

One of my favorite things to share in this column are items which set the mood and help visualize what is being described. Because of the writing and the descriptions, I have included the following report of a wedding exactly as it was written in the May 17, 1890 issue of the Monroe SUN. Notice the long sentences and the long first paragraph.

“The long-looked for and much-talked of marriage at midnight, which was the all-absorbing sensation of the day in feminine social circles, partly on account of having the nuptials in public at ‘midnight’s witching hour,’ and partly on account of the prominence of the ‘high-contracting parties’ in Monroe best society, has been happily and auspiciously consummated and proved a most gratifying success in every respect and will long be remembered by the hosts present as the most recherché marriage event ever witnessed in this city. Promptly at the set time set, 11:30 p.m., the massive church doors of the M. E. Church edifice, swung back on their hinges to admit the vast throng of expectant spectators which had besieged the doors for half an hour, and, as if by magic the vast auditorium, with the exception of a few seats in the body of the church reserved for the attendants, was filled to its fullest seating capacity, the feminine element largely predominating, however, showing how dear to the susceptible feminine bosom is an event of this kind even at the unromantic hour of midnight. All shades of Monroe society were represented in this assemblage - from the very *creme de la creme* down to the girl who ‘works out,’ all were there ‘dressed in their Sunday best’ (excuse us) and a very orderly, quiet and good-natured crowd it was, too. The quietness and celerity with which the guests were seated reflects great credit upon the ushers, Messrs Ben Treat, Zera Monroe, Bert Campbell, Fred Bolender, Will Young and Geo. Moreau. Prof. Metcalf favored the assemblage with a few pieces on the organ which filled the large room with a flood of melody that entertained the people and drowned a subdued murmur of many voices. It lacked a minute or two of twelve when Mrs. Dr. Without, Mrs. Ford and Miss Annie Benson, sisters of the bride, and Misses May Day, Jessie Weirich, Edith Ball, and Lizzie Thorp, Maids of Honor, quietly entered the church and took their seats nearest the altar. Precisely at 12 the grand Mendelssohn’s grand composition trembled upon the air of the bridal party took its position about the altar, the bride and groom immediately under a magnificent floral, bell and in his usually pleasant and most impressive way Rev. M. Benson performed his part and the twain were quickly made one, Rev. Mr. Balch and Rev. F. H. Benson, brother of the bride, alternately invoking God’s blessing upon the happy couple.

“The bride wore a rich and tasty attire of albatross cloth and Duchesse point lace with train, diamonds, and carried a beautiful bouquet of roses. The groom was becomingly dressed in the conventional suit proper to the occasion.

“The bridal party and invited guests repaired to the parsonage at the conclusion of the ceremony where, after a round of congratulations showered on the happy pair, a most sumptuous wedding breakfast was served, and with social chit-chat and gaiety the time of departure, 4 o’clock, arrived all took quickly, and the bridal party took the train for the future home of the newly married couple, carrying with them the best wishes of all who know them.

“Mr. Parry is a publisher from Minneapolis, Minn., and is the eldest son of the Hon. W. T. Parry of Portage, Wis., now a member of the State Board of Supervision. He is a genial young man and won many friends during his brief stay here, and it is enough to say that Miss Benson’s unlimited number of friends could have desired for no more worthy partner for life than he who has won one of Monroe’s fairest daughters.

“Presents costly and handsome were bestowed in profusion, the bride’s Baraboo friends sending some elegant gifts.

“The wedding breakfast menu was the finest ever seen here and the entire appointments of the dining room, together with the floral decorations displayed most excellent taste. The table was heavily laden with roses in delicate shades. The sideboard was draped with vines through which peeped violets, tulips and various colored geraniums. Miss Goddard, as hostess of the dining room, is due the credit for the appearance of the room. The menu was served in four courses as follows: Fruits; coffee, chocholets [sic], salads, olives, spiced raisins, cheese crackers; ice cream and cake.

“Among the most noticeable costumes, we have space for only a few, Miss Flossie Wilttrout, a handsome Miss of 6 years, as bridesmaid was dressed in white India mull elaborately trimmed with Moire ribbon, smilax and pink rose buds. Mrs. Benson, mother of the bride, was dressed in black lace and satin Rhadamanthus and wore a large corsage bouquet of Catherine Mermit roses. Mrs. Dr. Without, one of the bride’s sisters, was dressed in black Chantilly lace and Moire silk trimmed with Duchesse Point

ornaments, diamonds. Mrs. Chas. Ford, another one of the sisters, wore cream lace and carried pink carnations, ornaments, pearls. Miss Annie Benson, the bride's youngest sister, wore black Sarah silk with a large corsage bouquet of white carnations."

I noticed that the bride's first name was never given nor was anything mentioned about her parentage, so I went to the Court House to find out more. Lulu Nina Benson was born in Bothwell, Ontario, Canada to Michael C. and Sibbel (Hamilton) Benson. The wedding was held on May 14 witnessed by C. H. J. Bliss (who was never mentioned in the article) and Annie A. Benson. I believe that Lulu's father was the Rev. Benson who was appointed as the minister of the church in October 1888 after the previous pastor had passed away; that would explain why the reception was held at the parsonage.

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Photo caption: This photo, from the collection of Sharon and the late Dr. David Riese, shows the interior of the M. E. Church in June of 1896. The church might have looked similar to this at the time of the Parry wedding in 1890 unless it was redecorated in the interim.

William Parry born Portage publisher in Minneapolis William T and Margaret Williams  
Lulu Nina Benson born Bothwell, Ontario CAN Michael C and Sibbel Hamilton  
May 14, 1890  
Witnesses: C H J Bliss and Annie A Benson  
M Benson pronounced marriage