The Dream of Ida Elizabeth Marsh Munson

By Claire Prechtel-Kluskens

Ida Elizabeth Marsh Munson (1878–after 1959) was the daughter of Orlando Castle Marsh (1848–1893) and Sarah Elizabeth Lynn (1853–1936) and the wife of Horace Dwight Munson (1876–1943). Her family’s roots in Muskingum County ran deep; for example, her grandfather Lucius Patten Marsh was a Muskingum County judge for many years.

Ida’s application for membership in the National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, was approved on 2 October 1912 and her DAR National Number was 95800. Her application was based on descent from patriot James Taylor (1753–1844) of Lancaster Co., Pennsylvania, and Licking Co., Ohio. Her descent from Taylor was through her parents named above; maternal grandparents William Lynn and Mary Ellen Taylor; great-grandparents William Taylor and Sarah McDougal; and finally great-great-grandparents, James Taylor, the patriot, and Mary Ann Cully.

Ida first belonged to the DAR’s Muskingum Chapter in Zanesville, and then transferred to the Niagara Falls Chapter after she and her husband moved about 1918 to Niagara Falls, New York, where Horace was employed in a managerial position at Mathieson Alkali Works, Inc.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Ida pursued a dream. As a DAR member she could file supplemental applications to prove descent from additional patriot ancestors. She wanted to do just that. Ida learned that she descended from patriot William McCullar (1759–1831) through her parents named above; her maternal grandparents Lucius Patten Marsh (1823–1893) and Mary Jane Blake (1827–1902); and great-grandparents William Ward Blake [Jr.] (1789–1850) and Nancy McCullar (1791–after 1850), the oldest known daughter of the patriot. But Ida needed proof of Nancy’s parentage.

Ida began her quest with information she or other immediate family members knew. Then she did what any good genealogist does—she wrote letters to obtain records and submitted queries to genealogical magazines. Ida submitted several queries to the DAR Magazine that were published in 1923, 1926, 1931, and 1932. Decades later these queries are still valuable clues for today’s researchers even though they contain some factual errors. (DAR Magazine 57:352 (1923); 60:507 (1926); 65: 508 (1931); and 66: 309 (May 1932)). Unfortunately, she probably received no answers to her queries, since there no DAR members descended from William McCullar.

When Ida did her research in the 1930s, she had to write to the federal government agencies that held the original records she needed. (These records are now in the custody of the National Archives, Washington, D.C.) Ida wrote to the Veterans Administration on 6 March 1931, 14 October 1931, 28 January 1936, and 9 May 1939, seeking information about William and his family. William’s Revolutionary War pension file, which includes records and papers submitted by his widow Chloe in support of her widow’s pension, contains a lot of genealogically useful information, including the date and place of William’s marriage to Chloe Bullard, and the names of three daughters, Thirza, Sabra, and Polly, who were 26, 23, and 19 years old, respectively on 28 June 1820. Unfortunately for Ida, however, the pension file did not mention her daughter Nancy, because she was already married and therefore not dependent upon her father for support.

Ida’s 1936 and 1939 letters inquired about pension payments made to the widow Chloe McCullar. The Veterans Administration advised her to contact the General Accounting Office (GAO), which held the payment records at that time. Although Ida’s letter to the GAO has not survived, there is evidence that a GAO employee, Mrs. Hewson, did examine Chloe McCullar’s final pension payment record on approximately 7 August 1939. What information did the final payment record provide? On 4 September 1845, Chloe Bullard executed an affidavit affirming her identity as a Revolutionary War widow pensioner that was witnessed by W. W. Blake and Nancy Blake, whose relationship to her was not stated. At the same time, Chloe also executed a power of attorney authorizing James W. Ward of Cincinnati to collect her pension on her behalf from the pension agent in Cincinnati. (At that time, the federal government did not mail pension checks; the money had to be picked up in person either by the pensioner or by someone authorized to do so.) James W. Ward was the husband of Chloe’s
recently deceased granddaughter, Roxana Wyman Blake, but of course that relationship was not stated in the power of attorney. The widow Chloe McCullar did not apply for her next semi-annual pension payment in March 1846, so we may reasonably conclude that she died sometime between 4 September 1845 and 4 March 1846. No gravestone has been found. Although Chloe’s surviving heirs could have applied for pension moneys owed to her for the period from 4 September 1845 to the date of her death, they did not do so.

Ida Marsh Munson never realized her dream, but it was partially fulfilled several decades later when Claire Prechtel Kluskens (DAR National Number 831171) became the first DAR member to prove descent from William McCullar with her lineage through his daughter Sabra McCullar Hayford.

No record specifically naming Nancy as a daughter of William McCullar has yet been found, but establishing her identity as his daughter is possible weighing all available evidence. I am indebted to Ida Elizabeth Marsh Munson because her published DAR Magazine queries gave me clues that helped me find records relating to Nancy McCullar Blake and her husband, children, and grandchildren.

For further reading about this family:
