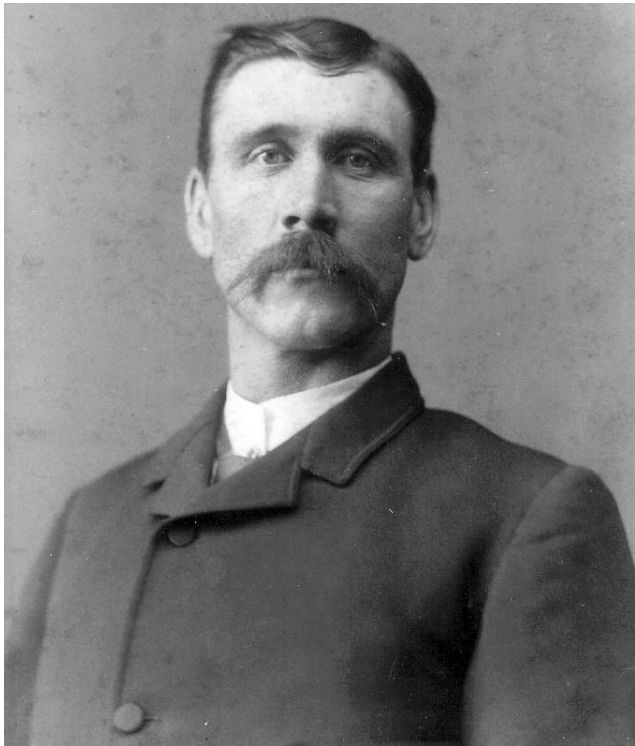




Joe and Carrie Wasson

Joe Wasson, the youngest surviving son of John and Jemima Wasson, married Carrie Sawyer, the daughter of Samuel and Ellen Sawyer, in 1879. They settled into what started as routine married life, as Joe took over his parents' farm, and he and Carrie started their family. But they had divorced before their children were grown, and each would go through a second divorce. We are direct descendants of Joe and Carrie Wasson through their son Duncan.



Joseph "Joe" Wasson (left) and Carrie Sawyer Wasson (right)

Joseph Wasson married Carrie Sawyer in 1879. We are direct descendants of Joe and Carrie Wasson.

Joe Wasson



Joe Wasson, 1875

- For more about Joe Wasson's family and his early years, see [John and Jemima Wasson in Iowa](#).

Carrie Sawyer

Carrie Sawyer was born to Samuel and Ellen Sawyer perhaps in about June 1861, in Fort Edward, New York. After the Civil War, she and her family moved to Madison Township in Jones County, Iowa, where as many as four of her father Samuel's siblings were living. For a time, their Madison Township property was next to that of her uncle Gilbert Sawyer and his family.

Her family moved to Olin, Hale Township, Jones County by the start of 1879.

- For more about Carrie Sawyer's family and her early years, see [Samuel and Ellen Sawyer](#).

Marriage

Joe Wasson married Carrie Sawyer on February 5, 1879 at the home of her parents, Samuel and Ellen Sawyer, in Olin, Iowa.

**In Olin, Jones county, Iowa, at the residence of
Mr S. Sawyer, Feb. 5th. 1879, by Rev. E. Holland,
Mr. Joseph Wasson, of Madison township, to Miss
Carrie E. Sawyer, of Hale township, Jones Co.**

The Anamosa Eureka, February 13, 1879, reported the marriage between Joe Wasson and Carrie Sawyer.



Joe Wasson and Carrie Sawyer's wedding photo, 1879

Children

Joe and Carrie Wasson had three children, including the following:

- Ellen "Ella" Jemima Wasson, born April 30, 1880, in Madison Township, Jones County, Iowa
- Jessie Gertrude Wasson, born May 27, 1882, in Madison Township, Jones County, Iowa
- Duncan James Wasson, born April 19, 1885, in Madison Township, Jones County, Iowa

We are direct descendants of Joe and Carrie's son Duncan.

Research Notes

Daughter Ella was named after her grandmothers Ellen McNeil and Jemima Wasson. Son Duncan was named after Carrie's uncle Duncan, who had been killed in the Civil War following the capture of Fort Fisher in January 1865, and Joe's brother James, who died the previous year. "Jessie" is a common nickname for "Jeannette". Because siblings Joe Wasson and Jeannette Wasson Sim remained close throughout their lives, I would not be surprised to learn that Jessie's first name really was Jeanette or Jeannette. However, it only appears as "Jessie" or "Jesse" on all of the relevant documents that I have found so far. I have not found any earlier relatives whose name could have inspired the choice of Gertrude as Jessie's middle name. However, Carrie apparently had a sibling who had died very young, name and gender unknown. If that sibling were a girl named Gertrude, that would explain the source for Jessie's middle name.

Married Life

After they married, Carrie moved onto the John Wasson Farm, where Joe was raised.



Joe and Carrie Wasson

It was at about this time that John Wasson retired from farming, and Joe began renting the farm from his parents.

As part of this arrangement, a second residence was built on the farm close to the road. This residence became John and Jemima's retirement home, whereas Joe, Carrie and eventually their children lived in the original farm house. Joe's lease did not include the retirement residence, and it excluded a small amount of land for John and Jemima's garden and orchard.

John died at his retirement residence in 1888. Jemima remained there until 1897 when she was becoming too infirm to live alone. She ultimately moved in with Joe and Carrie.

Joe's lease arrangement with his parents continued until 1906 when the farm was sold after Jemima died.

