they made their home on Market Street between Third and Fourth streets.

The Mussina family was, and still is, prominent in Williamsport.



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J.L. Mussina is probably best known for the jewelry business that he established and the Mussina family carried on for generations.

The Crusade in Williamsport

Jerusha Mussina and the Crusaders regarded liquor as a source of irresistible temptation to the men of Williamsport. The drinkers' wives and children suffered when the men spent their money on liquor rather than bringing it home to their families. The Crusaders were determined to bring public attention to the plight of these families and to stop the liquor trade if they could.

"The true record of the Temperance Crusaders" offers a day-by-day account of the bars and

saloons that the "praying band of women" visited, following in the footsteps of Mother Mussina.

The City Hotel was their first stop on Day 1 of the Crusade — March 1, 1874. The next day they gathered again and visited the Herdic House, which at that time was Peter Herdic's Hotel on West Fourth and Campbell streets; it later became the Park Home and is now Park Place.

Eighty or 90 women marched to Herdic's Hotel from the Pine Street M. E. Church. On March 3, they visited the Hepburn House; on March 4, Crawford House. On March 5, they prayed and sang at Fricker's, the American Hotel, the United States Hotel and Gerlach's Saloon.

On March 6, there was a violent snowstorm, but the women were not deterred; they marched out into the storm and visited the saloon of George Meyers on Third Street and Meitzler and Bruhn's Saloon on Market Street.

They continued their visits through March 11. Although generally the



Crusaders were treated with respect, proprietors and patrons sometimes slammed doors in their faces, insulted them threw water on them, and tried to smoke them out, but they pressed on.

They also picketed the saloons around the old curbside market, hoping to deter the farmers from spending the cash in their pockets on drink.

The True Record

"The True Record," published in 1907, decades after the Williamsport Crusade took place, has a 13-page list of women who supported the Crusade, with signers from all the Protestant churches in Williamsport. Since the booklet is online, readers can check the Lycoming County Women's History Collection to see if their ancestors were part of the Crusade.

Jerusha was 60 years old when she led the

Crusade in 1874. She was well known for her charitable and church work in Williamsport. She was a long-time member of the Pine Street Church, where she was a Sunday school teacher for more than 50 years. When the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (W.C.T.U.) was established in Williamsport, Mother Mussina was unanimously elected president. She held that position for 11 years. The W.C.T.U. met above the family jewelry shop at the northwest corner of Market Square.

Although we know little about Mother Mussina's life, her influence was great.

The Crusade that she led in Williamsport was part of what historians call the largest women's mass movement up to that time in the United States.

It was a grassroots and political movement by the mothers, wives and daughters of middle-class

families, women filled with the zeal of Protestant evangelism. The rallies that Mother Mussina organized filled the courthouse. The title page of that booklet is at far left. Also shown is the "Ladies Sing for Temperance," a popular cartoon of the period.

The Williamsport Daily Gazette and Bulletin reported that they were the largest gatherings ever held in Williamsport.

Jerusha Bailey Mussina died on Feb. 11, 1887, at the age of 73 and is buried in Wildwood Cemetery.

She was a woman of great note in her own time, and she and the Woman's Crusade of 1874 remain an important part of local history.

Sieminski is project manager for the women's history initiative that is a cooperative community undertaking between Lycoming College, the James V. Brown Library and the Lycoming County Historical Society.

Her column will be published on the second Sunday of each month.

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