

**Christine McLaren Lawrence (Mrs. Charles M.) Reeve
1851-1935**



Figure 1: Christine McLaren Lawrence Reeve

Christine McLaren Lawrence was born in 1851 in Syracuse New York, daughter of James Robbins Lawrence Jr. and Helen M. Wetherby. James was a lawyer who died in Louisiana of disease during the Civil War, “without having had a chance to fight.” In 1865, her mother was listed as the head of household, living with her two children, Christine and her brother James, and two teachers who boarded at their house in Syracuse. Christine’s brother graduated from Hamilton College in 1868 and moved to Minneapolis to practice law, serving as District Attorney in Minneapolis from 1872-1876.

Christine married Charles McCormick Reeve at St. Mark’s Church in Minneapolis on 31 May 1873. Charles had graduated from Yale and had recently passed the bar. Shortly after his graduation, he undertook a scientific fossil-hunting expedition to Nebraska and was successful with the help of William “Buffalo Bill” Cody. The fossils were donated to Yale’s Peabody Museum.

Charles worked as a cashier at the City Bank for eleven years and was elected to the State legislature in 1890. He was one of nine founders of Farmers and Mechanics State Bank in Minneapolis. He joined the National Guard in 1883. In his military career, Charles served in the Spanish American War and led the charge in the Battle of Manila. He then served as military Chief of Police in Manila. He was cited for “gallant and meritorious service” and attained the rank of Brigadier General. After returning to Minneapolis, he was the warden of the State Prison at Stillwater for nearly three years, then returned to business pursuits.

Charles and Christine purchased a 250-acre farm on the shore of Lake Harriet. Over time, they sold parcels of the property, becoming wealthy and acquiring impressive collections of antiques, weapons, and coins, many of which were later donated to museums and colleges. Christine was a founding member of the National Society of Colonial



Figure 2: Gathering at the Reeve home near Lake Harriet, 1903. Courtesy Hennepin County Library.

Dames of America in the State of Minnesota in 1896 and hosted the Dames at an outing to the Lake Harriett home in 1900, described by Ada W. Adams. Mrs. Adams described the surroundings as “of rare beauty, situated upon an elevation overlooking the blue lake, encircled by a wide expanse of finest meadow and upland.” The luncheon itself took place “under arms from the far fields of Manila, spears being artistically arranged upon the wall.”

Christine and Charles had two children, Charles Isaac, “Charlie,” and Christine Agnes, who died four days apart in 1879 of typhoid fever. Christine Agnes was three years old and Charlie was two. Many years later, in 1933, Charles and Christine commissioned and dedicated stained glass windows honoring the children’s memory at the Plymouth Congregational Church in Minneapolis. The window theme featured their Puritan ancestors John Winthrop, John Hooker, and Jonathon Edwards.



Figure 3: Locket with photos of the Reeve children, Charlie and Christine Agnes. Courtesy of Rachel Lawrence-Boden.

A story in the *Syracuse Herald* on December 2, 1917, provides a glimpse of Christine’s personality.

When Charles was called away to command a regiment in Manila, Christine “bought a full uniform ‘for a young man about my size,’ cut her curly hair off close to her head, joined the regiment in the crowd at the train just before the starting time, and quite without notice made the trip from Minneapolis to San Francisco- passed in the marching ranks on to the waiting troop steamer, and only after that had passed through the Golden Gate and was well out to sea, did she go to the colonel and confess.”

She was set ashore at Honolulu and told to return home. She bid farewell to her husband as his ship continued on, and waited for the next regular steamer to Manila, which she boarded to provide her husband “a happy surprise.” Her persistence paid off, as she remained with her husband “at the front until peace was declared.”

In later years, the Reeves kept a summer home on Minnetonka Beach and wintered in Pasadena, California. In Pasadena, they were each donors to the Red Cross. Charles was Chairman of the Pasadena Chapter of the American Red Cross from 1923 to 1935. He donated funds for construction of the Pasadena Red Cross chapter house in Christine’s memory after her death in 1935.

Upon Christine’s death, the Minneapolis newspaper said she was “one of the pioneer residents of Minneapolis and was active for years in the social life of the city. “

After Christine's death, Charles began wintering in Winter Park, Florida, home of Rollins College. He supported an essay contest at Rollins and also endowed the Charles McCormick Reeve Award for Scholarship, given each year to the highest-performing students. He died in 1947, a few weeks before his 100th birthday.

Colonial Ancestor

William Bradford (1590-1657) was the Colonial ancestor of twenty-three Minnesota Dames, including Christine and other founding members Ada Adams and Eliza Edgerton Newport. A Mayflower passenger, he served as Governor of Plymouth Colony from 1621-1632, serving again in 1635, 1637, 1639-1643, and 1645-1656. His journal, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, an account of the years 1621-1646, is one of the most complete and best-known descriptions of early life in the Plymouth Colony.

Christine was the sixth great granddaughter of William Bradford on her father's side. Several generations of the family remained in Plymouth: William and Alice's son William, his son David, and David's daughter Lydia Bradford. The daughter of Lydia and her husband Lazarus LeBaron was the first to move away from Plymouth. Christine's second great grandmother Elizabeth LeBaron married the Reverend Ammi R. Robbins of Connecticut in 1762 and settled there. After his graduation from Yale, Ammi became the first pastor of the Congregational Church in Norfolk. He and Elizabeth had eight children by 1775; the first four of whom died in infancy.

Ammi served as chaplain in the Revolutionary Army in 1776 and kept a journal, published in 1850 by Yale. In his seven months of service, he was sent back home due to serious illness twice, but each time returned to duty, visiting the sick in between bouts of his own illness, observing the horrors of war and searching for words of comfort for the soldiers, though "...their sorrows take hold of me." He returned home and the couple had five more children. He remained the pastor of the Congregational Church at Norfolk for fifty two years. In later years, he was trustee of Williams College and became a mentor to many young men who were considering entering the clergy.

Ammi and Elizabeth's daughter Elizabeth Robbins married Grove Lawrence, and among their nine children was Christine's grandfather, James Robbins Lawrence. Born in Norfolk, Connecticut in 1790, he married Christine McLaren, a Scotswoman, in 1810. He also



Figure 4: General Charles McCormick Reeve, Courtesy of MN Historical Society



Figure 5: Rev. Ammi R. Robbins, Yale University (public domain)



Figure 6: Honorable James Robbins Lawrence Sr., Christine's grandfather. Courtesy of Rachel Lawrence-Boden

graduated from Hamilton Oneida Academy that year. Hamilton became a college in 1812, and James maintained a long association with it, serving on its Board of Trustees for over thirty years, from 1836 to 1867, and receiving an honorary degree in 1862. Christine, the namesake and grandmother of Christine McLaren Lawrence Reeve, died in 1835.

James was elected County Judge of Onondaga County in 1847. In September 1850, he was appointed District Attorney

of the Northern District of New York by Millard Fillmore, and a year later prosecuted the famous "Jerry Rescue" case of October 1851, in which a group of abolitionists

broke into the Syracuse jail and freed William "Jerry" Henry, a former enslaved person, and helped him flee to Canada. The abolitionists who freed him were in violation of the new Fugitive Slave Law and were tried, but only one was convicted. James died in 1874 in Syracuse.

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Figure 7: Christine McLaren Lawrence, Christine's grandmother. Courtesy of Rachel Lawrence-Boden

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