- For more about the farm, see [The John Wasson Farm, Madison Township, Jones County, Iowa.](#)

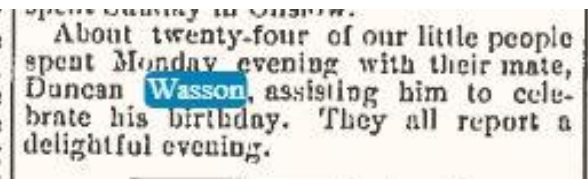
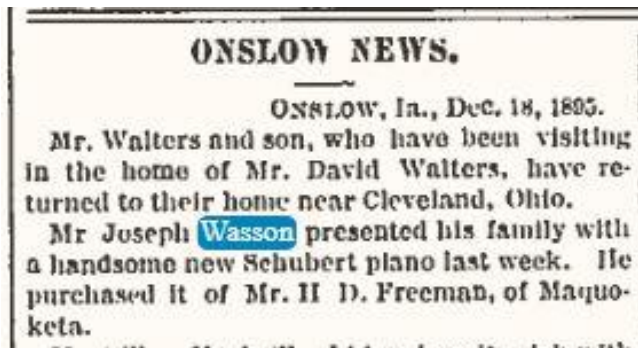
The online Jones County newspapers had a number of brief articles that mentioned Joe, Carrie and their children. Family visits, church events, social events, birthday parties, farm incidents, injuries, travel and livestock trades were reported, not unlike what was reported for many people in the area.

The following are stories of typical of Wasson family news during this time:

the teachers.
A pleasant social event took place at Joseph Wasson's residence near town last Saturday evening. It being the occasion of Miss Ella Wasson's 17th birthday, a company of her young friends were invited, unknown to her, to celebrate the happy occasion. Miss Ella was completely surprised, being at a neighbor's and sent for after the company had gathered. Arriving at home she found the lively party in full possession. The evening was spent very pleasantly in games and music, both vocal and instrumental. A male quartette, composed of John Paul, Arthur Noyes, Roy Russell and George Walker, rendered several pieces which were highly enjoyed by the entire company. A delicious repast was served during the evening, after which Miss Ella was presented with a beautiful photograph case as a remembrance from her young friends. After wishing their young hostess many happy returns of the day, the merry company departed, expressing themselves delighted with the pleasant evening which they had spent. The guests present were Misses Mae DeWitt, Marie Sutton, Lou Noyes, Bertha Wassoner, Annette Klma, Pearl Welch, Minnie Wasson and Daisy Krouse. Messrs. John Paul, Arthur Noyes, George Walker, Roy Russell, Frank Johnston, Lester Russell, Lawrence Young, George Lyons and Will Richardson.
Mrs. S. W. Underwood was an Anamosa vis.

The ice cream social given by Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Wasson, at their residence west of town, Tuesday evening, for the benefit of the Presbyterian church was a very pleasant affair and very enjoyable to the many who attended. The attendance was largely from the young people's circle and through them all had a means provided for a social occasion. Of the many present none seemed to enjoy the evening in all its fullness more than Grandma Wasson. The cream was delicious and aided as an incentive to the fine musical performances which afterwards followed.
The Fourth League and Christian Endeavor

Ella's 17th birthday party, Anamosa Eureka, April 8, 1897 (left); Joe and Carrie host an ice cream social to benefit their church, Anamosa Eureka, August 20, 1896 (right)

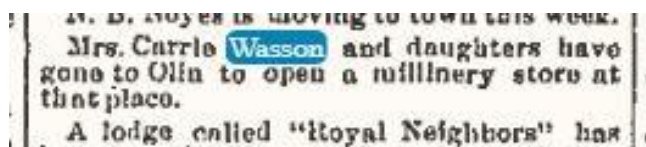


Joe buys a piano, Anamosa Eureka, December 19, 1895 (left); Duncan's 12th birthday party, Anamosa Eureka, April 22, 1897 (right)

Separation and Divorce

After Joe's mother Jemima reached her 80s, she was having more difficulties living on her own in the separate residence on the farm. She first moved in with her daughter Mary Gridley, but they did not get along. So, after a few months, Jemima moved back to the John Wasson Farm, this time moving in with Joe and Carrie in January 1897.

I don't know whether that had anything to do with Joe and Carrie's separation that took place months later when Carrie left for nearby Olin in July 1897 and opened a millinery there (Carrie's mother Ellen was living there at the time), but I note it because of the timing and the reported difficulties between Jemima and her daughter when Jemima moved in with the Gridleys.



Carrie leaves for Olin and opens a millinery store, Wyoming Journal, July 1, 1897

Carrie moved her household goods to Stanwood, Cedar County, Iowa in April 1898. Again, that seemed to be an odd destination, given that both her mother and the millinery store were in Olin. However, the millinery store was never mentioned in the news again, and her mother soon moved to Stanwood. In Stanwood, Carrie bought a house and took in some boarders.



Carrie moves to Stanwood, Anamosa Eureka, April 28, 1898

Daughter Ella moved to Stanwood with her mother. Son Duncan, who had just turned 13 years old, remained with his father and grandmother. Daughter Jessie, who was still in school, stayed with her father until the end of the following (1898-99) school year, when she graduated and moved to Stanwood to live with her mother.

By May 1898. Carrie had filed for a divorce from Joe. However, the case was dismissed in September 1898 for want of prosecution. A judgement was made against Carrie for costs.

Then Joe filed for a divorce in 1899. The divorce was granted in October 1899.

\$368.56.
Joseph Wasson vs. Carrie Wasson.
Trial to the court; decree of divorce as
prayed.
Took Kraus vs. Harry Stiff. Judge.

Joe and Carrie divorce granted, Monticello Express, October 19, 1899

By early in the new century, Joe Wasson was living on the John Wasson Farm with his mother Jemima and his son Duncan.

Carrie was living at her boarding house in Stanwood with her daughter Ella and Ella's husband Benjamin Spear, her daughter Jessie, and three boarders, William Wilkins, Daniel Wilkins and Ralph Waldo Emerson Miller.

