

The Last 48 Hours of Joseph Mooney

Joseph Mooney had married Sarah VanNess in Fremont County, Iowa, in 1865, and was the father of her two children. After Sarah died, sometime in the 1870s, he married Ida L. Palmer in Eastland County, Texas, in 1882. In 1889, he and Ida moved to the area that soon became Guthrie, Logan County, Oklahoma, where they would remain for the rest of their lives. Joseph had five children with Ida before she passed away in 1899. Joseph became quite well known in Guthrie and served as the Logan County Street Commissioner for a couple of years in the early 1900s. Joseph died in Guthrie on 27 October 1908, but just 2 days before that date he gave a statement to a local newspaper which set off a war of words between Guthrie's two partisan newspapers.

The articles transcribed here cover the controversy and also include brief obituaries of Joseph. It should be noted, though, that a couple of items in those obituaries seem to be incorrect: (1) Joseph was actually born in Ohio, not Iowa, although his family relocated to Iowa when he was 5 years old. (2) Official duty rosters show that Joseph served in Company A of the Iowa 8th Cavalry, rather than Company D.

From *The Guthrie Daily Leader* (Guthrie, Oklahoma), 26 October 1908, Mon., p. 1

M'GUIRE'S DUPLICITY EXPOSED

OLD SOLDIER GIVES REASON
FOR BOLTING REPUBLICAN
CANDIDATE

PROMISED PENSION IN-
CREASE THAT NEVER CAME

Devious Methods Used By Wily Congressman to Hold Old Soldier Vote

“I will at the coming general election vote a straight Republican ticket with one exception, that being for congressman. I can not vote for B. S. McGuire for congress because I do not believe he is a friend of the old soldiers.”

The above is the statement to *The Leader* by Joseph Mooney, of 514 West Oklahoma avenue. Mooney is a Civil War veteran, who states that McGuire, whom he has supported for office twice and in the primary against B. T. Hainer for congress, had gotten back on him when he needed assistance. He accuses McGuire of attempting to hold his vote by

stating that he will have a special medical examiner call upon him from the department of pensions and that he would get his pension increase for him before election. Joseph Mooney is well known throughout the state among the old soldiers and in Guthrie, where he served at one time as street commissioner. He has been a helpless invalid for the past year, suffering from foot and leg trouble due to rheumatic paralysis, and his eyes are also affected. He is compelled to hire a nurse to take care of him and can not live on the pension he is getting, \$30 a month, and pay nurse and his doctor bills.

Mr. Mooney stated yesterday that McGuire had been promising him for two years to have a special examiner come and examine him for his increase. He states that he had physician after physician make affidavit that the diseases upon which he applied for an increase of pension existed and that time after time he had filled out the application and sent it to Congressman McGuire to get him to present the same to the pension department at Washington. He states that McGuire kept telling him that he would attend to it and that when he came home last fall he called upon him and presented his papers for an increase. McGuire stated that he did not approve the way they were drawn up and that he would fix them over and send them off.

"In the meantime," continued Mooney, "he kept writing me from Washington to do what I could among the old soldiers for him on election day, declaring that the goods must be delivered first. I worked at the polls last election for McGuire tirelessly and secured many votes for him. Now when I am down and need the increase the worst kind he has failed me again. I wrote him every few weeks this summer and two weeks ago McGuire's private secretary, Earl Croxton, called at my place and stated that they would telegraph for a special examiner from the pension department at once and that the papers would be drawn at once so that there would be no

delay whatever and to have my physician make an affidavit that would state that the diseases existed, so that the pension department would be warranted in making the necessary papers.

"My physician, L. M. Overton, was also seen by McGuire's secretary, who told him of my pitiful condition and wanted him to make out the affidavit and examination papers at once so that the matter could be attended to. Dr. Overton stated that he would bring the papers over to McGuire's headquarters that afternoon if that would help matters any. Croxton said no, that would be too much bother and that the papers would be sent for."

Mr. Mooney stated that his physician drew the papers that day and phoned to Mr. Croxton several times and told him they were ready. Mr. Croxton did not call until almost a week later for the papers. He stated that the affidavit was not in form and that he would have it rewritten and send it over for the physician to sign the next day. Mr. Mooney and the physician waited day after day for Croxton to send the papers, which has not been done to this day, states Mr. Mooney.

