

A better place

“If we give the best of ourselves, the
best will return to us, and we shall
have done our part toward making the
world a better and happier place ...

— Respectfully submitted,
Lulu Sweeny”

Lulu Sweeny’s closing remarks of
the Petoskey Federation of Women’s
Club annual report June 22, 1917
from the Petoskey Evening News

Lulu Pratt Sweeny

The hostess with the mostest

Lulu Pratt Sweeny wasn't born in Petoskey, but she moved to 411 Emmet St. with her parents, Edgar E. and Ella Chase Pratt, as a young girl along with her sister, Lena, and two brothers, Fay and Earl.

According to the *Petoskey Record* of Jan. 18, 1893, Lulu was six years old when she won mention of her name in the paper for perfect lessons in spelling at the fourth-grade level. At the age of 11, she herself entertained the high school debating club at her home. The subject of the debate: prohibition. (It was defeated by the youth.)

At the age of 14, Lulu graduated from Petoskey High School and began working as a sales clerk at Little Will's, a jewelry store owned by William Searle. Since her father had died when she was nine, there is some speculation that she was doing her part to provide the family with income.

Working at the store didn't hurt her social calendar, though. In fact, it helped her to meet more people and make more friends. The *Petoskey Record* called her "the popular clerk" at Little Will's. She hosted a New Year's Eve party at her home in 1902, the year after she graduated. She rode on a float in the Mid-Summer Carnival that same year with friends. She would often invite more friends from Grand Rapids to stay with her for the summer.



Photo from Little Traverse Bay Historical Society

In 1904, when Lulu was 17, she, as second vice president of the Queen Esther Circle of the First ME Church, chaired the meeting. At this meeting, the ladies heard Mrs. Emma Lamb Barnes report news from a convention in Denver. She said, "Now, young ladies, do not refuse any work because you do not know how. Learn how. Dig."

Lulu remained active in the Queen Esther Circle throughout her time in Petoskey. She also often entertained her Sunday school class of girls at

her home with lessons, music, recitations and refreshments. When she was not leading her Sunday school students, she was serving on the church Sunday school board. At age 22, she presented a talk to the members of the board titled "Knowing the Pupil."

Along the road to various entertaining events and clubs, Lulu continued to excel at her job. From the *Petoskey Evening News*, July 31, 1908, "The credit of dressing this (display) case, which is beautiful, is due to Miss Lulu Pratt, who makes a study of the art, and she has certainly proven her good taste in this particular. Miss Pratt also assisted in the artistic work of arranging the cut glass cabinet and in connection with Mr. Searle, has made a magnificent display of the wares."

Not only talented, but smart, too, Lulu "proved most proficient and was awarded a pretty prize" at a church social contest regarding "conundrums and other questions regarding the doings of the state and nation."

Lulu really was "Miss Popular" – in fact, she was a contender in a Lockwood Hospital-sponsored popularity contest when she was 21. Lulu took a three-week vacation in 1913 to St. Louis, Missouri. While there, she made the social news three times, with parties and luncheons given in her honor. It seems everyone wanted to meet and make friends with our Petoskey hostess. So it was inevitable she would soon attract the attention of a young man who would woo her. She began seeing Henry Sweeny, the prosecuting attorney for Emmet County, in 1912, when he had first moved up north, and on Jan. 9, 1915, the two were married. Their union was celebrated with a pot-luck reception by all of their friends and family and even the judge.

Henry's participation in the International Order of Odd Fellows most certainly led to Lulu's subsequent involvement with the Rebekahs, a female

branch of the IOOF. She was made chaplain of the group. Through her work with the Rebekahs, Lulu also got involved in the Petoskey Federation of Women's Clubs.

On Nov. 8, 1915, our Lulu added suffragist to her identity. She was chosen as one of five women by the federation to represent Emmet County at the 30th annual convention of the Michigan Equal Suffrage Association in Saginaw.

Just a few months later, Lulu attended a Susan Anthony Tea, hosted by sisters Zilla Goldstein and Minnie Rosenthal. At the tea, Lulu "in her charming manner, gave the life history and work of Susan B. Anthony."