Joe Wasson, Lydia Arnold and Leaving the Family Farm

On July 1, 1903, Joe Wasson married Lydia Arnold, the twice-divorced daughter of Carrie Wasson's cousin Cecelia Sawyer, granddaughter of Carrie's uncle Eli Sawyer.

Lydia was born in 1865 in Jones County. She first married Adelbert Vrooman of Jones County, Iowa in 1881, when Lydia was just 16 years old. They farmed in Cherokee County, Iowa. Lydia had a son, Lee, with him in 1882, but their marriage did not last long, and Lee remained with his father after Lydia and Adelbert were divorced.

Lydia then married James William Mooney in Tipton, Iowa in 1888. They moved to the state of Wyoming, but they were separated by 1900. At some point after that, they divorced, and Lydia returned to Iowa, where she met and married Joe.

July 1-1903 1903	1 Wm. P. Parsons	2 Joseph Wasson Tipton, Iowa Farmer	3 46 White American	4 19 Iowa John Wasson Jemima Russell	5 12 Lydia L. Arnold Do Mt. Vernon, Ill.	6 10 White American	7 20 James W. Mooney Tipton, Iowa Farmer	8 21 Mrs. P. D. Parsons R. D. Parsons, Minister
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Joe Wasson and Lydia Arnold were married on July 1, 1903 in Tipton, Iowa. The record identifies this as Lydia's second marriage when in fact it was her third.

WASSON-ARNOLD.

On July 1st, 1903, at Tipton, Iowa, occurred the marriage of Joseph Wasson of Madison township, this county, to Miss Lydia Arnold, oldest daughter of Riley Arnold formerly of Olin, now a resident of Mt. Vernon, Illinois, Rev. R. D. Parsons officiating. The bride is well and favorably known to many people of this place and Olin, having spent most of her life in Jones county. The groom was born in this county and resided upon the farm he now occupies since childhood. After age had compelled his father to retire from active life, Joseph rented the farm and after the death of his father rented it from his mother, the late Jemima Wasson, she living in a house adjoining the farm house until age and declining years required especial care and attention when she moved into the home of her son where she was cared for until her demise about a year ago. He is one of our sturdy well-to-do farmers. The very many friends of the couple will wish them a long and prosperous matrimonial journey.

Joe Wasson marries Lydia Arnold, Wyoming Journal, July 9, 1903

Lydia moved onto the John Wasson Farm after she and Joe were married. When the John Wasson Farm was sold as part of settling Jemima Wasson's estate in 1906, Joe and Lydia moved onto the Sim-Wasson Farm that Joe started renting from his sister Jeannette.

Local news articles suggested that Joe and Lydia shared a typical married life through 1906, but by January 1907 Lydia had moved out. She filed for a divorce, which was granted in March 1907. As she had after her first two divorces, Lydia returned to using her maiden name.

It does not appear that Lydia Arnold married for a fourth time. She lived with her parents until their deaths. She died in 1944. Her obituary made no mention of any of her three marriages or of her son, Lee, who died in 1929 due to accidental ammonia poisoning. Joe's own obituaries made no reference to his marriage to Lydia.



Lydia Arnold was buried in Wyoming Cemetery, Wyoming, Iowa.

Joe Wasson and Edna Hanna

After Joe and Lydia divorced, he and his son Duncan continued to live on the Sim-Wasson Farm (which Duncan owned by 1910) until 1912, when they retired from farming, bought 14 ½ acres of town properties from Jeannette Sim, and moved into town. Joe and Duncan focused on real estate and livestock trading at this time, while Duncan rented out the Sim-Wasson Farm. Joe was also elected to a seat on the Onslow city council in March 1912, a seat he was re-elected to in March 1916. At some point, it appears that Joe sold off his share of the Sim town properties.

Also, in March 1916, Joe Wasson and his daughter Jessie Wasson McBride, who was visiting from Canada, hosted a large surprise party in honor of Edna Hanna, a widow with three children, who was about to move from Onslow to Anamosa.

In July, Joe Wasson, his daughter Jessie and her son Hobart, Edna Hanna and her daughter Mina, and her cousin Harbison Orr set off on a trip to Excelsior Springs, Missouri. While in Missouri, on August 10, 1916, Joe married Edna.

turned from Excelsior Springs.
Word has been received here from
Excelsior Springs that Jos. Wasson
and Mrs. Edna Hanna were married
last week at Kansas City.
There were no services in the

Joe Wasson marries Edna Orr Hanna, Wyoming Journal, August 17, 1916

Edna was born in 1877 in Scotch Grove, Jones County, Iowa. She married James L. Hanna of Jones County in March 1900. They moved to South Dakota in 1907, but they returned to Jones County in 1911 to be near family when James' health was failing. James and Edna had three children, Wylma, Jemina "Mina" and James Alvan, who was born not long after his father died in 1911.

To support her family, Edna operated a restaurant for a time in Onslow, although she eventually sold her operation and moved to Anamosa.

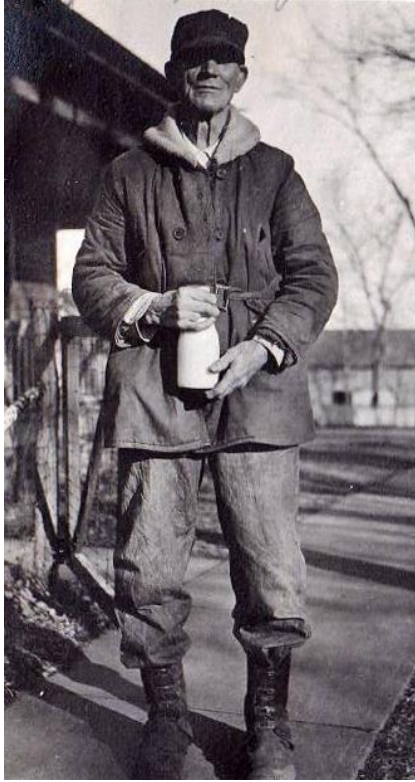


Edna's restaurant, with (from left to right) Edna, daughter Mina, son Alvan, employee Minnie Harms, and daughter Wylma, in 1914

Joe moved to Anamosa after he and Edna were married. In early 1918, Joe bought Duncan's share of the Sim town properties, including the Sim Town House that Duncan's aunt Jeannette Sim had given to Duncan shortly before her 1914 death. Duncan then moved to Anamosa, while Joe and Edna prepared the Sim Town House as their home. Joe, Edna and her children moved back to Onslow and into the Sim Town House in June 1918, and Duncan moved to Cedar Rapids. Joe and Edna would live here for the rest of Joe's life.