"I see now that they did not intend to do anything for me and just tried to hold my vote in line with their stories about telegraphing for a special examiner."

Mr. Mooney, continuing his statement, said: "I sent for a Leader reporter and give this story out to the press voluntarily. I have been a Republican all my life and one of the faithful workers of the party in this county. I helped organize the first political organization in this county, I helped name this county. I have always voted the straight Republican ticket. I have stood for McGuire both times he was up for election and voted for him in the recent primary against Judge Hainer, one of the best friends I ever had. McGuire has been promising to do something for me for two years, and has not done it, and I have now come to the conclusion that he is no friend of an honest man.

“I don’t need his help. I could have gotten my pension increase long before if I had sought my friends, instead of McGuire. I served with distinction in company D, Iowa volunteer cavalry, during the war and was on the roll of honor. Senator Hepburne, of Iowa, one of my lifelong friends, had told me never to want for a thing, and I have personal friends in the state offices of Iowa and department offices in Washington, and I shall have my affidavit of my physician prepared today and send it direct to the pension department and have Senator Hepburne, of Iowa, and my Washington friends look after the matter.

“If I am able, I will work against McGuire at the polls on election day. My son, who is a voter, will vote against him, like myself. I have all of McGuire’s letters to me urging me to work for him at the polls and his promises of aid and will show them to all that will call at my door.”

Mr. Mooney last Friday directed the following letter to Congressman McGuire at his headquarters at the Hotel Ione:

“Hon. B. S. McGuire, Republican State Headquarters, Ione Hotel, Guthrie.

“Dear Sir: I am very much wearied in regard to my pension claim, there being nothing done with it until now. I can not help but feel that you are neglecting your duty in my case and I feel a spirit of resentment which I shall be justified in doing what I can for your defeat at the polls November 3. I am an old soldier and belong to the Union veterans, and belonged to Captain Geo. W. Burns’ Company D, Eighth Iowa volunteer cavalry. I am known personally to all my comrades over the First congressional district. I have waited now almost ten days since your secretary called for my papers to be sent off for an increase in my pension, which you know I am entitled to. I am now beginning to believe that your story about writing for a special examiner was a political trick of yours to keep me and my friends in line for you on election day. If you

were doing your duty as a public official you would not demand that I work for you year after year to get a just pension claim allowed. If you were my friend as you pretend to be you would have given me my pension claim long ago. Yours respectfully, JOSEPH MOONEY.”

The Guthrie Daily Leader (Guthrie, Oklahoma), 27 October 1908, Tue., p. 1

JOSEPH MOONEY, VETERAN DEAD

At 6:30 o’clock this morning Joseph Mooney, patriot, soldier and pioneer passed from the living. The veteran, sick for many years and with the weight of 67 years balancing the scale against recovery, was dead almost before loved ones knew he was worse.

Only Sunday afternoon a representative of *The Leader* had called and taken a statement of the pioneer regarding pension affairs, death ending the contest which brought about the interview.

Mr. Mooney was a native of Iowa and fought in Company D, Iowa volunteer cavalry throughout the Civil war, there incurring the injuries which during the remainder of life caused him much suffering.

In 1889 he made the trip to Logan county, and has since that time been a citizen of the new land. He was street commissioner of the city of Guthrie and has been prominent since the opening day. His wife died in 1899, since which time he made his home with a son, Bert F., who resides at 514 West Cleveland avenue.

Another child, a daughter, Mrs. Leonard Bradley, resides here, the other five children being citizens of Tulsa. All will attend the obsequies, which will be held Wednesday afternoon at 2 o’clock. Interment will be made in Summitview cemetery.

The Guthrie Daily Leader (Guthrie, Oklahoma), 28 October 1908, Wed., p. 1

FUNERAL OF JOSEPH MOONEY

The funeral services for the late Joseph Mooney were conducted from the residence, 514 West Oklahoma avenue, this afternoon under the auspices of Hartranft Post No. 3, of which the deceased was a member. The body was interred in Summit View cemetery. The pallbearers were W. H. Herod, M. L. Mock, A. C. Ayres, George Latta, J. W. Ray and George Reed.

