

Grace Waldo Jessop

Teaching by example

Grace Jessop was born Grace Waldo in Indianapolis, Indiana. Four years later, she moved to Fort Wayne with her parents. Not much is found about her early life in Fort Wayne, but after high school, Grace began teaching school. In 1895, she married Stephen G. Jessop in Fort Wayne. They then moved to Detroit to build their lives.

In 1898, they had a son, Stephen, and then a daughter, little Grace, in 1902. (This Grace would eventually become one of the founding members of Petoskey's Crooked Tree Arts Center.)

Grace and her little family didn't stay long in Detroit, though. Nine years after settling there, Stephen died of diabetes at the age of 35. Grace took her two young children and moved to Petoskey to live with her mother, who married Mr. McCune at some point between 1893 and 1896. The family home was located at 804 Grove St.

Grace took a substitute-teaching position for a Petoskey teacher who left to care for an ailing sister. The following term, she was hired on as a full-time teacher with a \$400 salary. From that point, Grace would teach for the rest of her life — a total of 44 years in Petoskey. Adding the six years she taught in Fort Wayne before her marriage, she spent 50 of her 79 years teaching.



In addition to her duties in the classroom, Grace almost immediately became active in the Presbyterian church as a leader of Sunday school activities, a member of the West Minster Guild, the Mothers Wives Sisters Club (which she served as vice president) and the Civic Improvement Association board. This group, based out of the Presbyterian church, was responsible for beautifying the city streets, enforcing curfew, placing public restrooms and more. Grace took charge of the Junior League of Civic Improvement. She would pass out flower seeds to the members of the Junior League and award prizes

for the best exhibit of flowers raised by the children. The plants would then be used to enhance Petoskey streets. (This traditions continues to this day when, each spring, St. Francis students plant flowers throughout downtown Petoskey. One can only wonder if this contest of the Junior League of Civic Improvement is where the tradition is rooted, pardon the pun.) Grace was also involved with the Girls' Auxiliary of Lockwood Hospital, the Red Cross, and the registering of young men for war. She represented the second ward in pinning arm bands on those who signed up during a Petoskey registration parade. No doubt the young men she pinned for war were once in her care as students in school.

Grace engaged with her students outside of the classroom in other ways as well. In 1906, she hosted a "hard-times party." During this party, according to the March 31 edition of the *Petoskey Record*, "The scholars divided, one half with the teacher furnishing the entertainment and refreshments for the other half. The young folks had a very happy evening." (Imagine hanging out at your teacher's house for an evening of fun.)

In 1906, Grace presented "The Use of Traveling Libraries" at a teachers' association meeting in Pellston. Perhaps this talk on the importance of getting books to rural families served as a springboard for Grace's eventual involvement with the city library board. Appointed to the board by the mayor in 1907, Grace served on the board in some capacity for the rest of her life. At the time of her death in 1949, she was the acting president.

Grace spent much of her time with the youth of Petoskey, but not all. She was also a member of the Art Study Club, where she would review novels "in a most delightful manner" with and for the other women. She spent her summer vacations furthering her own education in Ypsi-

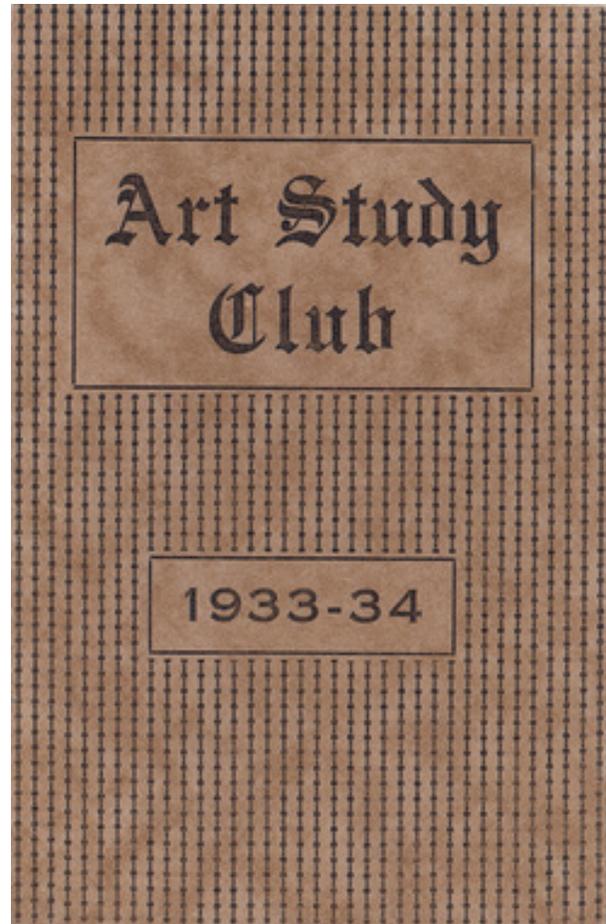


Image courtesy Little Traverse Historical Society

lanti and Kalamazoo, leaving her children home with her mother, Mrs. McCune.