- For more about the Sim house, see [The Sim Town House and Properties, Onslow, Iowa.](#)

For the next several years, Joe and Edna raised her children and tended to their real estate holdings, which included some farms that Joe co-owned with Duncan, and at least one Onslow house that they rented out.



Joe Wasson in his later years

Joe's Death and Burial

After being ill for several days, Joe was taken to University Hospital in Iowa City, Iowa in July 1934. He eventually underwent surgery, and was on the road to recovery and preparing to go home when he had a heart attack and died on July 25, 1934. He was buried in the Wasson family plot in Wyoming Cemetery, Wyoming, Iowa.



Joe Wasson's marker, Wyoming Cemetery, Wyoming, Iowa

and a host of friends.

Aged Man Dies

Mr. Joseph Wasson died last Friday morning at the University hospital in Iowa City, where he had spent the last two weeks. His death was a sudden shock, as he was ready to come home when the end came. To the family it was an exceptional shock, as he had seemed much improved in health.

Mr. Joseph Wasson was born near Onslow 76 years ago, and had spent his entire life here, except two years he lived in Anamosa. He was twice married, the first time to Carrie Sawyer of Onn. To them were born three children, Mrs. Ella Spear of Canada, Mrs. Jessie Orr, who died in 1933, and one son, Duncan of Onslow. In 1916 he married Mrs. Edna Hanna, who survives with her three children, Mrs. Wilma Buckner living near Anamosa, Mrs. Mina McGovern and Alvan of Chicago. Mr. Wasson was a son of Mr. and Mrs. John Wasson, pioneer residents and natives of Scotland, and he was the last one of his family.

The funeral took place from the church, Sunday afternoon, at 2:30 o'clock. Rev. Provan, pastor of the church had charge of the service. Music was furnished by a young mans quartette composed of Mr. Robert Linsen, Mr. Dale Mayberry, Harold Overholt and Gordon Inn, with Mrs. C. R. Smith at the piano. The flowers were beautiful. Mr. Wasson will be missed by his friends and neighbors.

Among those who attended from out of town were Mrs. Mina McGovern and Alvan Hanna of Chicago, a grandson, Hobart McBride, Mr. and Mrs. Will Lamey and Mrs. Phillip Palmer, all of Cedar Rapids; Mr. B. Rhinehart of Anamosa; Mrs. Etta Tracy, her daughter Ida and granddaughter, Florence Lehr of Mt. Vernon; Mrs. Margaret Lozier of Cedar Rapids; John T. Wherry and daughter Winifred, Mr. and Mrs. August Hansen, Mrs. Nettie Wherry, Mrs. Arthur Peck and Mrs. Albert Young, all of Wyoming; Mrs. Lottie Heelan of Maquoketa; Mr. and Mrs. Will Clark and Harry Chase of Center

possibilities of increase in certain seed productions.

Flames Cause Loss At Marshall Home

Fire caused several hundred dollars damage to the E. R. Marshall home here, about 9:30 Monday morning. The blaze was caused by sparks from a laundry stove.

The flames ate through the roof and spread rapidly before the fire was discovered, and only quick and efficient work by the Wyoming fire department prevented further loss. Damage was confined to the attic, which was empty. Water caused some damage to walls on the second floor.

The loss was covered by insurance.

The fire is the second at the Marshall home within a year. The previous fire was confined to the shingles.

Missionary Society Will Hold Important Meeting

The Woman's Missionary Society of the Presbyterian church will hold their mid-summer praise meeting at the home of Mrs. Roy Bender, Wednesday afternoon, August 8. A thank offering will be taken and a picnic supper is to be served. Members of the committee in charge are Mrs. T. Broderson, Mrs. Robert Alden and Mrs. Nettie Wherry.

There will be a program at 4 o'clock, and the business meeting will be in charge of Miss Elsie Bender. Leaders are especially urged to be present, as Miss Bender will present a matter of vital importance.

Junction. The pall bearers were George Paulsen, George Sears, J. R. Ramey, Howard Willson, Loyal Smith and Kenneth Kennedy.

Burial was made in the Wyoming cemetery, in the family lot.

Joe Wasson's obituary, Wyoming Journal, August 2, 1934

Edna's Later Years

Edna rented out the Sim Town House where she and Joe had lived, but in 1938 she eventually lost it and the other Sim town properties Joe had bought from Duncan back in 1918.



Edna Orr Hanna Wasson

Edna moved in with her daughter Wylma and her family, and was living with them when she died of heart disease on March 3, 1941. She was buried with her first husband, James Hanna, in Clay Cemetery, Jones County, Iowa.



Marker for James Hanna and Edna Orr Hanna Wasson, Clay Cemetery, Jones County, Iowa

Research Notes

When Joe married Edna, her three children became his step-children and his son Duncan's step siblings. What little there was in the Jones County newspapers about this blended family suggested that the step siblings all got on well.

That appeared to change after Joe died. Duncan had to take Edna to court to recover some of his belongings worth \$46 that were in Joe's possession when Joe died. There was also a Great Depression-related tax issue on some property that Joe and Duncan had owned together that resulted in Duncan and Edna selling a Jackson Township, Jones County farm that Joe and Duncan had purchased and rented out.

