

Lucy, Josephine, and Minnie Munson: A local family leaves traces to today

By **MARY L. SIEMINSKI**

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From the mid-19th century, the Munson family was prominent in Williamsport business, legal, and social circles. The story of three generations of this family captures local life in this time period. While father, son, and grandson were leaders in the community, their wives were active in intellectual and social clubs and charitable activities. Family homes in Williamsport, Muncy, and Eagles Mere became landmarks, some of which are still standing and even currently for sale.

Three generations of the Munsons will be featured in a series of two articles.

Edgar and Lucy Munson

Edgar Munson (1820–1901) and his wife, Lucy Maria (Curtis) Munson (1820–1902), were the first generation of Munsons to live in Williamsport. They came from

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Lycoming County Women

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Steuben County, New York, about 1870, at the height of the lumber era.

Edgar's father, Jesse Munson, had purchased large tracts of land in the local area, and Edgar and Lucy originally came to Williamsport so that he could supervise the lumbering of that land. Edgar was owner of the Susquehanna Saw and Planing Mill at the foot of Maynard Street and was involved in many other businesses, among them the railroad, banking, coal mining, and the water company.

Lucy Maria Munson was from a well-educated and prosperous New England family. She attended Mt. Holyoke Seminary in the mid-19th century. According to Thomas Lloyd's History of Lycoming County (1929), Lucy Munson "will be long remembered for her charm of

manner and qualities of heart and mind, exhibiting talents of a literary order of high degree."

The couple were married in Meriden, Conn., in 1852 and had three children: Cyrus Larue (1854), Robert (1857), and Edwin (1858). The Munsons were members of Christ (Episcopal) Church, on East Third Street, where Edgar was a senior warden. A stained-glass window in the church honors their memory.

Lucy was a founding member of the Clio Club, an invitation-only club whose object was "the pursuit of study as a means of intellectual culture and general improvement." In the early years of the club, each member was expected to give a talk on a historical theme. Lucy's talk in December 1879 was titled "Richard Coeur-de-Lion

and the Third Crusade. 1189–1199."

The Munsons lived on Millionaires' Row at 870 W. Fourth St., next door to the Judge J. W. Maynard home, now the site of the Lycoming County Historical Society and Thomas T. Taber Museum. Edgar died in 1901; Lucy died a year later, in 1902. They are buried in Wildwood Cemetery.

Cyrus Larue, Josephine and Minnie Munson

Edgar and Lucy Munson's oldest son, Cyrus Larue (1854–1922), was associated with many local business ventures and was a prominent local attorney. He graduated from Yale University. Active in state politics, he even considered becoming the Democratic candidate for governor of Pennsylvania in 1910.

Cyrus was an early property owner and developer in the resort community of Eagles Mere. His cottage, called Wyno, was built about 1887. Among other

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PHOTO PROVIDED

A school photograph of Minnie Tuller, later Munson, taken in 1873 or 1874 in Rome, New York.



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Eagles Mere investments, he was involved with the Eagles Mere Light Company, which brought electricity to Eagles Mere in 1900.

In 1877, Cyrus married a Williamsport woman, Josephine Anthony White (1856–1889), the daughter of Henry and Catherine (Grafius) White. Henry and Catherine White built the home known as White Castle, which stood on West Fourth Street, where Way's Garden is now.

Josephine was involved in church groups at Christ (Episcopal) Church, where her husband was a vestryman and lay reader. According to a paper written by Suzanne Gehret as a Lycoming College history project, she was the director of a visitation group, visiting the sick, poor, and elderly. Cyrus and Josephine had two sons, Edgar (1881) and George (1883). Josephine died in 1889 at the young age of 33.

In 1891 Cyrus married Minnie Wright Tuller (1858–1931), from Rome, New York. She was the daughter of Ackley Post and Jane (Bailey) Tuller. Minnie attended Wells College as a seminary student, unusually for the time. She had been married and divorced when she and Cyrus were married. They did not have children but raised his children together.

Most likely it was Minnie's mother-in-law, Lucy Munson, who introduced Minnie to a group of Williamsport women involved in charitable activities. Minnie became very active in the community. She was a benefactor of the Home for the Friendless, founded in 1872, which provided a home for children and elderly women in need. In 1906 Minnie donated 30 yards of seersucker for sewing days. Cyrus was on the Home's advisory board, and both husband and wife made bequests to the Home.

A founder of the Williamsport YWCA in 1894, Minnie worked with the YWCA and served on its board of directors for many years, work carried on by her daughter-in-law Louise Munson.

Like her mother-in-law, Minnie was an early member of the Clio Club. In 1910, Minnie gave a talk called "Jane Addams and Settlement Work."

Cyrus and Minnie's cottage in Eagles Mere is two and a half stories, with a two-story bell tower. An eyebrow dormer, reminiscent of H. H. Richardson's work, is centered in the roof between the cross gables and two stone chimneys. It remained in the family until Louise Munson's death and was the site of many grand parties. It is for sale today.

In the early 1900s Cyrus and Minnie built a home called Bungalow at 860 Vallamont Drive, on the north side of Vallamont at the head of First Avenue. The shingled cottage was designed by noted Philadelphia architect Charles Barton Keen and was featured in the March 1909 issue of *Carpentry and Building*. The home, now with many additions and enlargements, is also for sale.

While on a tour of the "Orient," Cyrus contracted pneumonia; he died in Beijing, China, in 1922. Minnie died 9 years later. Both are buried in a large mausoleum in Wildwood Cemetery.

Look for the colorful story of Cyrus and Josephine's oldest son, Edgar, and his wife, Ellen Louise (Franchot) Munson, in next month's Lycoming County Women column.

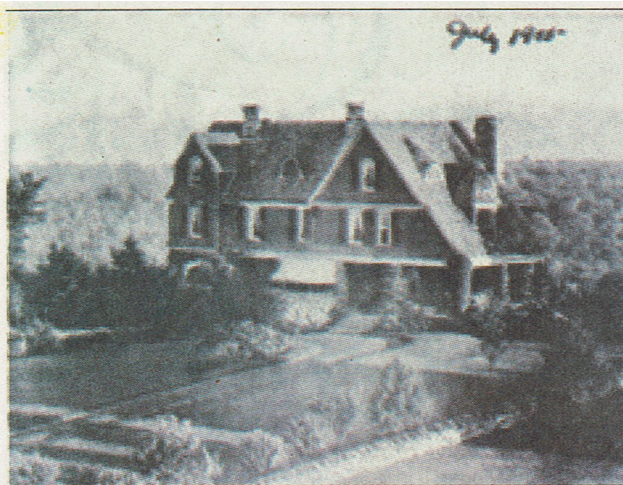


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A postcard from the collection of the Eagles Mere Museum shows Wyno, the Eagles Mere home of the Munson family.