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## Wilhelmina “Minnie” Toeneboehn

Pioneer Woman of the Kansas Prairie

Wilhelmina "Lena" "Minnie" Toeneboehn

1886–1970

**BIRTH** 22 AUG 1886 • St Louis, Missouri, USA

**DEATH** 20 SEP 1970 • Shawnee, Johnson County, Kansas, USA

### Introduction:

When I was about ten (ca. 1960), we lived in Overland Park, KS (suburb of Kansas City). My Mom regularly visited her Aunt Minnie (sister of her late father, Frank Toeneboehn). We, my Mom, brother and me, would drive up and down the rolling backroads of Shawnee in Johnson County in our 1951 Chevy until we reached a home (3000 S 63 St) that sat back off the road up a steep rocky horseshoe-shaped driveway. At the top of the hill was a large house (unfinished) situated in the trees and another smaller house situated behind the house. Aunt Minnie lived in the large house with her third husband, Earl Higman. In the small house lived Nadine Webb, Aunt Minnie's daughter from her second marriage to Ben Webb. [Note: My sister, Bonnie, recalls that when she went over to Aunt Minnie's house (years earlier than me), it was half built and Minnie and Earl lived in the basement.]

As we drove up the steep hill to her house, Aunt Minnie always came outside to greet us, in good spirits, and very glad to see my Mom. She seemed to always be dresses and seemed she was, having been always uncomfortable because when we going to another world class Overland Park always offered food to it, just did not look never ate anything at



What I remember was a kitchen in the front. I'm not sure if

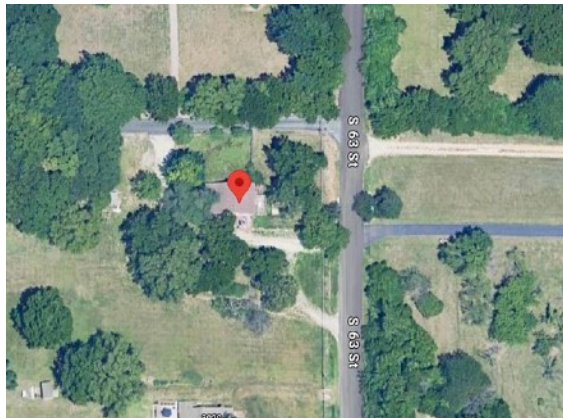
dressed in nightgown like quite old to me, which I guess born in 1886. These visits were for me. I think this was visited Aunt Minnie it was like that was far from my middle world at the time. Aunt Minnie us. But, her food, when I saw good or smell good to eat. I Aunt Minnie's.

about the house was that there back and a big room in the there were any bedrooms. In

the big room were a few old chairs covered in blankets and a spittoon that Earl used for tobacco chewing. At the front of the big room was a front door. But, you could not use the front door because there was no porch and you could drop about 10 feet to the ground if you stepped out.

My brother and I would usually find a way to stay outside, playing in the driveway, throwing rocks. One time Earl came out and started pulling weeds. I knew what poison ivy was and I knew to stay away from it. I was fascinated to watch Earl pulling up poison ivy vines like they were common weeds. At the time, not knowing that there are people who are not allergic to poison ivy, I thought he had magic powers.

Our visits with Aunt Minnie would last not much more than an hour, or at least until my brother and I would begin to get annoying with our driveway rock throwing. I was quick to hop in the car for the drive home, which started with a treacherous ride down the other side of the steep horseshoe driveway.



3000 S 63rd St, Shawnee, KS

My Mom told me, on more than one occasion, that Aunt Minnie lived in a sod house on the plains of Kansas when she was a young girl. This particular fact has always intrigued me. So, let's restore the life of Minnie Toeneboehn and see if we can determine if that was true.

## **Early History:**

Minnie was the youngest of three children (brother, Frank and sister, Hulda), born in 1886, in St. Louis. MO.

### Minnie's parents:

Franz "Frank" George Toeneboehn Sr  
1856–1927

**BIRTH** SEP 1856 • Buchanan County, Iowa

**DEATH** 2 JUN 1927 • Kansas City, Wyandotte, Kansas

married: 1883 in St. Louis

Wilhelmina "Minnie" Wendt  
1862–1944

**BIRTH** 27 NOV 1862 • Halle, Saxony-Anhalt, Germany

**DEATH** 15 MAR 1944 • Kansas City, Wyandotte, Kansas

Frank and Minnie Toeneboehn were pioneering urban farmers in St. Louis. However, upon the death of Frank's mother, Caroline, in 1896 and exclusion from her will, the family moved to Kansas City, KS. There, they continued to farm. Minnie was about 10 years old during this move.

In July 1906 Minnie (age 19) married Matthias "Tice" Meyer (age 26).