It was around this time that Lulu's efforts toward suffrage, like many others' in the country, took a bit of a back seat to the war. Her civic efforts, however, did not let up.

For the next two years, Lulu seemed to extend her involvement. She was named to the Emmet County Children's Welfare Advisory Committee (along with her husband) to represent the county to the state. ("To this advisory committee will be left the selection of the Emmet county representatives to the Detroit congress, and they will later have charge of the state survey of children's problems for this vicinity.") She took part in the happenings of the Grand Opera Study Club, the Assembly Study Club (as secretary), the Beulah Chapter of the Eastern Star, and she helped to raise money for the Red Cross.

At the June 5, 1916, annual meeting of the Petoskey FWC, Lulu was voted secretary. In the year-end report from the *Petoskey Evening News*, the previous secretary, Alma Critchell, wrote, "We are glad to welcome the ... Emmet County Equal Suffrage association to membership of the Federation."



Henry S. Sweeny.

Lulu had a supportive partner in Henry Sweeny. He wrote an open letter to the president of the Emmet County Suffrage Association, Zilla Goldstein. It read:

“Mrs. Zilla Goldstein, Petoskey, Michigan

Dear Madam: —

“I have your favor of the 14th, instant, wherein you ask me to give you a short statement of my position on the question of equal suffrage.

“I believe in equal suffrage. Our Government which is formed to promote the welfare of all its citizens represents a large, going concern, and every citizen should have the right to participate in the management and control of it, unless the citizen is clearly not able to do so by reason of being an infant, a

criminal, an idiot or insane. The denial of the right to vote, as I view it, should be based only upon one proposition, and that is the incapacity of the citizen to intelligently participate in governmental affairs. The denial of women of the right to vote places womankind, as a class, in the list of those not possessed of the proper capacity to have a voice in the affairs of our country. In view of the wonderful activities, achievements and demonstrated abilities of women so conspicuously written into the history of our country, this position is both illogical and unjust.

“Trusting that the above fully explains my position on the question you ask, I am,
Very respectfully,
Henry S. Sweeny “

On May 12, 1917, Henry was called to war by telegram. He was ordered to Fort Sheridan for the Officers' Reserve Corps. The day he left, “scores of (people) were at the depot to bid au revoir to the prosecuting attorney. Nathan Stone held a large American flag over Mr. and Mrs. Sweeny so that they could be found in the crowd.”

With her husband off to train for war, Lulu was left to work of her own at home. She continued contributing her service to the Red Cross, she raised money for the Michigan's Children's Home society of St. Joseph by selling flags for Flag Day, was named

to a committee by the mayor to welcome summer visitors, and performed her duty as a representative of the first ward in pinning badges of honor on the young men who registered for war.

In June of 1917, perhaps Lulu saw the writing on the wall where it concerned her husband, who was quickly rising in the army ranks. She retired her position as secretary of the Petoskey FWC. Mrs. Critchell, the president at the time, presented her with a handsome bouquet of flowers and wrote: “Vote. Thanks to Mrs. Sweeny. Mrs. Sweeny, the retiring secretary, read a comprehensive report of the year's work. Mrs. Grosenbaugh warmly commended the painstaking and untiring work of Mrs. Sweeny and the federation endorsed these remarks by a rising vote of thanks.”

A few months later, in September, the Assembly Study Club gave a luncheon in her honor because she was about to leave the city. Later that month, she resigned her position with the Rebekahs. From the *Petoskey Evening News*, “Mrs. H. S. Sweeny plans to go to Battle Creek tomorrow to be with her husband, Lieut. Henry Sweeny at Camp Custer. Their home on Division Street has been closed and her mother, Mrs. Pratt, will go to the home of

Woman Suffrage Conference

11th CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Michigan Equal Suffrage Association

METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
PETOSKEY

THURSDAY, MAY 16th, 1918

In co-operation with the Emmet County Branch.

Mrs. Zilla Goldstein, President.
Mr. Henry Sweeny, Vice-President.
Mrs. Aleck Clark, Vice-President.
Mrs. Jessie Grosenbaugh, Vice-President.
Mrs. James Oldham, Secretary.
Mrs. Agnes Cushman, Treasurer.

