

Amelia "Millie" Brittingham Murdock Witt

1875-1957

County Treasurer and Librarian for Wasatch County

Biography by Ann Engar

Millie Murdock was born the day after Christmas 1875 in Heber City, Utah, to John Heber and Mary Elvira Gallagher Murdock in a tiny, roofed log cabin. Named for her maternal grandmother, Millie was the oldest daughter of eleven children. Her early years were spent on a farm, and she enjoyed school, especially reading.

When Millie was nine, her father was called to move the family to St. Johns, Arizona, to help the struggling Latter-day Saints there. They sold everything and left a comfortable home to live in what Millie called a "wild and lawless country." Yet she described these as "happy times" in which she grew to appreciate water. Her mother, however, was not strong, and after six years the family returned to Heber. Millie's mother died in childbirth when Millie was sixteen. Millie then had responsibility for her six younger siblings.

Millie was the first pupil in Wasatch County to "graduate from the grades" (students graduated after 8th grade). She wanted to attend Brigham Young Academy, but her family did not have the money. She passed the State Teachers' Examination and, after attending the Academy for one summer session, was allowed to teach school. She taught at the Central School in Heber for five years. Millie served as president of the East Ward Young Ladies Mutual, secretary of the Sunday School, town clerk, and "Queen of Wasatch."

In 1899, she married Joseph William Witt, and they became the parents of five children. They moved back and forth from Heber to Park City, as Will was a miner and rose to be superintendent of the Mountain Lake Mine. He suffered appendicitis in 1914 and, with a bad heart, was never well again. He could not work, so Millie took care of the family and the farm—stacking grain, mowing, shocking grain, hoeing, irrigating, and fixing fences.

Active politically, Millie ran as a Democrat for County Treasurer for Wasatch County and served two terms. In each case, her political opponent was also a woman. She took office January 1, 1917; her husband died January 28. She wrote, "It was hard to begin work and be before the public and have not a minute to mourn." Among her responsibilities were collecting taxes and assembling and publishing a delinquent tax list.

A single mother, Millie was torn between work and family responsibilities. In the flu epidemic of 1918, she and two of her children contracted the disease, and one son was ill for almost a year.

After she lost the 1920 election, Millie supported her family by teaching third grade again at Heber Central School for two years. She briefly moved to Provo but returned to Heber in 1923 as Wasatch County librarian, a role she served in for a number of years. A member of the Utah Library Association, she took part in discussions of the role of county libraries in 1927.

In the latter part of her life, Millie devoted herself to her family, traveling to see her daughters Wilmuth in Nevada and Pearl in Denver. She died December 17, 1957, in Salt Lake City.

Bibliography

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