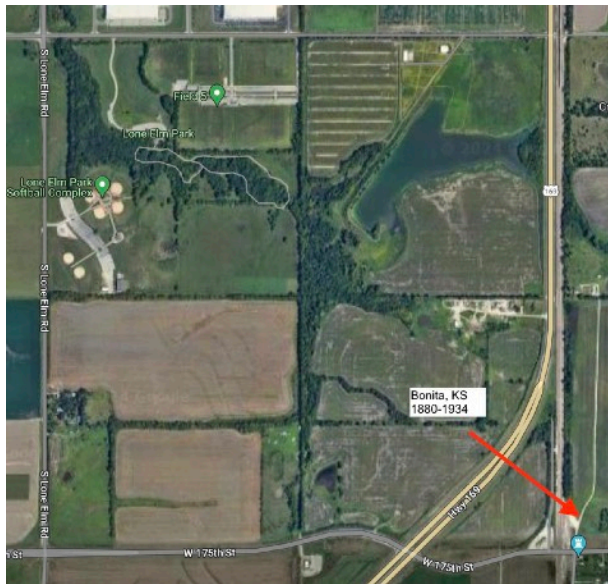


Tice and Minnie rented some land in SW Johnson County, KS, near Bonita (now a ghost town), where they intended to farm.

Without trees or ready to use stone, it's entirely possible that they constructed a sod house. Sod is the top layer of earth that includes grass, roots and clinging dirt. Sod is an excellent insulator, necessary when the harsh Kansas winter and summer winds blew cold or hot.

[**Note:** Most homesteaders cut bricks with special plows (using mules, oxen, horses) that were 18 inches wide by 24 inches long and weighed around 50 pounds each. Approximately 3000 bricks were required to build a 16 x 20 foot house. Freshly cut sod bricks were laid root-side up in order for the roots to continue to grow into the brick above it. Over time, the bricks in fact grew together to form a very strong wall.]





Approx. Meyer Farm location and Bonita, KS area

In 1908, their son, Edward Francis, was born. In the 1910 census, the Meyer family was living in the town of Gardner, KS. Gardner, a small town SW of Olathe in Johnson County (near Bonita).

In July, 1914, their daughter, Lorene, was born.

In early Nov. 1914, Tice Meyer took sick with Tuberculosis. The disease slowly overtook him and he died in Dec. 1914:

Mr. Tice Meyer, living about six miles southwest of town, has been quite seriously ill but is now improving.

Tice Meyer, who has been at Corpus Christi for some time, is reported to be getting strong and healthy again.

The following relatives visited with Mr. and Mrs. Tice Meyer last week: Mr. and Mrs. Pete Meyer, of Morse; Mr. and Mrs. John Meyer, of near Morse; Mr. and Mrs. Jake Meyer, of Lenexa; Mr. and Mrs. Joe Ebeck, Mr. and Mrs. Chas. Brown, of Wyandotte; Mr. and Mrs. Will Behringer, of Edgerton; Mr. and Mrs. Frank Toeneben, of Turner; Mr. and Mrs. Henry T. Zimmer, of Kansas City, Kansas; Mr. and Mrs. Louis Rieke, of Shawnee; and Mr. and Mrs. Max Wendt of Ocheltree.

Tice Meyer, who formerly lived on Miss Maggie Harrington's place north of town, died Thursday of last week and was buried Sunday in the Olathe cemetery. Deceased has recently occupied the Doctor Good place east of town. He leaves a wife and several children,

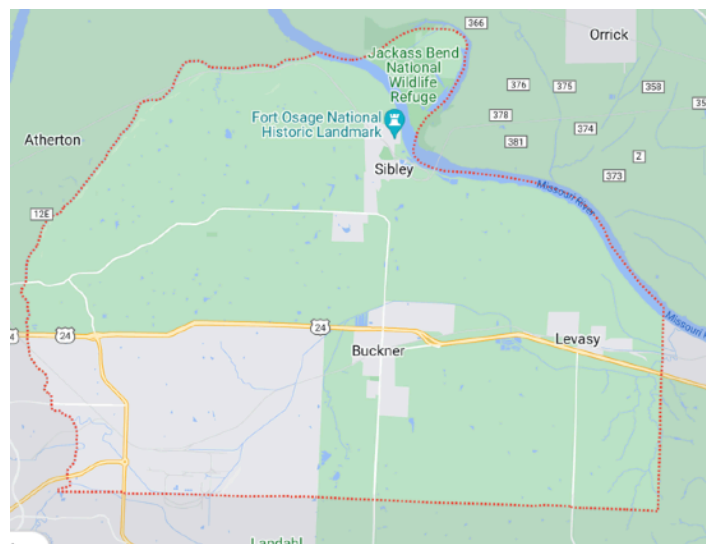
Soon after the death of Tice, Minnie, her son Edward, and daughter Lorene, moved in with her parents in Shawnee, Johnson County, KS.