I have not found anything showing interactions between Duncan and Edna and her children after that.

Ralph Miller and Carrie Wasson

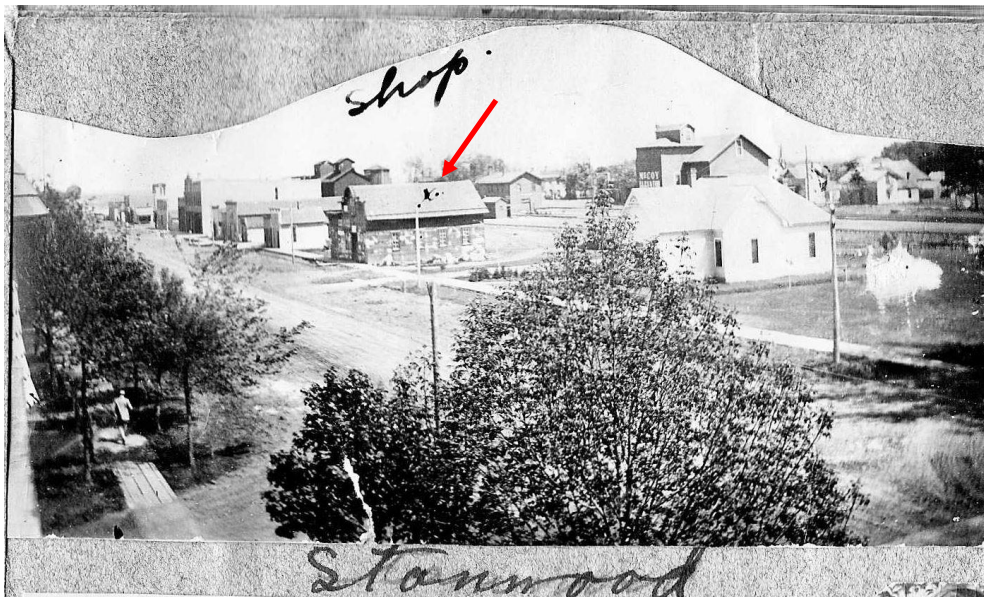
Daughter Ella married Benjamin Spear in 1900, and move to Portage La Prairie, Manitoba, Canada with him. Carrie Wasson and her mother Ellen Sawyer then moved from Stanwood to Cedar Rapids in about 1901.

As did one of Carrie's boarders, Ralph Miller.



Ralph Waldo Emerson Miller

Ralph Miller was born in Iowa in February 1868. He worked as a carpenter for his father's building business in Stanwood.



Ralph Miller's father Ezra ran his building business out of his shop on Broadway Street in Stanwood.

Ralph Miller and Carrie Sawyer Wasson were married on Christmas Day, 1901 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. They lived in Cedar Rapids immediately after they were married, but they may have moved to DeWitt, Iowa, for a time, as news articles reported that her son Duncan visited her there in both 1905 and early 1906.

1	Ellen Sawyer	Ralph Miller	1874	Clinton Co. Iowa	Carrie Wasson	1878	New York	Cedar Rapids Ia.	12-25-1901	1902
2		Cedar Rapids Ia.	1874	Clinton Co. Iowa	Carrie Sawyer	1878	New York	Cedar Rapids Ia.	12-25-1901	1902

Ralph Miller and Carrie Wasson wed in Cedar Rapids Iowa, December 25, 1901.

WASSON-MILLER.
 Married, on Christmas day at 10 o'clock in the morning, Miss Carrie Wasson and Mr. Ralph Miller. The wedding took place at the Trinity M. E. parsonage, the pastor, the Rev. N. A. Mershon, officiating. Mr. and Mrs. Miller will begin housekeeping immediately and are at home to their friends at 203 Second avenue west.

Carrie Sawyer Wasson marries Ralph Miller, Cedar Rapids Gazette, December 26, 1901

Carrie's mother Ellen moved in with Ralph and Carrie in Cedar Rapids in 1906. In 1908, Ellen suffered a stroke. She died at her daughter's Cedar Rapids home two days later.

It was about this time that Ralph's parents, Ezra and Theresa Miller, retired to Portland, Oregon. Ralph and Carrie Miller also moved to Portland, and were living there with his parents at the time of the 1910 U.S. Census.



Ralph and Carrie Sawyer Miller once lived with his parents at 1042 Cleveland Avenue in Portland, Oregon. In the early 1930s, the city of Portland changed some street names and renumbered most houses. In its new numbering scheme, the address is now 4920 NE Cleveland Avenue. © Google Street View

However, Ralph and Carrie's marriage did not last much longer. They were separated by 1911, and Ralph Miller married his third wife, Rosella V. "Nellie" Beller, on March 6, 1912 at her home in Portland. Ralph Miller would go on to marry a fourth time. He died in Portland in 1935.

Carrie Miller's Later Years

Carrie Sawyer Wasson Miller was living with her daughter Jessie and her family in Portage La Prairie, Manitoba at the time of the 1911 Canada Census, but not at the time of the 1916 Canada Census.

Information about Carrie is sparse at best between 1911 and 1930, with only a couple entries in the 1919 and 1920 Moline, Illinois City Directories that likely were her, based on the fact she was identified as the widow of Ralph Miller in the directories, even though Ralph was very much alive. However, because she did not appear in the 1920 U.S. Census under the name Carrie Miller, I was not able to verify that our Carrie was indeed living in Moline in 1920.

At the time of the 1930 U.S. Census, Carrie was once again living with her daughter Jessie and her family, although Jessie was now living in Cedar Rapids, Iowa with her second husband Harbison Orr. Again, Carrie was identified as a widow, although both of her ex-husbands were still alive and well, Joe living in Onslow, now married to his third wife, and Ralph living in Portland, now married to his fourth wife.