Grace would then bring her newfound knowledge back to the community. From the *Petoskey Evening News*, Dec. 5, 1908, edition in an article about a parent meeting: "Mrs. Jessop followed with an address on the social life of the child, emphasizing the point that in the social life the school room forms the foundation for sound public opinion... [It] was a talk that brought a better understanding to many."

Her involvement in all these things was what brought Grace to the Petoskey Federation of Women's Clubs, of which she was a charter member. In 1909, she was named to several



committees, including the flower committee and the local option committee. It was fitting, then, that she was a guest speaker at a temperance meeting that year at her church. During the 1910 meeting of the Petoskey FWC, where the club voted to align with the state federation, she was named treasurer of the group.

In 1912, Grace was not only named to the board of directors for the Petoskey FWC, she was also made part of the newly created suffrage committee. This committee merged with the local option committee and a new committee, the Emmet county equal suffrage committee, was formed in 1915. According to public meeting minutes, Grace was a part of both.

Along with her rising activities with the federation, Grace was still keeping busy with her regular teaching. By this time she had become the teacher of the “ungraded” department “with a view to giving every possible help to children in need of more individual attention than it is possible for them to receive in the regularly graded rooms.” In

addition, she continued to serve on the library board, led a public speaking class for girls, and participated in the State Teachers’ association.

One can assume Grace and the rest of the women of the Emmet county suffrage committee were keeping their fingers on the pulse of what was happening in the nation. The suffrage movement picked up steam when the house successfully passed the amendment in January of 1918 (though the Senate defeated it).

The *Petoskey Evening News* (May 17, 1918) reported, “Name chairman for suffrage: Northern Michigan being organized. Grace Jessop named head of the work in this county; Zilla Goldstein heads district.

“One of the most important meetings of suffrage workers in this part of the state was that held in Petoskey Thursday and Thursday evening at the Methodist church and high school auditorium. “The meeting resulted in a fine start toward organizing lower Michigan counties of the Eleventh congressional district for the active campaign.

NAME CHAIRMEN FOR SUFFRAGE

NORTHERN MICHIGAN
BEING ORGANIZED.

Mrs. Grace Jessop Named Head of
the Work in This County. Mrs.
Zilla Goldstein Heads District.

One of the most important meetings of suffrage workers in this part of the state was that held in Petoskey Thursday and Thursday evening at the Methodist church and high school auditorium.

The meeting resulted in a fine start toward organizing lower Michigan counties of the Eleventh congressional district for the active campaign.

County chairmen were named for four counties by Mrs. Percy Farrell, of Detroit, president of the state association. Mrs. Zilla Goldstein, chairman of Emmet county, was made chairman of this district, and Mrs. Grace Jessop of this city was named as Emmet county chairman. Mrs. J. Lee Morford was made chairman of Otsego county; Mrs. John Baker, of
(Continued on page four)

County Chairmen were named for four counties by Mrs. Percy Farrell of Detroit, president of the state association: Mrs. Zilla Goldstein, chairman of Emmet county was made chairman of this district and Mrs. Grace Jessop of this city was named as Emmet county chairman.”

Grace Jessop, newly grieving the loss of her husband, took her two young children to a new community. She immersed herself into the organizations of Petoskey, using her talents as an educator, a lover of books, a singer, a gardener, a mother, a speaker and a leader. These talents were used to better a community, not only for women, but for all.

Funeral Is Tuesday For Mrs. Jessop

Funeral services for Mrs. Grace W. Jessop, 79, Petoskey school teacher for 44 years, who died Saturday noon at Lockwood General hospital, will be held at 3:30 p.m. Tuesday at the Presbyterian church. The Rev. E. P. Linnell will be in charge.

Born March 26, 1870, in Indianapolis, Ind., she was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Waldo and moved with her parents to Fort Wayne about four years later, where she grew to young womanhood.

During the years she spent in Fort Wayne she taught school six years and also studied Greek and Latin at Concordia college there.

On October 8, 1895, in Fort Wayne she was married to Stephen G. Jessop. Shortly after their marriage they moved to Detroit to make their home. Mr. Jessop died on December 30, 1903.

In the same year, Mrs. Jessop came to Petoskey where she has since resided. This spring she would have completed 44 years of teaching in Petoskey schools, making a total of 50 years as a school teacher. During the years she spent in Petoskey as a teacher, she attended Ypsilanti and Kalamazoo colleges.

She was a member of the library board and at the time of her death, president of the organization. She also was a member of the Presbyterian church and the Art Study Club. She was active in the State PTA and helped to organize the PTA in northern Michigan.

She is survived by a son, Stephen, of Detroit; a daughter, Grace, of Petoskey; a brother, the Rev. N. A. McCune of East Lansing; two grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

The family has expressed the wish that no flowers be sent.