At the age of 35, Minnie married Benjamin Franklin Webb (age 48, 1873-1944) in April 1921. The marriage to Minnie was Ben's second. His first marriage, with Elizabeth Gregg (1868-1947), produced four children. Ben and Elizabeth divorced about 1917. The children, including a son, Samuel Preston Webb, lived their mother. More on Sam in a moment.

Ben and Minnie truck farmed in the Shawnee area of Johnson County, KS. In Sep. 1924 their daughter, Nadine, was born.



Let's take a moment to get to know Ben Webb and his parents, Preston "Press" Webb (1836-1899) and Mary Perry-Webb (1835-1924). Ben was born in the Buckner area of Fort Osage Township (Jackson County), east of Kansas City.



Books have been written about the “*Fighting Webbs of Jackson County, Missouri*”. Press joined the Confederacy early in the Civil War and fought against the Jayhawkers, who raided western Missouri from eastern Kansas. He joined William Quantrill and his guerrilla company of raiders becoming his trusted scout. Scores of Webb family served under Quantrill. They fought in all major Missouri battles during the war.



Press Webb, 1863



Press Webb, Quantrill Scout

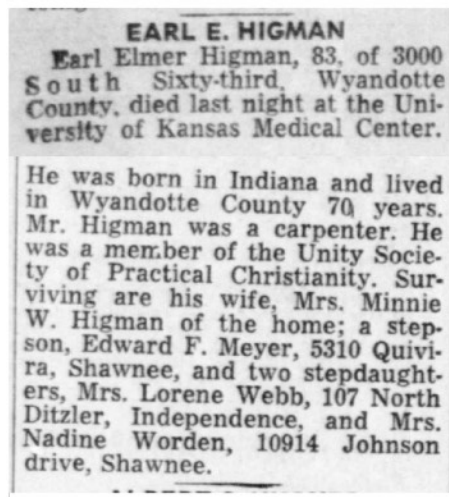
After the war, Press and Mary settled in Fort Osage Township of Jackson County, west of Buckner, and raised 12 children, among them Benjamin Franklin Webb.

By 1930, Ben Webb and Minnie, Lorene (15) and Nadine (5) were living in Prairie Township of Jackson County. They rented a home and were truck farmers.

**[Note:** Interestingly, in about 1933, Lorene Hulda Meyer (1914-1999), the daughter of Minnie and Tice Meyer married Samuel Preston Webb (1903-1961), the son of Ben Webb and Elizabeth Gregg. Lorene and Sam produced three children.]

By 1940, Ben Webb was living alone in Independence, Jackson County and listed himself as divorced. It's not clear what happened to cause a divorce in about 1937. However, by 1940, Minnie had remarried to Earl Higman (1884-1965).

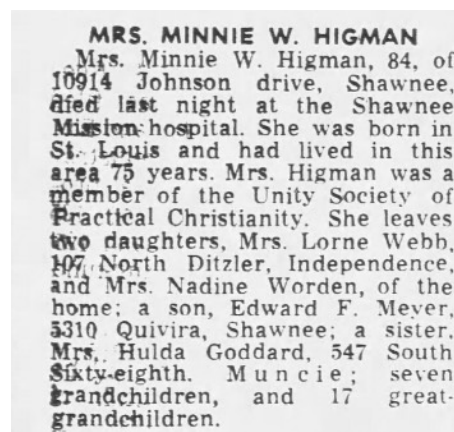
Not much detail is known about Earl. He had a first marriage and three children. That marriage ended in divorce and the children lived with their



mother. Earl was apparently quite handy; machinist, stone mason, carpenter. We also know he was immune to poison ivy. Minnie and Earl lived together for about 25 years until his death in 1965.

[Note: You will notice in the OBITs that Earl and Minnie were a members of the Unity Society of Practical Christianity. Unity was founded in Kansas City in 1903 by Charles and Myrtle Fillmore. Their founding principle was using Affirmative Prayer, asking for something that was already in process, instead of pleading. Among many educational and service outreach programs, they founded Silent Unity, one of the oldest 24-hour prayer ministries in the United States. Unity churches are active throughout the world and Unity Farm remains active in the Lee's Summit area of Jackson County. During her life, my mother was also an active Unity adherent.]

Minnie Toeneboehn-Meyer-Webb-Higman died in Sep. 1970 at the age of 84. To the best of my knowledge, she never had a telephone, never had a driver license, never owned a car, never traveled on public transportation, never had a TV. She was a survivor, pioneer, and a good example on how to live a simple yet full life.



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