Carrie continued to live with Harbison and Jessie Orr through Jessie's death in 1933.

Shortly after Jessie died, Harbison Orr moved back to Onslow, Iowa. It appears that Carrie remained in the Cedar Rapids area until her death in 1940. Although it is possible that Carrie lived for a time with her grandson Hobart McBride, who also remained in Cedar Rapids after his mother died, I have found no record of that.

Research Notes

Although there are Jones County news stories reporting when her son Duncan visited her years earlier before Carrie moved to Portland, I have not turned up any such stories after that, even though Carrie was living back in Cedar Rapids by 1930, and it appears that she lived there until her 1940 death. I also noted that in an article about Jessie's funeral that ran in the Monticello Express, Jessie's surviving husband, son, father and siblings were named, but Carrie was simply identified as "her mother". These observations suggest that there was more than a little distance between Carrie and the Jones County Wassons at this point, including her son.

Because Carrie was identified as a widow in the 1930 U.S. Census, I have considered the possibility that she married a third time and indeed was a widow. That would explain why I was unable to find information that I can fully confirm is about her from 1912 to 1929. But I am skeptical of that possibility because I have not found any documentation to support that, and Carrie continued to use the surname Miller until her death instead of the surname of some third husband.

Carrie also appears in the 1939 Cedar Rapids City Directory as "Miller Carrie E (wid Ralph) r830 3d av SW". Ralph Miller indeed was dead by this time. By referring to him instead of someone else, this does suggest that Carrie did not remarry after she and Ralph divorced. The house at that address no longer stands.

The 1919 and 1920 City Directories for Moline, Illinois included a Carrie E. Miller, noting that she was the widow of Ralph Miller.

Thus, it appears that Carrie consistently presented herself as Ralph Miller's widow after their divorce, which would seem to rule out a third husband. It was also probably more socially acceptable to be a widow than a divorcée.

Carrie's Death and Burial

Carrie Sawyer Wasson Miller died December 14, 1940 in Marion, Iowa. She was buried in Linwood Cemetery, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, near her mother Ellen McNeil Sawyer. Her brother Elwin and his wife were also buried in Linwood Cemetery.



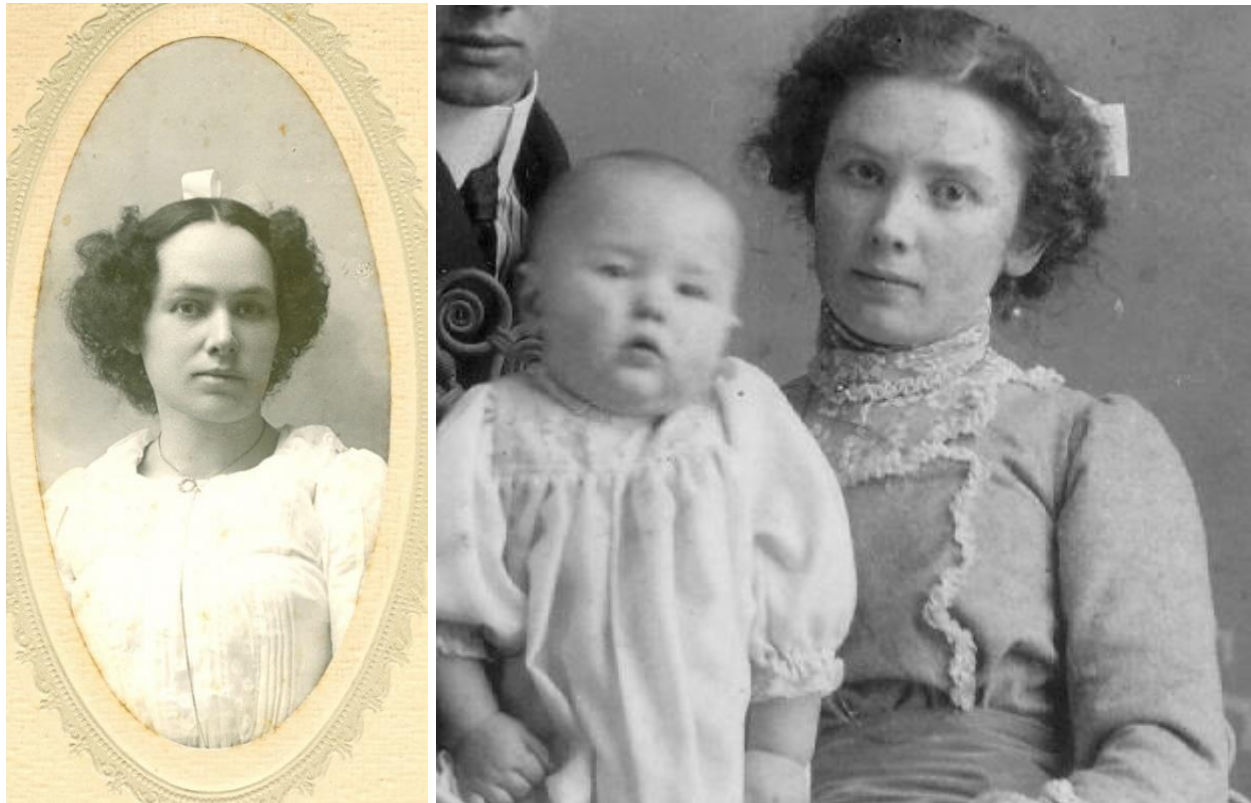
Joe and Carrie Wasson's children, Ella, Jessie and Duncan, likely taken in 1903 when Jessie got married in Cedar Rapids

Ellen “Ella” Jemima Wasson (Joe and Carrie Wasson’s daughter)

It wasn’t long after moving to Stanwood, Iowa that Ella Wasson met Benjamin Spear, a farm laborer and son of local farmers. They visited Ella’s father Joe, grandmother Jemima and brother Duncan in Jones County in December 1899, and were married in Stanwood on May 16, 1900.

