

## **Mrs. Myrtle Delo O'Brien**

### **First National President**

Mrs. W.D.A. O'Brien was elected the Sons of Veterans, U.S.A. Auxiliary's National President at its first convention, held in Akron, Ohio on September 7-9, 1887.

Mrs. O'Brien was born Myrtle Delo Wirick on January 24, 1866, to Martin Van Buren Wirick and Mary Elizabeth "Mollie" Reed Wirick. Martin was a blacksmith who had served from June 11, 1861, to June 24, 1864, in Company D, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ohio Volunteer Infantry. He fought in the Battle of Perryville, where he was wounded, and at Stones River. On May 3, 1863, he was captured with much of his regiment at Rome, Georgia, and sent to Belle Isle. He was exchanged later that month at Camp Chase, Ohio.

On January 11, 1883, Myrtle married William D. Andrew O'Brien, ten years her senior and the son of Irish immigrants. The two lived in Sidney, Ohio, which was a rapidly developing town of nearly four thousand residents at the time. Here, William was a laborer and became an officer in the county labor union in 1887. Together, they raised three children: Howard (Nov 1883-Feb 1956), Edward (9 Dec 1891-18 Nov 1945), and Mary Elizabeth (1898-1973).

William was elected commander of Springfield, Ohio's Z. Barney Phillips Camp #37 and was installed in January 1885. That May, he was elected the Ohio Department's Junior Vice Commander. In September 1886, the camp's Ladies Aid Society #6 was instituted with 29 members. Officers were installed with Myrtle serving as vice president.

By the time of the first National Encampment in 1887, 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.

Interestingly, Mrs. A.P. (Nancy E.) Davis was elected as Chaplain-in-Chief, a position she was repeatedly re-elected to each year. She served at least until her husband's death 12 years later and was likely a direct conduit to the Order's founder, providing guidance and counsel. She died in 1912.

The Auxiliary filed papers of incorporation with the Ohio Secretary of State in 1887.

Mrs. O'Brien was re-elected National President at the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Encampment, held in 1888 in Wheeling, West Virginia. By September 1888, membership had grown to 1,716.

In January 1888, William was elected a director of the Cooperative Coal Company.

In 1889, William represented his department as a delegate at the Sons of Veterans National Encampment in Patterson, New Jersey. The following year, Myrtle was elected delegate-at-large.

The O'Briens moved to Chicago for a few years in the 1890s, perhaps as the result of a four-year national economic depression, the Panic of 1893. By 1900, though, they had moved to the town of Milford in Iroquois County, Illinois, where William worked as a photographer. However, another financial downturn, the Panic of 1907, caused a nationwide economic crisis, which hit small towns especially hard. The O'Brien family moved back to Chicago, where William and his two sons took jobs as railroad office clerks.

William died on August 8, 1910, at the age of 52. After her husband's death, Myrtle moved back to Springfield and lived with her bachelor son, Edward. She died on July 6, 1921, and was buried next to her husband in Springfield, Ohio's Ferncliff Cemetery.

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

#### Sources

Akron City times: 14 Sep 1887

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

**Official Roster of the Soldiers of the State of Ohio in the War of Rebellion, 1861-1866** by Ohio Roster Commission

Ohio County Marriage Records, 1774-1993

**Springfield Daily Republic**: 8 Jan 1885, 13 Jan 1885, 25 Sep 1886, 3 Sep 1887, 9 Sep 1887, 17 Jan 1888

**Summit County Beacon (Akron)**: 14 Sep 1887, 22 Aug 1888

**The Akron Beacon Journal**: 21 Jun 1890

**The Cincinnati Enquirer**: 17 May 1889

Additional Information on Myrtle Delo Wirick O'Brien  
by Wanda Langdon, PNP

**Headstone of Myrtle Delo Warick O'Brien:**

Ferncliff Cemetery  
501 West McCreight Ave. Springfield, Clark County, Ohio 45504

Section H, Lot 544



Photo by Carol JCJ

Find a Grave Memorial:  
58417711

National President Myrtle O'Brien presided over the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Encampment of the ASUVCW then called the "Ladies Aid Society" held at Akron, Ohio. The proceedings can be read here:

1888 National Encampment Proceedings:

[https://asuvcw.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/1888\\_Proceedings.pdf](https://asuvcw.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/1888_Proceedings.pdf)