

# Friday Funny: “Says She’s a Widow Lady”



1914 G.A.R. Parade in Detroit, Michigan, via Wikipedia. Public domain- Library of Congress.

[Helbling Family, Springsteen Family](#) *(Click for Family Tree)*

Earlier this week we looked at the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) and how it was a large fraternal organization with political clout. A number of our ancestors were GAR members, such as Abram F. Springsteen and Samuel T. Beerbower. (Both would be some-number-of-great uncles in Anna May (Beerbower) Helbling’s line, the number depending on your generations from Anna May.)

An encampment of the GAR was a great time for camaraderie amongst the old Civil War veterans. It was also an opportunity for a sweet but enterprising “widow lady” searching for a little camaraderie of her own.

A headline of “SAYS SHE’S A WIDOW LADY, And Wants a Husband Who Is In High Social Standing” was found in the Elkhart Daily Review, Elkhart, Indiana on 31 August 1899 on the front page. The committee in charge of the September 1899 GAR encampment in Philadelphia received a letter from a 34-year old woman from Marion, Indiana, asking them to give her letter to a widower “high in social standing.” She states that she will be in attendance at the encampment, “...and it would be so lonely for not to know any one there.”

She was pretty specific in her needs [transcribed as written]:

"I would like a jeantleman 38 or 40. He knead not fear me. I am a dressmaker here."

"Please let it be some who can show me over the city and enjoy myself."

"I want to have a husband to take me to Chicago next year."

This was one serious lady! But smart too- there would be a lot of "jeantleman" at the encampment from all over the country, so it would be a big pond to fish in, as they say. They would be like-minded men, too- Northern sympathies, patriotic, and committed to the work and social aspects of the GAR.

Her letter was taken seriously, as the committee knew there would probably be some widowers at the encampment who would be pleased to find a spouse there too. The GAR was a family-based organization, so grown children would sometimes be there as well as the veterans themselves. This was a good thing for the 'widow lady,' since it was 34 years since the close of the Civil War- the vets attending would be at least 50 or more. To find her a 38-40 year old husband, it would have to be the son of a veteran- not even our youngest drummer boy, Abram F. Springsteen, would fit her requirements.

The 'widow lady' was in luck. The committee replied to her letter with the address of "the Texas farmer who says he has two sons he wants to marry off here..."

We don't know what the outcome was, and can't really research it since we do not have the name of the lady. This was, however, a very determined lady, and people married more for economic reasons back then than for love ("you can learn to love him/her").

The GAR Encampment Committee was hoping for a public wedding to add to the festivities, and my guess is that it probably

happened. I suppose we need to add “matchmaking” to the list of missions of the GAR.

### **Notes, Sources, and References:**

1. Military Monday: Abram F. Springsteen and the G.A.R.  
<http://heritageramblings.net/2016/02/01/military-monday-...en-and-the-g-a-r/>
2. “Says She’s a Widow lady” in the 31 August 1899 *Elkhart Daily Review*, Elkhart, Indiana, p1, via GenealogyBank.com.

