

Columbus, Ohio's Royal Wedding

The bride wore a dress of heavy, white-corded silk. Her moderate-length train highlighted a long overskirt looped with a profusion of orange blossoms. A long tulle veil secreted her lovely face graced by a necklace of diamonds and pearls. The groom wore his full dress uniform with some of his decorations around his neck. On his hands were many rings. He was accompanied by members of the Imperial Prussian Legation from Washington, D.C.

The occasion? The wedding of local girl, May Parsons, to Bavarian Prince Alexander Zu Lynar. The couple was wed on May 16, 1871 at Trinity Episcopal Church located on East Broad Street. Although the wedding was set for 12:30pm, by 10am a huge crowd had gathered to witness Miss Parsons become Her Serene Highness.

The bride and groom met just before the Franco-Prussian War. May and her sister, accompanied by their mother, were studying in Europe. The Prince was serving as an attaché to Emperor William I at the German Embassy in Paris. The Prince vowed that if he survived the war he would take May as his bride.

In those days it was not uncommon for wealthy Americans to marry European Royalty who were title-rich and money-poor. But in this case, May seemed to be marrying for love. In fact, it was said at the time that she could do better. After all she was young, beautiful and wealthy – a veritable catch. Nevertheless, the couple lived happily and raised three children.

May's paternal grandfather, Dr. Samuel Parsons, was one of the early prominent citizens of Columbus. He moved from Connecticut to Franklinton in 1811, and then across the river to Columbus in 1816, around the time the city became the state capital. In 1843 he served as a State Representative. May's father, attorney George Parsons, was reported to be one of the city's first millionaires, making money in real estate ventures and railroads.

Parsons Place, the family homestead, was located on a large piece of land at the corner of Parsons Avenue and Bryden Road. The Greek Revival style home served as the Columbus School for Girls from 1901 to 1953. It was demolished in 1954.

May moved to Germany after her wedding and lived out her life there, dying in Lindenau on October 8, 1920. Just prior to her death she sued to regain the family property in Columbus that had been seized by the federal government during World War I because it was "German-owned" property. But anti-German feelings had not always been the case in Columbus. Before World War I, the German community embraced the Prince during his brief stay in 1871. At that time he dedicated the Peace Oak in Schiller Park celebrating the end of the Franco-Prussian War.

SOURCES:

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