CALL TO PATRIOTIC WOMEN.

The Michigan Legislature of 1917 gave to Michigan women an amendment to the State Constitution granting full suffrage to women, to be voted upon November 5, 1918, by the electors of the state.

The Legislature voted this amendment after war was declared. Perhaps they realized that the slacker and alien vote will remain with us while so many of our patriotic men are across the sea. Suffrage therefore is an important war measure. That the loyal women at home may be able to guard the interests of their husbands, brothers and sons, as well as their own, with their ballots.

COME TO THIS MEETING.

Mr. and Mrs. William Jarman for the fall and winter.”

Through letters written by Henry for the *Petoskey Evening News*, we learn Lulu was “delighted with Battle Creek and finds almost too much to do here...”

In another letter, written from Jacksonville, Florida, he said, “I wonder how many of you have seen the Atlantic Ocean. Mrs. Sweeny and I went out to see it last Sunday. It was her first view of this great body of water and she describes it as being ‘just wonderful.’”

A telegram to Lulu’s mother stated, “Lieut. and Mrs. Henry Sweeny are to leave Jacksonville, Fla., today for Washington, D. C., where Lieut. Sweeny will be on duty in the office of the quartermaster general.”

In yet another letter to Petoskey, Henry wrote, “Mrs. Sweeny likes Washington real well, but is just a little homesick. She can hardly be blamed for this, for she has been away now for eight months. She asks to be kindly remembered to all of the CH gang, their wives and the distinguished representatives of the abstract office and fire department.”

The couple, who finally settled in Lansing for Henry’s new job as assistant to the Attorney General after an honorable discharge from the Army, came home to Petoskey to visit often — especially for the summers. During this time, though, Petoskey most certainly felt the loss of Lulu’s stellar servitude.

In her capacity as secretary for the Petoskey FWC, Lulu was responsible for giving the annual report. She did this for the June 29, 1917, edition of the *Petoskey Evening News*.

In closing, she wrote, “If we give the best of ourselves, the best will return to



us, and we shall have done our part toward making the world a better and happier place when 'Only the Master shall praise us, and only the Master shall blame. And no one shall work for money and no one shall work for fame; But each for the joy of the working, and each in his separate star, Shall

paint the things as he sees it, for the God of things as they are.' Respectfully submitted, Lulu Pratt Sweeney, Secretary, June 22, 1917."

Lulu died unexpectedly after a brief illness at the age of 40. Her life, though short, truly made Petoskey a better place.

DEATH TAKES MRS. SWEENEY

FORMER PETOSKEY WOMAN
PASSES UNEXPECTEDLY
IN DETROIT TODAY.

Remains to Be Brought Here for
Funeral and Burial. Had Many
Friends in Petoskey.

Mrs. Henry Sweeney died very unexpectedly at about 4 o'clock this morning in Detroit, following a short illness. News of her death comes as a severe shock to her sister, Mrs. William Jarman, of this city, and to her many friends in and around Petoskey. Few knew she had been ill. The body will be brought to Petoskey tomorrow and the funeral will be held from the William Jarman home on Porter street.

Mrs. Sweeney was born at Gaines, Genesee county, and came to Petoskey with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. E. E. Pratt, when a small child. She grew to womanhood here and graduated from Petoskey high school. On January 9, 1915, she was married to Mr. Sweeney. During their several years' residence here both were prominent in church, social and fraternal circles. They resided for a time in Washington and for some years in Lansing and last February moved to Detroit.

Since girlhood Mrs. Sweeney was a devotee and active member of the Methodist Episcopal church and Sunday school. She ever exemplified a beautiful Christian character and faith. Her loveable disposition and pleasing personality won for her a host of friends. She was a member of Beulah chapter, No. 63, O. E. S., Queen Esther Shrine, No. 15, W. S. of J., and of Emmet Rebekah lodge, No. 104, of this city.

Surviving her are the husband and sister, Mrs. Jarman, and niece, Miss Reva Jarman; two brothers, Fay W. Pratt, of Detroit, and Earl E. Pratt, of Birmingham, Ala. Her mother, the late Mrs. Ella Pratt, passed away last July.