

## Laura Florence Martin Miller

### 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional National Ladies Aid Society President



Laura Florence Martin was born May 10, 1864, in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, the daughter of David N. Martin, a rope maker, and Kate Hubert. She had a younger brother, William.

During the Civil War, David had served in Company A, 122<sup>nd</sup> Pennsylvania Volunteers (9 mos.) from August 11, 1862 to May 15, 1863. He took part in the defense of Washington, the Battles of Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville.

19-year old Laura was reportedly head of the few Ladies Aid Societies, associated with the Eastern Pennsylvania Sons of Veterans in 1883. When the Eastern Pennsylvania Ladies Aid Societies met in Lancaster in 1883, they decided to accompany their Sons organization when it affiliated with A.P. Davis' organization. Laura then became the provisional National President of the new Ladies Aid Society, which had a crude organization and lacked system.

Laura's father died of a stroke on September 17, 1884, just weeks after the Sons of Veterans officially recognized and acknowledged the Ladies Aid Societies as the auxiliary to the Sons of Veterans, U.S.A. By this time, the new Order consisted of seven chapters, all in eastern Pennsylvania.

Just shy of her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday in 1885, Laura was installed as president of Ladies Aid Society #7 at the Admiral Reynolds GAR Post 405 hall in Lancaster. The local society was mustered in with 25 sisters, under the auspices of the Sons of Veterans' George H. Thomas Camp 19.

The following month, the LAS #7 held a 3-day fair and festival at Lancaster's Roberts Hall. President Laura Martin was Superintendent and General Manager. Three tables, each representing the Sons of Veterans, the Ladies Aid Society, and the Grand Army of the Republic, were manned by the ladies of the society. They respectively featured confections, flowers and cakes, were presumably were sold for the support of each of the organizations.

In September 1885, Miss Martin's requested that the Sons of Veterans Camps, Departments and Grand Divisions advance her Order with temporary loans to meets the needs of the Ladies Aid Society. The Woman's Relief Corps felt threatened by the term "Auxiliary." To address inquiries, clarify the LAS's purpose, and allay fears of competition with the WRC, Martin issued a circular, which was republished in several newspapers. The first images of the Society's seal and badge, designed by Maj. A. P. Davis, were included.

Laura served as the provisional National Ladies Aid Society President until its first National Encampment in Akron, Ohio, on September 7-9, 1887. By the time of the encampment, there were 6,000 sisters in 72 local societies. Sixty-five were chartered since January 1<sup>st</sup> of that year in California, Connecticut, Dakota, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and the District of Columbia. Eighteen delegates were present.

In 1888, Maj. Davis issued a special challenge to increase membership in the Ladies aid Societies. President Martin received the unique and rare Type IV LAS badge. The badge was made in gold and enamel and was awarded for recruiting 25 new members.

Upon stepping down as National President, Laura Martin moved to Philadelphia, where she first worked as an artist in Gilbert & Bacon's photographic studio and then, in her own studio. There she hand-painted/colorized black and white photographs, and was an importer of miniature frames. She was recognized by the Photographers' Association of America with awards in 1894 and 1895.

PNP Laura Martin continued to act in a ceremonial capacity in the Ladies Aid Society, installing officers, speaking at ceremonies and social events. In 1897, she installed six brothers of Philadelphia's Anna M. Ross Camp #1 as Anna M. Ross Ladies Aid Society #1's advisory board. She then made a presentation to the Pennsylvania Division's immediate Past President. In 1910, when the Philadelphia Sons of Veterans Auxiliary held its annual Lincoln Birthday banquet, Laura and two other past National Presidents addressed the guests.

She met her husband in Philadelphia, a native of that city. Charles Miller was the chief accountant for the Pennsylvania Railroad, Philadelphia division. He was also a member of the Blue Meridian Sun No. 158, F and AM, Consistory, Chapter and Council, St. John's Commandery, and Lulu Temple, Knights of Pythias, P.O.S. of A., and the Sons of Veterans.

In preparation for marrying Charles Miller in 1913, Laura was baptized and confirmed in St. John's Episcopal Church the year before. She was accompanied by her brother.

Mr. and Mrs. Miller moved to Atlantic City, New Jersey, where they lived until about 1929. Laura joined the city's chapter of the Eastern Star.

In April 1926, she began being attended to by a doctor, as she had been diagnosed with breast cancer and other ailments. She refused to be operated upon. In declining health, Charles and Laura returned to Lancaster in 1929 and lived with Laura's sister-in-law. Charles died on June 19, at age 74, and Laura died later that year, on November 19, at age 67. She was buried next to her husband in the Lancaster Cemetery.



Laura Martin Miller

In 2019, The National Auxiliary to the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War instituted the Laura Miller Award, presented by the National President or Department President to a Sister for exceptional service to the ASUVCW. The service needs to have occurred in a noteworthy manner at the National/Department level over an extended period of time or for an extraordinary action by a Sister.

By PCinC Steve Michaels with research assistance by PDC Kent Peterson and PDC Robert Wolz

#### Sources

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Dept. of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics

Federal Census: 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920

**Lancaster New Era:** 13 Sep 1884, 18 Sep 1884, 4 May 1885, 25 Jun 1885, 3 Jan 1896, 9 pr 1896, 13 Aug 1897, 20 Jan 1931, 20 Nov 1931.

**The Philadelphia Inquirer:** 24 Jan 1897, 20 Feb 1910

**Pittsburgh Post Gazette:** 8 Sep 1894

**Quad City Times** (Davenport, IA): 20 Aug 1894

**Western Veteran** (Topeka, KS): 13 Apr 1886

[See next page for additional information.](#)

Additional Information on Laura Florence Martin Miller:  
by Wanda Langdon, PNP

**Obituary:**

**MRS. LAURA MARTIN MILLER**  
Mrs. Laura Martin Miller, sixty-seven, widow of Charles J. Miller, died last evening at her home, 441 West Lemon street. She was a former resident of Atlantic City and was a daughter of the late David and Kate Martin. She was a photographer in Philadelphia for many years.  
Mrs. Miller was the first national president of the Auxiliary of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War and a member of the Atlantic City chapter of the Eastern Star. She is survived by her nephew, David N. Martin, and nieces, Laura F. Martin and Mrs. Donald Witmer.  
Services will be Monday afternoon, 2 o'clock at the home, with interment in the Lancaster cemetery.

from the:

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**Headstone of Charles and Laura Miller:**



Photo by Ron Walter

Find a Grave Memorial: 39188483

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/39188483/laura-f-miller>

National President Laura Martin presided over the 1<sup>st</sup> National Encampment of the ASUVCW then called the "Ladies Aid Society" held at Akron, Ohio. The proceedings can be read here:

1887 National Encampment Proceedings:

[https://asuvcw.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/1887\\_Proceedings.pdf](https://asuvcw.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/1887_Proceedings.pdf)