

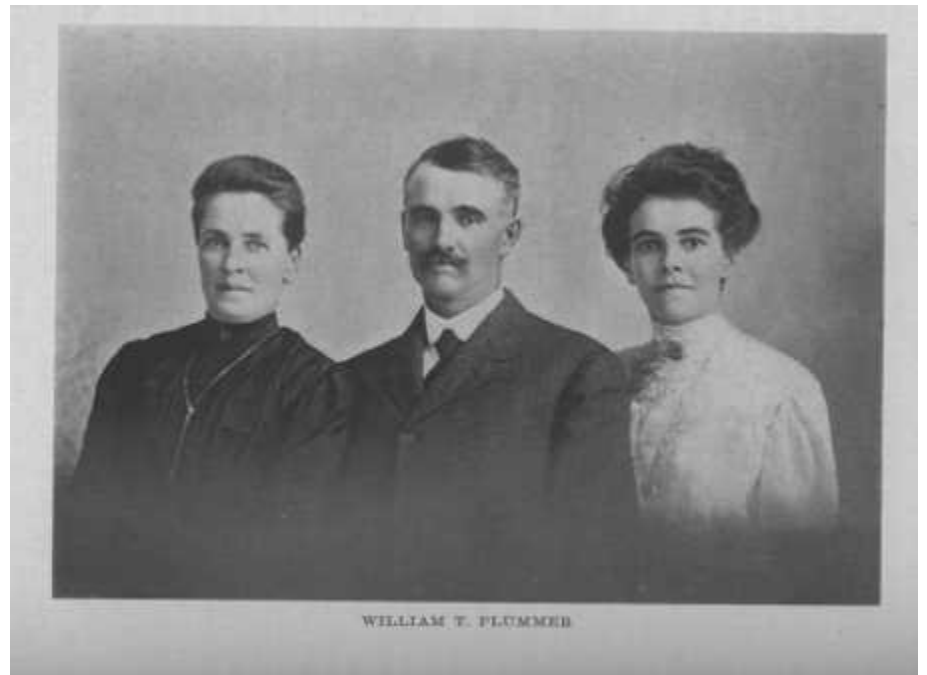
## The Story of Mary Clemenceau



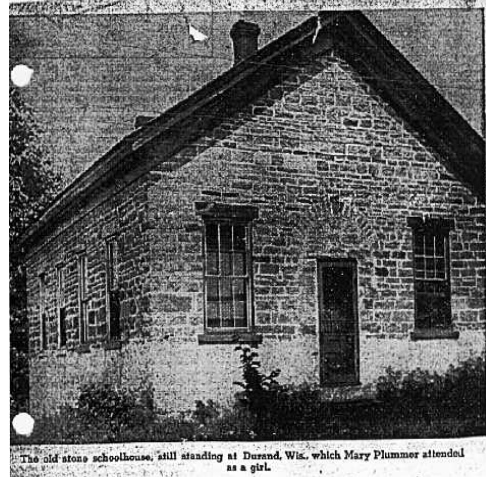
It's hard to believe that a small town girl from little ole Durand led an ostentatious, glamorous life as the spouse of a great World War I French premier. But the fate and kismet of her beauty and poverty as a child led her to a courtship in Connecticut with George Clemenceau.

Mary Plummer was born to William T. Plummer and Harriet at Springfield, Massachusetts in 1849. Her father became ill but in 1857 moved his family which included his wife, his daughter Mary, his son William, and his youngest daughter, Susan, "out west" where they eventually settled in Skinner's Prairie near Durand.

Three years later in 1860, William Plummer died leaving Harriet to raise Mary, Will, and Susie alone. Thankfully, four years later, in 1864 when Mary was 15, her mother's brother and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Horace Taylor, came to Skinner's Prairie for a visit. When Mr. Taylor realized how beautiful Mary was- he offered to educate Mary at the Catherine Aiken Seminary in Stamford, Connecticut.



School in Durand , now gone, which Mary attended.



Mary adapted quickly to the highly glamorous clothes of the era. Even though she had been dressed plainly throughout her life, she wore the new clothes with natural grace and poise.

Mary Plummer's friend from the seminary, Mary E. Walton, writes that when she attended the school, she watched the romance between George Clemenceau and Miss Plummer develop.

Walton recalls Clemenceau came to the seminary as a French professor. She says that, as a student of his, she saw Clemenceau as an erratic teacher, full of oddities and yet, very artistic. So artistic that when bored, he would sketch the fair face of beautiful Mary Plummer, who was also a student of his. Mary Walton remembers seeing one of Clemenceau's fellow teachers looking at his sketches. The teacher then pronounced: "Those eyebrows are like Mary Plummer's!" This proclamation began gossip and rumors about the professor's fascination with Mary.



A whirlwind romantic courtship took place and in less than a year, Mary Plummer (20 years old) wed George Clemenceau (28 years old) on June 23, 1869 at the New York City Hall.

There were rumors of secret wealth and of rich establishments owned by Clemenceau. Mary Walton and others doubted these reports because they thought their professor was just your average Frenchman.

In the meantime- Mr. and Mrs. Clemenceau moved to Castle L'Aubray in the Vendees in France. George immediately entered politics. In 1870, Clemenceau was elected Mayor of Montmarte and soon after became a member of the

National Assembly. As he became more powerful, his loving marriage to Mary dissolved.

Yet, as the marriage became more and more nonexistent, Mary maintained a room full of momentos and awards related to her beloved George. Meanwhile, George Clemenceau denied that he had ever known or loved Mary. His power had overcome his love for her and now he wished for a divorce. They never did annul the marriage for fear that the divorce would ruin his reputation and thus his career in politics. Yet, as the Germans continued to push further into France, Clemenceau offered to provide sanctuary for Mary and the children. She declined the offer along with pleas from relatives in the United States to return to her family. She decided to move to Paris and left the Castle in Vendees with only a few belongings and clothes to start a new life.

Though Mr. Clemenceau provided his family with money, Mary also held a job. Over the years spent in Paris, she worked as a gallery guide for American tourists, as a purchasing agent for American firms, and even wrote articles for American magazines.



By this time, Mary's glamorous life shared with George Clemenceau was completely dissolved yet she continued with her life as a mother. Her daughter, Madeleine, became a famous newspaper writer and speaker. Therese Juliette married St. Andre Gatineau whom she eventually divorced, and her son, William Benjamin held the position of colonel in the French army during World War I.

George Clemenceau and daughter Madeleine.



Shown here are George Clemenceau, accompanied by President Woodrow Wilson of the United States, and Prime Minister Lloyd George of Great Britain, leave Versailles after signing the agreement ending World War I, a war which cost eight million lives. World War I was labeled 'the war to end all wars...'

Mary Plummer Clemenceau died in 1922 of natural causes and is buried in France.

Though she is gone, she will always be remembered, especially by me because I am a descendent of her. After extensive research of my ancestral background, I have come to the conclusion that she is my great great great grandpa's niece. Thus ends the story of Mary Plummer, a beautiful girl who grew up in the old Durand but led the life of a queen.



Relatives of Mary Plummer's lived in this house in Durand. (Check it out, it's located on the block across from DHS.on Wells Street!!)

Web page created by: Paula Ward in October of 1997.

Sources used in this report include: Louise Miller, Mary E. Walton, *The History of Buffalo and Pepin Counties Wisconsin* compiled by Franklyn Curtiss-Wedge, *Pepin County History*, Adda Mae Ward, Emily W. Rautman, "The Love Story of George Clemenceau" by Alice F. Brown, and clippings from the Courier Wedge. Special thanks to Candace Jones, Karen Tarrant, and the Durand Public Library staff for compiling info on Mary Plummer.