1991 May 16 1900	H. Gordon	Benjamin D. Spear	white	Stanwood Ia.	11 Ella J. Wasson	12 White	13 Stanwood Ia.	14 John Spear	15 Carrie G. Sawyer	16 Caroline Meier	17 Pulow, Ia.	18 J. H. Swanson, minister	19 Stanwood Ia.	20 June 16 1900
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Benjamin Spear and Ella Wasson wed in Stanwood, Iowa, May 16, 1901.



Ella Wasson (left); Ella Wasson Spear and son Duncan Russell Spear (right)

Shortly after they were married, Benjamin and Ella moved to Portage La Prairie, Manitoba, Canada, where Benjamin was originally a merchant but became a farmer. It is not clear why they moved to Manitoba. Neither had known family ties to the Canadian province. Benjamin’s parents were immigrants who had come to the United States from England and Ireland.

At around 1907, they became farmers near Poplar Point, Manitoba in the Portage La Prairie area. At some point, they moved northwest, settling in the then-municipality of Shell River, not far from the village of Roblin, in Manitoba’s Dauphin district, but the specific year is not known.

Benjamin and Ella had four children:

- Duncan Russell Spear, born December 20, 1900, in Portage La Prairie, Manitoba
- Leslie Irving Spear, born August 6, 1906, in Portage La Prairie, Manitoba
- Bernice Spear, born about 1909, in Manitoba
- Cassie Velma Madalene Spear, born November 6, 1914, in Roblin, Manitoba

A variety of spellings for Bernice and Madalene have been used in various records.



Benjamin Spear (left); Ella Wasson Spear (center); Ella Wasson Spear and Duncan Wasson (right)

Further information about Benjamin and Ella's later years is sparse, as the Canadian records available at this time generally end in 1926.

Benjamin died in 1949, and Ella died in 1959. They were buried in Roblin District Cemetery, Roblin, Manitoba.



Benjamin and Ella Spear's marker, Roblin District Cemetery, Roblin, Manitoba

Jessie Gertrude Wasson (Joe and Carrie Wasson’s daughter)

It is likely that daughter Jessie Wasson moved to Cedar Rapids in 1901 when her mother Carrie and grandmother Ellen moved there from Stanwood. However, Jessie soon moved to Portage La Prairie, Manitoba, where her sister Ella and her husband Benjamin Spear had moved.

The 1901 Canada Census showed that one of Ella and Benjamin’s neighbors just seven households away was a William McBride. McBride, who worked at a farm school and eventually became its head farmer, was a 37-year-old widower, originally from Oakland, Ontario. Jessie likely met him while staying with her sister.

William McBride and Jessie Wasson returned to Cedar Rapids, Iowa in early 1903, where they were married on January 28.

9371	Carrie Miller	William McBride	1901	38	Ontario	Jessie Wasson	1901	30	Iowa County	Cedar Rapids, Ia.	1903	1903
27-1913		Manitoba	Can.	Can.	Robt. McBride	1901	Can.	Jessie Wasson		Carrie Miller	1903	1903
		Farmer	Second	Jane Patterson		Cedar Rapids, Ia.		Jessie Wasson		W. A. Marshall		

William McBride and Jessie Wasson wed in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, January 28, 1903.

Word has been received here of the marriage of Miss Jessie Wasson at Cedar Rapids to a Mr. McBride, of Oakland, Canada.

Jessie Wasson marries William McBride, Monticello Express, February 5, 1903

William and Jessie McBride made their home in Portage La Prairie, Manitoba. They remained there even after Benjamin and Ella Spear moved to the Roblin, Manitoba area.



William McBride and Jessie Wasson's wedding photo, 1903



*In 1916, the McBrides lived at 615 Saskatchewan Ave East, Portage La Prairie, Manitoba
© Google Street View*

William and Jessie had one child:

- William Hobart McBride, born February 13, 1907, in Portage La Prairie, Manitoba



William Hobart McBride, in the 1930 Coe College yearbook

Like her sister Ella, Jessie McBride and her son Hobart often returned to Jones County, Iowa to visit her father Joe and brother Duncan. Some of these were for extended stays, such as the entire winter of 1915-16. Jessie and Hobart joined her father, Edna Orr Hanna, Edna's daughter Mina, and Harbison Orr on the July 1916 trip to Missouri where Joe and Edna got married. As Edna's cousin, Harb vouched for her in the marriage paperwork.

Harb Orr was a widower who once rented the Sim-Wasson Farm from Jeannette Wasson Sim, and then he bought the farm next door in 1906 when Joe and Duncan Wasson moved onto the Sim-Wasson Farm. Harb's late wife Mary was the sister of Duncan's friend Will Dennison. So, Joe and Duncan Wasson already had known Harb Orr for some time. It is not known if Jessie knew Harb from earlier, but she did meet him no later than her father's wedding trip.

Jessie and William McBride were divorced on March 27, 1919, and Jessie and her son Hobart moved to Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Her brother Duncan was already living in Cedar Rapids in 1919, but it is not known whether Duncan, Jessie and Hobart were living together at this time.

Harb and Jessie decided to get married soon after. Because Jessie's divorce decree did not allow the parties to remarry for one year, in July 1919 Jessie petitioned the court to modify the decree so that she could remarry sooner than that. The petition was granted that month.

Smoothing The Way.

Judge Moffit, at Marion, last week, modified a divorce decree in a manner to smooth out the love affairs of a Jones county resident. We copy from the Cedar Rapids Republican:

"Judge Jno. T. Moffit was in Marion Friday and heard an application in the case of **Jessie McBride** vs. Wm. McBride for the modification of the decree of divorce granted about March 27. After hearing the evidence, Judge Moffit granted the plaintiff the right to remarry sooner than one year after the date of the divorce. Mrs. McBride has a child about eleven or twelve years of age and expects to marry a Mr. Orr who has been on a farm near Onslow, but who has sold his 171 acres at \$275 per acre."