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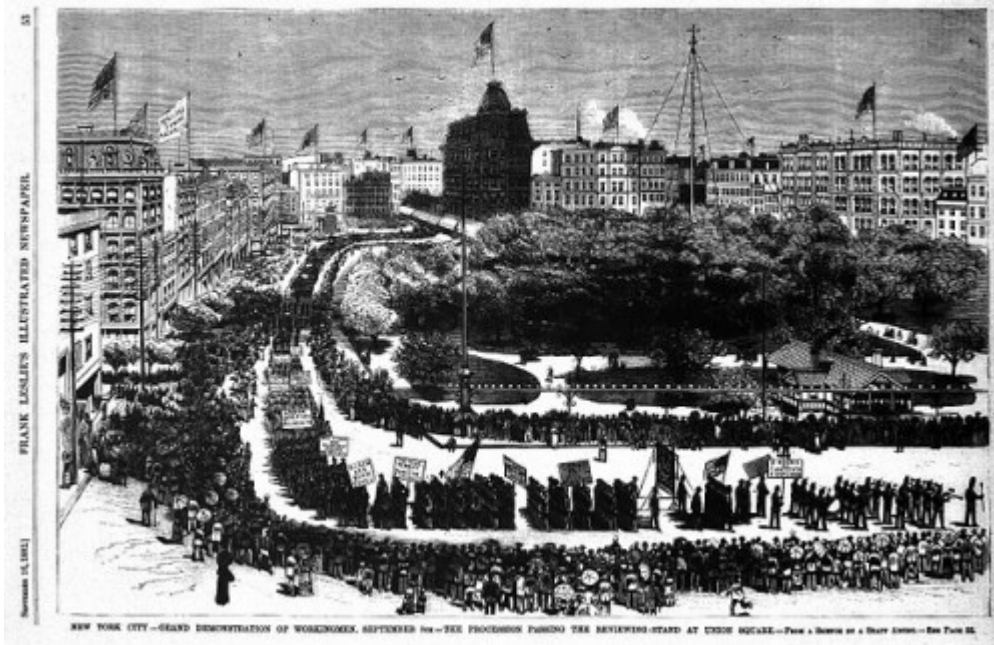
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# Labor Day: Celebrating the Labors of Our Ancestors



*First Labor Day Parade in the US, 5 Sep 1882 in New York City. Via Wikimedia. (Click to enlarge.)*

Labor Day officially became a federal holiday in the United States in 1894. “The Gilded Age” included the rise of big business, like the railroads and oil companies, but laborers fought- sometimes literally- for their rights in the workplace. Grover Cleveland signed the law to honor the work and contributions, both economic and for society, of the American laborer. Celebrated on the first Monday in September, ironically the holiday was a concession to appease the American worker after the government tried to break up a railroad strike but failed.

The Labor Day weekend is a good time to think about our ancestors and the work they did to help move our country and their own family forward.

Jefferson Springsteen was a mail carrier through the wilds of

early Indiana, traveling for miles on horseback through spring freshets (full or flooding streams from snow melt), forest, and Indian villages. Samuel T. Beerbower, who would be a some-number-great uncle depending on your generation, was the Postmaster in Marion, Ohio, for many years. "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds."



*Edward B. Payne, Pastor, circa 1874. Image courtesy of Second Congregational Church, Wakeman, Ohio.*

Bad weather, gloom of night, ocean crossings in the mid 1800s, and the threat of disease or injury did not stay our minister, deacon, and missionary ancestors from their appointed rounds either- especially since they felt they were appointed by a higher power. We have quite a number of very spiritual men in the family. Henry Horn became a Methodist circuit rider after coming to America as a Hessian soldier, being captured by

George Washington's troops in Trenton, NJ, then taking an Oath of Allegiance to the United States, and serving in the Revolutionary Army. The family migrated from Virginia to the wilds of western Pennsylvania sometime between 1782 and 1786. A story is told of how he was riding home from a church meeting in the snow. The drifts piled up to the body of the horse, and they could barely proceed on, but Henry did, and was able to preach another day. He founded a church Pleasantville, Bedford Co., Pennsylvania that still stands, and has a congregation, even today. Edward B. Payne and his father, Joseph H. Payne, Kingsley A. Burnell and his brother Thomas Scott Burnell were all ministers, some with formal schooling, some without. Edward B. Payne gave up a lucrative pastorate because he thought the church members were wealthy and educated enough that they did not need him. He moved to a poor church in an industrial town, where he was needed much more, however, he may have acquired his tuberculosis there. He also risked his life, and that of his family, by sheltering a woman from the domestic violence of her husband, and he testified on her behalf.

Abraham Green was one of the best tailors in St. Louis, Missouri in the early 1900s, and many in the Broida family, such as John Broida and his son Phillip Broida, plus Phillip's daughter Gertrude Broida Cooper, worked in the fine clothing industry.