The Oklahoma State Capital (Guthrie, Oklahoma), 29 October 1908, Thu., p. 8

WAS GO-BETWEEN

DYING WORDS “DOCTORED”

Alleged Physician Helped Afternoon Paper Secure Political Dope From Semi-Conscious Man

Dragging politics into the death chamber and virtually shoving from his bedside those who would have been near to him in the last hours of life, a representative of Governor Haskell’s Personal Defense Sunday, at the instance, it is said, of Dr. L. M. Overton, a decided partisan, called upon Joseph Mooney of 514 West Cleveland Avenue, a civil war veteran and long-time resident of Guthrie and obtained from him what purported to be an interview in which Congressman McGuire was criticised for failure to secure for him an increase in pensions. At the time Mr. Mooney, who had been an invalid for years, was lying practically unconscious. The interview was published Monday afternoon. Mr. Mooney died at 6:30 Tuesday morning.

“Mr. Mooney had long been a friend of Mr. McGuire’s and had frequently said that McGuire had gotten for him his pension of \$30,” said a West-End business man whose name is withheld by request.

“He had been in ill health for years,” continued the speaker, “and had recently had as his physician Dr. Overton, an active Democratic worker. Mr. Mooney was a very sick man Sunday afternoon—so sick that it would have been a physical impossibility for him to have made a statement of such length as published in the afternoon paper.”

The Oklahoma State Capital (Guthrie, Oklahoma), 29 Oct 1908, Thu., p. 5

JOSEPH MOONEY

Joseph Mooney, an old and highly respected citizen of Guthrie passed away at 6:30 yesterday morning. His age was 67 years. He had been ill for a number of years, and while his death was not altogether unexpected, it came almost before the watchers at his bedside knew he had grown worse. Mr. Mooney was a native of Iowa and served throughout the war of the rebellion in an Iowa volunteer regiment. During the war he received injuries that caused him great suffering during all the rest of his life.

In 1889 he came to Logan county where he has since resided, having been prominent here ever since the opening. He was at one time city street commissioner. In 1889 his wife died, since which time he has made his home with a son, Bert F. Mooney of 514 West Cleveland. A daughter, Mrs. Leonard Bradley also lives here. Five other children make their home at Tulsa. All are expected to be here at two o’clock at which time the funeral is to take place. The burial will be in Summit View Cemetery.

Oklahoma Weekly Leader (Guthrie, Oklahoma), 29 October 1908, Thu., p. 4

AS TO MR. MOONEY

Concerning the demise of Mr. Mooney who had the day prior to demise authorized a statement to *The Leader*, the local Santa Fe paper* attempts to crawl from under the severe indictment Mr. Mooney rendered against Cowtax McGuire* by stating the deceased was unconscious when the interview was printed.

The cowtax defense does not worry *The Leader*, even though McGuire had his lackey print the falsehood before the body of Mr. Mooney was laid in the grave.

Mr. Mooney sent for a *Leader* representative and in his yard made the printed statement, making special request that it be printed at once. He declared he would need the increased pension and wanted it acted upon at the earliest moment.

If *The Leader* wished to be half as unfair as the Santa Fe sheet it could dilate on the case. The son had been working in the office of the newspaper now seeking to falsify about the deceased Mr. Mooney; had worked faithfully and got no compensation for his labor save a piece of colored paper worth about as much as any statement or promise that comes from the cowtax organ—nothing.

The organ is in splendid shape to criticize *The Leader*—lying about the father and accepting services from the son without giving more than a blue streak in payment—grand sheet, backed by deception and lack of principle!

* *The Leader's* reference to the *State Capital* as “the local Santa Fe paper” surely refers to the Santa Fe Railroad, which served Guthrie at that time, rather than to any location. This may have been the *Leader's* way of implying that the *State Capital* was under the influence of railroad management. Its reference to the congressman as “Cowtax McGuire” most likely alludes to some unpopular legislation that the congressman had supported.

Oklahoma State Register (Guthrie, Oklahoma), 29 Oct 1908, Thu -Page 5

JOSEPH MOONEY, VETERAN

Joseph Mooney, patriot, soldier and pioneer, has passed from the living. The veteran, sick for many years, and with the weight of 67 years balancing the scale against recovery, was dead almost before loved ones knew he was worse. Internment was made in Summit View Cemetery Wednesday afternoon.

Afterword

In spite of Joseph's public complaints, Congressman Bird Segle McGuire was reelected in 1908 and continued to serve in Congress until 1915.