The court clears the way for Jessie McBride and Harb Orr to marry, Monticello Express, July 17, 1919.

Days later, Jessie Wasson McBride married Harbison Orr on July 24, 1919 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.



Harbison Orr and Jessie McBride wed in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, July 24, 1919.

Harbison Orr of this place and Mrs Jessie McBride of Cedar Rapids were married at Cedar Rapids last week, and are visiting at the home of Mrs. Orr's father, Mr. Joseph **Wasson. Congratulations are in order.**

Jessie Wasson McBride marries Harbison Orr, Wyoming Journal, July 31, 1919



Harbison Orr

The couple temporarily lived in the Neelan house in Onslow, Iowa, but in August 1919, they purchased a small property on 23rd Avenue (today's Wilson Avenue) in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where they planned to establish their home. When the Orrs moved into their new home in Cedar Rapids in November 1919, Duncan moved in with his sister and brother-in-law.

U. S.
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Wasson and
Mr. and Mrs. Harb. Orr motored to
Cedar Rapids Friday. The latter
people bought a place in the suburbs
of Cedar Rapids where they expect
to make their home.

Harb and Jessie Orr purchase a home in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Anamosa Eureka, August 14, 1919

Harb Orr and family have moved to Cedar Rapids, where they will make their future home.

Harb and Jessie Orr move to their new home in Cedar Rapids, Monticello Express, November 20, 1919

Duncan Wasson moved back to Onslow from Cedar Rapids after he got married (see below), Hobart McBride finished high school and then attended Coe College while living at home, and Jessie's mother Carrie Miller moved in with the Orrs by 1930.

On November 12, 1932, Jessie was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. She died at St. Luke's Hospital in Cedar Rapids on April 11, 1933.

... SERVICE WAS OBSERVED.
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Wasson, Mr. and Mrs. Duncan Wasson and son Walter, Mr. and Mrs. B. W. Streeper, Mildred and Mabel Streeper, Mr. and Mrs. Alva Streeper and Alva Orr and Mrs. George Sears went to Cedar Rapids, Saturday, to attend the funeral of Mrs. Harb Orr which took place at one o'clock at an undertaking parlor. Burial took place on the Wasson lot in the Wyoming cemetery. Mrs. Orr was Jessie Wasson before her marriage and was born and reared near here and attended the public school. She leaves to mourn her loss her husband, Harb Orr, one son, Hobart McBride; her father, Joseph Wasson; her mother, a brother, Duncan Wasson, and one sister, Mrs. Ella Spear, who lives in Canada. A number of friends from Onslow and Wyoming attended the burial service.
Mrs. Fred Elwood and daughter of Des Moines were guests at the B. W. Streeper home. They were called here to attend the funeral of Mrs. Orr. Mrs. Elwood is a sister of Mr. Orr.

Jessie Wasson McBride Orr's death, Monticello Express, April 20, 1933



Marker for Jessie Gertrude Wasson McBride Orr, Wyoming Cemetery, Wyoming, Iowa

In the summer before Jessie died, Harb Orr established an auto service business back in Onslow. Shortly after she died, Harb sold their Cedar Rapids property and moved back to Onslow, where he lived the rest of his life. He died in 1952.

Duncan James Wasson (Joe and Carrie Wasson's son)

We are direct descendants of Duncan James Wasson.

Duncan and Esther Gensicke eloped to Galena, Illinois and were married there on October 6, 1921. After a renter left the Sim-Wasson farm that Duncan owned, Duncan and Esther moved onto the farm on March 20, 1922, where they settled into farm life and raised their family.

- For more about Duncan's life up to his marriage to Esther Gensicke, see [Young Duncan Wasson](#).

Duncan and Esther had four children:

- Walter Norman Wasson, born April 28, 1923, in Jones County, Iowa
- Douglas Verne Wasson, born August 11, 1924, in Jones County, Iowa
- Glenn Everett Wasson, born May 1, 1927, in Jones County, Iowa
- Boyd Warner Wasson, born August 24, 1936, in Monticello, Iowa

Douglas died of pneumonia brought on by measles when he was only five years old.

Duncan and Esther were farmers, getting through several tough years during the Great Depression, but they recovered in the 1940s. Duncan and Esther were active in their church and in their community, and the local newspapers had countless accounts of their gatherings with friends, often to play bridge, or their times spent with relatives. Walter, Glenn and Boyd all did well in school, each graduating as valedictorian of his class, and all three went on to college.

In 1944, Duncan repurchased the Sim Town House, and made some updates to it, including tearing down the old barn that had been part of Onslow's first public school, adding a garage, and adding an indoor bathroom. He and his family lived there in 1946 while they built a new modern house on the farm. They moved into the new farm house towards the end of that year.



Glenn, Walter and Douglas, 1929 (left); Esther with Boyd, 1945 (center); Glenn, Walter and Boyd, with Walter's wife Maxine (right)

Duncan and Esther sold the farm in 1958. They retired to a house on Ellis Blvd. in Cedar Rapids, where Esther's brother Henry and his wife Lillian became neighbors. They acquired and managed a handful of rental properties in their neighborhood.

They also had eight grandchildren.



Duncan Wasson with his granddaughter Julie, early 1960s

Duncan died in 1968. Esther remained in their Cedar Rapids home until 1986, when she moved into Kingston Hill, a retirement home for women. She lived there until she passed away in 1995. Both were buried in the Wasson family plot in Wyoming Cemetery, Wyoming, Iowa.



Duncan and Esther's marker, Wyoming Cemetery, Wyoming, Iowa

Prepared by Mark David Wasson
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