BLANCHE SEAMAN SPRAGUE

At A Glance

Birth: July 9,1856, McConnelsville, Ohio

Death: November 19,1940, Los Angeles, Calif.

Maiden Name: Blanche C Seaman

Race/ethnic background: English

Married:
Joseph Munro(e) Brown, May 21,1879, Brooklyn, New York;
Charles Silvey Sprague, September 26, 1888, Netherwood, New Jersey, divorced on September 18, 1896, in Colorado, and remarried January 24, 1897, in Chicago, Ill.

Children:
Anna Brown, 1876-1889,
stepdaughter from Brown's first marriage,
Harold Munro Brown, 1882-1899;
Munro Seaman Brown, 1885-1972;
Blanche Seaman "Sallie" Sprague McCandless, 1897-1975



Blanche Seaman Sprague
Special Collections, Tutt Library, Colorado College, Colorado Springs, Colorado

Primary City and county of residence and work:
New York City; Colorado Springs, Colorado; Goldfield, Esmeralda County, Nev.

Major Fields of Work:
Business, Daughters of the American Revolution chapter founder, genealogy

Goldfield society woman established first DAR chapter in Nevada

Blanche Seaman, born to a poor Ohio family, although she may have had some talent as a singer, made her marriages to two successful businessmen her path to social prominence. Her interest in her family genealogy led her to found the first Nevada chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

When Blanche Seaman was born on July 9. 1856, in McConnelsville, Morgan, Ohio, her father, David Seaman, was 30 and her mother, Nancy Bingham Kelly, was 23.

Newspaper articles report that the family was poor, but Blanche was a beauty with a good voice. She sang at concerts and later in the choir of the Second Presbyterian Church. Later she moved to Cincinnati and Pittsburg to study under well-known vocal teachers and appear in operas and concerts. She is said to have interested an old man with money who sent her to New York to perfect her musical training.

[Note: *This part of her story was likely fabricated by the press to cast a favorable light on Blanche. In the Gilded Age morals of the time, a girl from a poor family traveling East to further an art career was considered far more suitable than a single woman who was a powerful businesswoman, which Blanche became, not a singer. There is no reliable extant information of Blanche as a famous singer.*]

She was given a letter of introduction to Henry C. Brown, a banker, whose brother, J. Munro Brown, she later met and married on May 21, 1879, in Brooklyn, New York. They lived in New York City and later Netherwood, New Jersey. The marriage produced two sons, plus the stepdaughter from Brown's first marriage. While the family was traveling in Switzerland in 1887, Brown died suddenly, and the widow returned to the United States with the three children.

Not long after her return home, Blanche returned to her childhood home in McConnelsville to tend to a dying brother. While there, she met and became fast friends with Charles Sprague, owner/editor of several local newspapers, and the son of the U.S. Congressman from the 15th Ohio District. They formed a deep personal friendship even though he was rumored to be engaged to a college friend out west. Blanche soon left to return east to the Hotel Netherwood where she was in a short time the object of the ardent affection of a Count Marazzi.



Blanche Seaman Sprague
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Soon after Blanche's departure, Charles Sprague also left McConnelsville, the gossips all thinking he was heading west to be married. Dead wrong. He went straight to the Hotel Netherwood to join Blanche and the Count at dinner. Not long after, Blanche and Charles Sprague were married in the Netherwood church on September 26, 1888. This wedding was a major social event, notoriously dubbed a "flash wedding" because it was one of the very first to use instantaneous artificial flash powder. It made headlines and was a media sensation, no doubt in part because of Sprague's burgeoning media empire.

In 1890 the Spragues moved to Colorado Springs where he founded the *Colorado Springs Evening Telegraph* and the *Mining Investor*. Sprague came to Goldfield, Nevada, in December 1905 with an established reputation as a prominent newspaperman and politician from Colorado. In 1906 he purchased the *Goldfield News* and developed it into one of the most successful businesses in the district with a readership across the entire nation.

Meanwhile Blanche kept herself busy as a socialite wife in Goldfield and as Charles's bookkeeper and business partner.

Her other major interest was genealogy. She was a member of the Mayflower Society, a descendant of both John Alden and Miles Standish. She was the founder of the first Nevada Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), and her home was where the first meeting was held in February 1910. She was adamant that her children retain the knowledge of their DAR heritage, so she created a Century Chest in Colorado to preserve her family's history and connection to the Mayflower.

In 2010 the Nevada State Society of the Daughters on the American Revolution placed a plaque on the Sprague's home in Goldfield. It reads: "The Gables. Home of Blanche Sprague, Organizing Regent of Nevada, February 12, 1910. Nevada State Society, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, Dedicated August 22, 2010."





The Gables, Goldfield, Nevada and the D.A.R. plaque. Photos from the Ekman Collection.

Prior to the move to Goldfield, Blanche and Charles had divorced in Colorado after nine years of marriage, possibly because of the clash between public prominence, severe illness, and the pressure of managing a burgeoning media empire; they remarried four months later in Chicago.

Sprague made many fortunes in the mining business in Goldfield but then fell on hard times. When the news building burned down, he moved his family to Los Angeles, Calif., where he died in 1931.



Charles S. Sprague, "Sunny Boy" [Charles S.] McCandless, Munro Brown, Blanche Seaman Sprague, unidentified woman, in Los Angeles.
Photo from the McCandless Collection.

Blanche died in 1940 at the age of 84 years. She and Charles are in the Hollywood Memorial Park Cemetery, which was renamed in 1998 to Hollywood Forever Cemetery. Her headstone reads "Adored wife mother friend. Noble Example of Womanhood."



Researched by Patti Bernard and written by Joanne Whalen. 2026.

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