

# Boylstonian Manages First Branch of Y.W.C.A. in Manhattan, New York

*Excerpt from Early Families of Boylston, Massachusetts  
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Harriet Sawyer called “Hattie,” the daughter of Alfred Sawyer and Sarah Abbott Goss, was born 9 November 1845 at Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts.<sup>1</sup> Her parents had married 21 April 1841 in Lancaster, Worcester County, Massachusetts.<sup>2</sup> She was the only child of Alfred and Sarah to survive infancy. Her brother, John William, died from disease of the head at 9 weeks old on 5 February 1844 and her sister, Sarah Greenwood, died at 13 months of age of dysentery on 18 September 1853.<sup>3,4</sup>



**Harriet Sawyer Mears**  
1845-1929

*Boylston Historical Society Photograph Collection*

By 1865, when Harriet was age 20 years, 12-year-old Herbert Pliney Sawyer was living with Harriet’s family. An orphaned relative, Herbert Pliney was born 13 February 1853, the son of Charles H. Sawyer, who had died 2 July 1865 and Rosina F. Sheldon, who had died in 24 January 1861.<sup>5,6,7,8</sup> Herbert helped on the farm and Hattie was educated and reared in Holden, Worcester County, Massachusetts.

Hattie’s paternal grandparents were Oliver Sawyer and Harriet Goulding, and her maternal grandparents were Captain John Goss and Rebecca White. It was Hattie’s great grandfather’s brother, Aaron Sawyer who had resided in the settlement known as Sawyers Mills of Boylston, Massachusetts. The ancestors of the Goss family were settlers in the town of Lancaster, Massachusetts where they were grain millers.

By 1870, Hattie and her family had relocated to a farm in Sterling, Worcester County, Massachusetts.<sup>9</sup> Her father died there that year on 14 November 1870.<sup>10</sup> It was in that town that on 1 January 1873, Hattie Sawyer at age 27 years married Reverend Lucian Dwight Mears, age 32 years. Reverend DeWitt S. Clark, Pastor of the Congregational Church of Clinton, officiated at the ceremony.<sup>11</sup> Lucian, the son of Henry Mears and Louisa Clark, was born 29 March 1838 in Beloit, Rock County, Wisconsin.<sup>12</sup> His parents had both been born in Vermont and relocated to Beloit, Wisconsin, an area abandoned in 1832 by the Ho-Chunk Indians after the Black Hawk War.<sup>13,14</sup> Lucian was credited as being the first-born white man in Beloit.<sup>15</sup> He graduated from Beloit

<sup>1</sup> Birth Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1846

<sup>2</sup> Marriage Records, Lancaster, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1841, digital image, ancestry.com

<sup>3</sup> Death Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1844

<sup>4</sup> Death Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1853

<sup>5</sup> Massachusetts, State Census, Holden, Worcester County, 1865, digital image, ancestry.com

<sup>6</sup> Birth Records, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1853, digital image, ancestry.com

<sup>7</sup> Death Records, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1865, digital image, ancestry.com

<sup>8</sup> Death Records, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1861, digital image, ancestry.com

<sup>9</sup> United States Federal Census, Sterling, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1870, digital image, ancestry.com

<sup>10</sup> Death Records, Sterling, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1870, digital image, ancestry.com

<sup>11</sup> Marriage Records, Sterling, Worcester County, Massachusetts, digital image, ancestry.com

<sup>12</sup> Gravestone, Lucian Dwight Mears, Oakwood Cemetery, Beloit, Rock County, Wisconsin, digital image, findagrave.com

<sup>13</sup> United States Federal Census, Beloit, Rock County, Wisconsin, 1850, digital image, ancestry.com

<sup>14</sup> Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Dane County, Wisconsin

<sup>15</sup> The History of Rock County, Wisconsin Western Historical Co., books, google.com

College in 1862, was engaged in civil engineering and went on to teach German for two years at Beloit College. He entered Chicago Theological Seminary and transferred to complete his studies at the Andover Theological Seminary, located in Andover, Essex County, Massachusetts, graduating in 1870. This seminary had been founded in 1807 and was primarily for the education of Congregational ministers. Reverend Lucian Mears served as acting pastor in Sterling, Massachusetts from 1870 until his ordination as pastor 8 November 1871. He was dismissed 9 September 1873, eight months after Lucien and Harriet were married.<sup>16,17</sup>

Lucian and Hattie had one child, a daughter, Louisa, born 26 March 1874 in the Redstone area of Sterling.<sup>18</sup> Hattie and her family moved to Danby, Rutland County, Vermont where her husband served as pastor at the Congregational Church for 11 years from March 1876 to April 1887.<sup>19</sup> Hattie's mother Sarah accompanied her daughter and son-in-law, Reverend Mears to live in Vermont where she died, in Danby, on 31 January 1886. Sarah's Vermont death record indicates she died from the effects of a broken hip, although it is more clearly understood when combined with the Boylston records which state she died from consumption. Consumption or skeletal tuberculosis is a disease caused by an infectious bacterium which effects the lungs and spreads to the bones and joints. Hattie was buried in Pine Grove Cemetery, Boylston.<sup>20,21</sup>

Reverend Lucian Mears and Hattie relocated to Beloit, Wisconsin in 1887 where he served as assistant treasurer of Beloit College. His Historical Address at the semi-Centennial of the Congregational Church in Beloit, in 1899, was subsequently published. He died from consumption caused by la grippe on 29 September 1891 at the age of 52 years and was buried in the Mears family lot in Oakwood Cemetery, Beloit, Wisconsin.<sup>22</sup>



**Harriet Sawyer Mears Headstone**  
*Pine Grove Cemetery*  
*Photograph by Bruce D. Filgate*

After the death of her husband, Hattie moved to New York City where as a nurse, was an instrumental force for the Young Women's Christian Association (Y.M.C.A). She opened and managed the first branch of this organization in Manhattan, New York County, New York and for 18 years was closely identified with this organization and its community service cause to aid individuals to reach their full potential.<sup>23</sup> Her daughter, Louisa, never married. She lived with her mother in Brooklyn and worked there as a librarian.<sup>24</sup>

Hattie Sawyer Mears, the widow of Reverend Lucian Dwight Mears, died at age 83 years on 14 March 1929 at her home at 513 E. 28<sup>th</sup> Street, Brooklyn, Kings County, New York. She was interred in the Sawyer family plot Section 1 Lot 87 at Pine Grove Cemetery, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts.<sup>25,26</sup>

<sup>16</sup> History of Andover Newton Seminary at Yale Divinity School, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut

<sup>17</sup> History of The Congregational Churches of Vermont and their ministry, John M. Comstock, Corresponding Secretary of Vermont Congregational Conference, St. Johnsbury, Vt, The Caledonia Company, 1915

<sup>18</sup> Birth Records, Sterling, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1874, digital image, ancestry.com

<sup>19</sup> The Congregational churches of Vermont and their ministry, 1762-1914, books, google.com

<sup>20</sup> Vermont Vital Records, 1820-1908, Danby, Rutland County, 1886, digital image, ancestry.com

<sup>21</sup> Death Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1886

<sup>22</sup> Minutes of the 93<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting of the General Convention, Congregational Minister and Churches of Vermont, Barre, Vt, June 1888, Watchman Publishing Co. 1888

<sup>23</sup> Obituary, The Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Brooklyn, Kings County, New York, 15 March 1929, Page 3, digital image, newspapers.com

<sup>24</sup> United States Federal Census, Brooklyn, Kings County, New York, 1920, digital image, ancestry.com

<sup>25</sup> Obituary, The Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Brooklyn, Kings County, New York, 15 March 1929, Page 3, digital image, newspapers.com

<sup>26</sup> Cemetery Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1929