Edgar Springsteen worked for the railroad, and was often gone from the family. Eleazer John "E.J." Beerbower worked for the railroads making upholstered cars- he had been a buggy finisher previously, both highly skilled jobs.



*Sheet music cover for "Bless Your Ever Loving Little Heart," from "The Slim Princess." (Click to enlarge.)*

The theater called a number of our collateral kin (not direct lines, but siblings to one of our ancestors): Max Broida was in vaudeville, and known in films as "Buster Brodie." Elsie Janis, born Elsie Beerbower, was a comedienne, singer, child star in vaudeville, "Sweetheart of the A.E.F" as she entertained the troops overseas in World War I, and then she went on to write for films. Max Broida also did a stint in the circus, as did Jefferson Springsteen, who ran away from home as "a very small boy" to join the circus (per his obituary).

Collateral Lee family from Irthlingborough, England, included shoemakers, as that was the specialty of the town. They brought those skills to Illinois, and some of those tools have been handed down in the family- strange, unknown tools in an inherited tool chest turned out to be over 100 years old!

Will McMurray and his wife Lynette Payne McMurray owned a grocery store in Newton, Iowa. Ella V. Daniels Roberts sold eggs from her chickens, the butter she made from the cows she milked, and her delicious pies at the McMurray store. Franz Xavier Helbling and some of his brothers and sons were butchers in Lawrenceville, Pennsylvania, near Pittsburgh, and had their own stores.

Some of our ancestors kept hotels or taverns. Joseph Parsons (a Burnell ancestor) was issued a license to operate an 'ordinary' or "house of entertainment" in 1661 in Massachusetts, and Samuel Lenton Lee was listed as "Keeps hotel" and later as a saloon keeper in US Federal censuses. Jefferson Springsteen had a restaurant at the famous Fulton Market in Brooklyn, NY in the late 1840s.



*From left: Edgar B. Helbling, (Anna) "May" Helbling, Vi Helbling, and Gerard William Helbling, on Flag Day 1914. Note 'Undertaker' sign- yes, it was all done in his home. (Click to enlarge.)*

Many of our family had multiple jobs. William Gerard Helbling (AKA Gerard William Helbling or "G.W.") listed himself as working for a theater company, was an artist, then an undertaker, and finally a sign painter. George H. Alexander was artistic as well- he created paintings but also worked as a lighting designer to pay the bills.

Sometimes health problems forced a job change. Edward B. Payne was a Union soldier, librarian, and then a pastor until he was about 44 when his respiratory problems from tuberculosis forced him to resign the pulpit. For the rest of his life he did a little preaching, lecturing, and writing. He also became an editor for a number of publications including, "The Overland Monthly," where he handed money over from his own pocket (per family story) to pay the young writer Jack London for his first published story. Edward B. Payne even founded a Utopian colony called Altruria in California! He and his



second wife, Ninetta Wiley Eames Payne, later owned and conducted adult 'summer camps' that were intellectual as well as healthy physically while camping in the wild and wonderful northern California outdoors.

Other times, health problems- those of other people- are what gave our ancestors jobs: Edward A. McMurray and his brother Herbert C. McMurray were both physicians, as was John H. O'Brien (a Helbling ancestor), who graduated from medical school in Dublin, Ireland, and came to America in 1832. He settled in western Pennsylvania, still wild and in the midst of a cholera epidemic that was also sweeping the nation; he had his work cut out for him. (It appears he did not get the same respect as other doctors because he was Irish, and this was pre-potato famine.) Lloyd Eugene "Gene" Lee and his father Samuel J. Lee owned a drugstore in St. Louis, as did Gene's brother-in-law, Claude Aiken. Edith Roberts McMurray Luck worked as a nurse since she received a degree in biology in 1923.

We have had many soldiers who have helped protect our freedom, and we will honor some of those persons on Veterans Day.

We cannot forget the farmers, but they are too numerous to name them all! Even an urban family often had a large garden to supplement purchased groceries, but those who farmed on a larger scale included George Anthony Roberts, Robert Woodson Daniel, David Huston Hemphill, Amos Thomas, etc., etc. We even have a pecan farmer in the Lee family- William Hanford Aiken, in Waltham County, Mississippi, in the 1930s-40s.



*Lynette Payne, December 1909, wearing a purple and lavender silk dress. (Click to enlarge.)*

We must also, “Remember the ladies” as Abigail Adams entreated her husband John Adams as he helped form our new nation. He/they did not, so 51% of the population-women- were not considered citizens except through their fathers or husbands. Many of these women, such as Lynette Payne McMurray, labored to get women the right to vote, equal pay, etc. (Lynette ‘walked the talk’ too- she was the first woman to ride a bicycle in Newton, Iowa! Not so easy when one thinks about the clothing involved.) Some men, like her father, Edward B. Payne, put their energy into the women’s suffrage movement as well. Many of our ancestors worked for the abolition movement too, including the Payne and Burnell families.

A woman worked beside her husband in many families, although she would get little credit for it. Who cooked the meals and

cleaned the rooms for the Lee and Parsons innkeepers? Likely their wives, who also had to keep their own home clean, laundry washed, manage a garden and often livestock- many families kept chickens even if they didn't have a farm. They raised and educated their many children too, sometimes 13 or more. Oh yes, let's not forget that women truly 'labored' to bring all those children into the world that they had made from scratch. (Building a human from just two cells makes building a barn seem somewhat less impressive, doesn't it?) Some of them even died from that labor.



*June 1942- Claude Frank Aiken and his wife Mildred Paul Aiken in their drugstore in St. Louis, Missouri.*

Working alongside one's husband could be frightening due to the dangers of the job. A noise in the Aiken family drugstore in St. Louis, Missouri in 1936 awoke Claude and Mildred Aiken since they lived in the back of the store. Claude took a gun and went into the store while Mildred called the police. Claude fired the gun high to frighten the intruder- Mildred must have been very scared if she was in the back, wondering who had fired the shot and if her husband was still alive. Thankfully he was, and the police were able to arrest the thief, who wanted to steal money to pay a lawyer to defend him in his three previous arrests for armed burglary and assault.

We applaud all of our ancestors who worked hard to support their family. Their work helped to make the US the largest economic power in the world, and a place immigrants would come to achieve their 'American dream.' We hope our generation, and the next, can labor to keep our country prosperous and strong.

## **Notes, Sources, and References:**

1. There are too many folks listed here to add references, but using the search box on the blog page can get you to any of the stories that have been posted about many of these persons. Of course, there is always more to come, so stay tuned!

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# Sentimental Sunday: Samuel T. Beerbower to Irene L. Peters



*Samuel T. Beerbower portrait, circa 1860s? Posted with kind permission of the Marion County Historical Society (MCHS), Ohio. (Click to enlarge.)*

[Beerbower Family](#) *(Click for Family Tree)*

We generally see our ancestors in two dimensions, if we are lucky enough to have an image of them. Sometimes, though, we get to see a third dimension, something deeper, sometimes down to their heart:



*Samuel T. Beerbower portrait-reverse, circa 1860s? Posted with kind permission of the Marion County Historical Society (MCHS), Ohio. (Click to enlarge.)*

***“Yours faithful until death***

***– Sam”***

Such romantic words... What a gift to know that Sam could express himself in such a way, and that he loved Irene enough to put those words on the back of his portrait!

Perhaps this was a portrait Sam gave to Irene before he left for the war on 2 Oct 1861 at age 18?

Or was it given during their courtship? Sam was born in Fairfield County in 1842, but his family moved to Marion when

he was just over a year old. Irene was born in Marion in 1846, so it was likely that they knew each other growing up. Were they 'sweet' on each other during their school years? Had they courted before he left for the war? Or did they fall in love after Sam returned from the war, a man changed physically as well as mentally?

Or was this a gift from around the time of their wedding, on 13 Jan 1867?

We won't know the occasion unless letters or a diary are found, but it is fun to imagine what their lives may have been like.

Identifying when N. Green, the photographer, had a studio on Main St. in Marion, Ohio may help us pinpoint the date. (No luck so far, though found another photo identified as the 1860s with N. Green the photographer. So we are in the right decade.)

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### **Notes, Sources, and References:**

1) Samuel T. Beerbower portrait, circa 1860s? Posted with kind permission of the Marion County Historical Society (MCHS), Ohio for non-profit use only. Found in the Samuel T. Beerbower bible held by MCHS.

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## **Wedding Wednesday: Samuel T. Beerbower and Irene L. Peters**





*Marriage Certificate of Samuel Beerbower and Irene Peters, 18 Jan 1867, Bucyrus, Ohio. Posted with kind permission of the Marion County Historical Society. (Click to enlarge.)*

[Beerbower Family](#) *(Click for Family Tree)*

Samuel Taylor Beerbower (1842-1902) was the son of Eleazer John Beerbower and Matilda Louise McKelvey. His bride, Irene Lewella Peters (1846-1924) was the daughter of Nathan Peters and his second wife, Mary Cady Russell.



*Marriage record for Samuel T. Beerbower and Irene L. Peters, married January 18th, 1867, in the Samuel T. Beerbower Family Bible. Posted with kind permission of the Marion County Historical Society (MCHS), Marion, Ohio. (Click to enlarge.)*

Both Samuel and Irene were Marion natives, so it is curious that they were married in Bucyrus, Ohio. Bucyrus is a bit less than 20 miles north of Marion, but is in another county (Crawford), and the county seat. We are not aware of any family living in Bucyrus. Maybe they could get a license there more quickly, or they eloped?

### **Notes, Sources, and References:**

1) Marriage certificate and Samuel T. Beerbower bible posted with the kind permission of the Marion County Historical Society (MCHS), Marion, Ohio.

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## Amanuensis Monday: Samuel T. Beerbower Obituary Transcription

**A PROMINENT  
CITIZEN DEAD**

**Samuel T. Beerbower Dies Early This  
Morning**

**AFTER AN ILLNESS OF  
ABOUT EIGHT MONTHS**

Samuel T. Beerbower, 67, died early this morning after an illness of about eight months.

Mr. Beerbower was born in Franklin, Ohio, on October 12, 1834. He was educated in the common schools of his native town and attended the Ohio Wesleyan University at Delaware, Ohio, where he received a bachelor's degree in 1856. He was employed by the Ohio State Government for several years and was a member of the Ohio State Bar Association.

Mr. Beerbower was married to Mrs. Mary Beerbower, nee Wilson, who survives. He is survived by three children: Samuel T. Beerbower, Jr., of Columbus, Ohio; and two daughters, Mrs. Mary Beerbower, nee Wilson, of Columbus, Ohio, and Mrs. Mary Beerbower, nee Wilson, of Columbus, Ohio.

Funeral services will be held at 10 o'clock tomorrow morning at the residence of Mrs. Mary Beerbower, nee Wilson, 1212 North High Street, Columbus, Ohio.



**SAMUEL T. BEERBOWER.**

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Obituary of Samuel Taylor BEERBOWER, *Marion Daily Star* [Marion, OH], 12 July 1902, Vol. XXV, No. 194, Page 6. Posted with kind permission. (Click to enlarge and make more readable.)

[Beerbower Family](#) (Click for Family Tree)

An 'amanuensis' is a person who has been employed to take dictation or copy manuscripts. As family historians, that is a huge part of our work. It is especially important for items handwritten in script, as today's generation is hardly learning cursive in school; with the advent of computers, so little is written with a pen or pencil, and future generations may look at cursive writing like it is a foreign language. Handwriting is very hard to OCR (though they are working on it), so it is very important to get manuscripts transcribed; transcription will also help with Google searches to make more knowledge available to all.

While Samuel T. Beerbower's obituary is not in cursive, the digitized newspaper is very hard to read. We have looked at a couple of sources for the image and they are all challenging to read. We are still hoping to find a better copy, but for now this will have to do, and posting the transcription on the blog will allow Google and other searches to pick it up for other Beerbower descendants.

Another thing transcribing helps one to do is to check facts, dates, places, etc. Dates especially can be hard to read- for instance, the marriage year above seems to be 1847, but by cross-checking what is already known with blowing up the image as much as possible, we know the date should be 1867. Of course, obituaries, like death certificates, often have errors, as they depend on accurate recall during a time of great stress by an informant who probably was not present for most of the events.

Samuel T. Beerbower's death was 10 July 1902.

## **A PROMINENT CITIZEN DEAD**

**Samuel T. Beerbower Dies Early This  
Morning**

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**AFTER AN ILLNESS OF  
ABOUT EIGHT MONTHS**

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**Suffers an Injury to His Right Leg by  
Jumping Out of a Wagon Compli-  
cations Arise and He Never Recov-**

## **ers- Leaves a Widow, One Son and Many Friends**

Mr. Samuel T. Beerbower of east Center street died this morning at 7 o'clock after an illness extending over a period of eight months.

Mr Beerbower jumped off a wagon last October and severely injured his right leg. He was confined to his bed and, owing to his advanced age, a complication of diseases set in. He would rally at times, but just as often he suffered relapses and gradually grew weaker. His life has been despaired of for some time and the news of his death this morning did not come as a shock to his many friends.

Mr. Beerbower was born in Franklin county, November 10, 1842. He was the oldest of nine children and moved to Marion with his parents when he was but a little over a year old. His youth was spent in this city, and at the breaking out of the war, at the age of nineteen, he enlisted in company A, Sixty-Fourth Ohio Volunteer infantry. He served in the Army of the Cumberland and was in the battles of Perryville, Stone River, Chattanooga, Chickamauga and Mission Ridge. In the latter battle he was struck by a ball in the right shoulder. This wound confined him in hospitals in Chattanooga and Nashville for over three months, the wound causing paralysis

of the right arm and hand. He received an honorable discharge March 22, 1864.

In 1865, having recovered from his wound, Mr. Beerbower accepted a position with the firm of Lucas & Sefner. Later he was employed by Reed & Yake, and in 1868 he was appointed postmaster by President Grant. He served thirteen years in that capacity. He was united in marriage with Miss Irene Peters, January 13, 1867, and two children were born to the union, one of whom, Cornell, survives.

Mr. Beerbower leaves, beside his wife and son, a large number of friends to mourn his death. He was an honored and highly respected citizen and was a member of the Elks, Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias and the G. A. R. He had gone through the chairs of most, if not all, of the various lodges of which he was a member.

The funeral service will be held at the late residence of the deceased Monday afternoon at 4-o'clock. The remains will be placed in the vault.

The remains may be viewed from 2 to 4 o'clock Sunday and 10 to 12 o'clock Monday.

**Notes, Sources, and References:**

1) Obituary citation as above. Via Ancestry.com-

[http://interactive.ancestry.com/6431/news-oh-marion-mariondlystar.1898\\_06\\_11\\_0008/471018504?backurl=&ssrc=pt\\_t4049043\\_p-1645243095\\_kpidz0q3d-1645243095z0q26pgz0q3d32768z0q26pgplz0q3dpid\\_m1&backlabel=ReturnToTree&rc=1742,479,1894,521;2275,3192,2431,3221;2535,3192,2795,3221](http://interactive.ancestry.com/6431/news-oh-marion-mariondlystar.1898_06_11_0008/471018504?backurl=&ssrc=pt_t4049043_p-1645243095_kpidz0q3d-1645243095z0q26pgz0q3d32768z0q26pgplz0q3dpid_m1&backlabel=ReturnToTree&rc=1742,479,1894,521;2275,3192,2431,3221;2535,3192,2795,3221)

2) Transcribed by the author.

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