

[Peck, Martha Lavery]

Mrs. Martha Lavery Peck, 93, Dies  
WAS INSTRUCTRESS AT ST. LAWRENCE IN 1863  
Became Teacher in Iowa and Established Private School

Mrs. Martha Lavery Peck, a one-time instructress in the old preparatory school at St. Lawrence University during Civil War days, died at the home of her niece, Mrs. Addie Taylor, on Buck street, early Thursday morning April 2nd, it being the 93rd anniversary date of her birth. Mrs. Peck, it will be remembered, narrowly escaped with her life from the fire which destroyed the home she was living in at Crary Mills last fall. She had since resided with her niece, Mrs. Taylor.

Martha Lavery Peck was the daughter of John and Sylvia Remington Lavery, her birthplace being Lawrenceville, N.Y., and the date April 2, 1838. Later her parents moved to Canton and she eventually became a teacher in the district schools, the pupils at the Langdon's Corners school being among her charges. In this group was John Langdon Heaton, well known editorial writer of the New York World.

This was during the early days of the Civil War. St. Lawrence University was a struggling institution, trying to get a foothold. Dr. John Stebbins Lee was heroically doing his best to keep the college going, and to do so it was necessary to have a preparatory department to educate the students up to a college grade. It was Dr. Lee who organized the St. Lawrence Teachers' Association and in this work he became acquainted with Miss Lavery, and in 1863 she was hired as an instructress in the preparatory school of the college.

At the close of the school year in 1864 Mrs. Peck resigned her position at St. Lawrence and started west. She went to Iowa, where she engaged in teaching and later established a private school. There she met and married John Franklin Peck and there the couple resided until his death in 1917. Following her husband's death she returned to this section and has resided here since.

Surviving are two nieces, Mrs. Addie Taylor, Canton, and Miss Sylvia Lavery, Canton; two nephews, Warren Lavery, Cawker City, Kansas and Fran Lavery, Pyrites.

Funeral services were held Saturday at 2:30 p.m. from the Taylor home in this village. Interment was made at Bridge Cemetery.

At the Charter Day exercises at St. Lawrence University last May Mrs. Peck was the guest of honor, and at that time the following was given as her recollections of the college during the year she was employed:

"In 1863, when I was twenty-six years old, Professor Lee, a fine man and one loved all over the country, engaged me to teach in the college for one term of thirteen weeks. I was to teach the English branches, Algebra and

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French. I procured board in the family of Heman Matthews, who lived on Park street, below the railroad... There were, I remember, a few silver maples on the college property. We did not then call it the campus. I knew Dr. Fisher, head of the Theological School, and I well remember Olympia Brown, pioneer advocate of the rights of women, when she came here to enter the theological school, preparatory to her career as the first woman minister. Dr. Fisher, who was perhaps not a suffragist, advised her not to come, but she came just the same. She was assigned to a room on the third floor of the college building, all the other rooms being occupied by the men theologues. The third floor was then a dormitory. Well, the men were not very kind to their fellow-student, and it finally got to the point where Mr. Everest, the steward, advised her to give up her room on the third floor and take refuge with his family in the steward's quarters, in the basement.

"Down in the cellar, on the south side, there was a woodshed and, I think, only a dirt floor. Each of the boys who lived on the upper floor had his own bin for wood, and each day sawed up enough to keep him warm for the next twenty-four hours. They got their athletics sawing and carrying up wood, and carrying down ashes.

"The dining room was in the north end of the basement and the kitchen was on the other side. The room in front on the first floor to the left of the entrance was Dr. Fisher's room, and the theologues also used it as a chapel. It had a reading desk and a small reed organ in it. The college students used a room for a chapel that ran across the south end of the first floor... Dr. Lee's room was on the third floor, but I think that the room I used was on the second floor. It was a long time ago, and some details are not now clear... Under the pastorate of L. C. [Lewis Cresaba] Browne I joined the Universalist Church, and I remember J. T. [John Temple] Goodrich, who was the financial agent of the college for a long time. Mr. [Seth W.] Remington, another minister who was also a financial agent, often preached in Canton. In 1865, along with Professor Clapp's family, I went to Chicago, then located in Iowa. I lived first in Muscatine, then in Des Moines, and for many years in Ottumwa. In Ottumwa I had a private school. In 1920 my husband died, and I returned to Crary Mills—I guess that's about all."

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Transcribed on 7 Feb 2008 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY