

[Lucia Elizabeth Heaton]

Dr. Lucia E. Heaton Was Of First Women Physicians
WAS OF EARLY CANTON PIONEERS, A ST. LAW. GRADUATE,
PRACTICED MEDICINE IN CANTON

Dr. Lucia Elizabeth Heaton, a descendant of pioneer Canton families and one of the first women to take up the practice of medicine in the State and the first in Northern New York, passed away at her home, 12 East Main Street, yesterday morning at the advanced age of 88 years four months. Dr. Heaton retired from the practice of medicine several years ago. Dr. Heaton was a graduate of St. Lawrence University, class of 1879, and took her medical degree in New York City in 1892, thereafter taking up her practice in Canton.

Lucia Elizabeth Heaton was born at the old Heaton farm, about two miles from this village, on the Pierrepont road, June 18, 1856, a daughter of Ira Wilmarth and Lucia Langdon Heaton. Both Heaton and Langdon families were of the first settlers of the town of Canton. Her grandfather, John Heaton, settled on the land on what has since been known as Heaton Hill in 1814. On this farm her father, Ira Wilmarth Heaton, was born, and later on here on Heaton Hill were born her sister, Eva Heaton, who married Bernardi Jacques Pink, and became the mother of Louis Heaton Pink, prominent St. Lawrence alumnus of Brooklyn, and recently retired State Superintendent of Insurance; her brother, John Langdon Heaton, long [a] New York newspaperman and editorial writer on the New York World, and publisher of interesting books; and here also was she born in June, 1856.

It is interesting that the Heaton farm, taken up by Dr. Heaton's grandfather, John Heaton, in 1814, is still in the Heaton family, John Langdon Heaton on his death within recent years leaving it to his grandson, John Langdon Heaton, 1937 St. Lawrence man. In 1821 the first John Heaton acquired title to the farm, for at that time all indebtedness was paid, and a deed received for the contract. It is interesting that one hundred years following this on a June day, 1921, a celebration of the 100th year was arranged by John Langdon Heaton. Old friends, the neighbors, and many others were invited to the gathering on the farm on Heaton Hill. It was a glorious June day and the gathering was large. Ledyard P. Hale of Canton and Albany, then counsel for the N.Y. State Public Service Commission, was present and gave the made address, but there were other speakers, including a representative from Cornell University. It was a big day on the hill, and all present enjoyed it, the old time music, the ancient games, the fiddler with the square dances on the green and other things that made it a picture of the early days of the town and country hereabouts. Among those present at that gathering was Dr. Alpheus Baker Hervey,

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former president of St. Lawrence University, and his recently married bride, coming as guests of the Dr. Charles Kelsey Gaines family.

At the Heaton farm John Langdon Heaton, brother of Dr. Heaton, his two sisters, Eva and Lucia, walked to the village school and later came to St. Lawrence University, both graduating. John Langdon went at once following his graduation to New York City and for long years thereafter was engaged in journalistic and literary work, ceasing his labors only when the New York World ceased to publish. He was at his desk as the curtain was drawn on the World and announcement made that the World had ceased to exist. This was a great blow to him, from which he never fully recovered. He died some years ago and is buried in the Heaton reservation [family plot] on Evergreen cemetery, not far from many other old friends of the years.

Lucia Heaton received her B.S. degree from St. Lawrence in 1879 and her M.S. in 1882. She studied medicine in New York City, [the] Woman's Medical College and the N.Y. Medical Infirmary for Women and Children in 1892. She was a student at the N.Y. Post Graduate Medical School and Hospital. She began the practice of medicine in Canton in 1892, having her office on Main Street at the old Heaton home, where she passed on yesterday morning. As the first woman physician in a community like Canton she had the age old prejudice to meet and did it heroically, gaining a very nice practice which she continued for many years until she had come to that age that she felt she must relinquish it.

She served for a number of years on Cornell University extension staff. A great deal of her time through the years was given up to work for the cause of temperance. She was a lifelong member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and she was all her mature years a worker in the cause of votes for women, and was foremost among those who brought victory for that cause in New York State twenty-five years ago.

Dr. Heaton was interested in education and served as the first woman to be elected trustee in the village of Canton, serving for many years on the Board of Education of Dist. No. 1 Canton village. It is recalled that the election of women to the school board was bitterly resented by the ultra conservatives of fifty years ago, and only the backing of such men as Judge L. P. Hale and others was it possible to win a school election. This same condition arose in the fight for votes for women, years later, and Dr. Heaton not only introduced the woman medical practitioner, herself, into a community cold at first, but later on she found the prejudice melting, for women on the school board.

There are those in Canton still living who will recall the little woman physician riding out on sick calls, in all kinds of weather. Her horse and cutter were foundered in a great storm during those years on the West

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Potsdam road and it was only the following morning that she was able to get through drifts and return to her home here in Canton.

Dr. Heaton was one of the most loyal of St. Lawrence Alumnae. She served for many years as a member of the Board of Trustees of the University, the Alumni Council. She was supervisor of surgical dressings for the American Red Cross during the First World War. While at St. Lawrence she was a member of the Browning Society whose ritual became that of Kappa Kappa Gamma National Social sorority, and the Browning girls were affiliated with K.K.G.

Dr. Heaton had a long and interesting life. She like some other Canton women, Mrs. Flora Priest, Mrs. Henry Prentiss Forbes, Mrs. Robert Dale Ford, Mrs. Grace Robinson Hale, Canton's first woman attorney, was on the firing line until victory was won and [they] lived to cast their ballots at the polls.

Dr. Heaton was a woman of fine enduring principles, she had faith in the good things that were right things and she saw ancient prejudices fading and the enduring and abiding things for good to come to all the people. Her death marks the passing of another woman who fought the good fight and kept the faith. She was a lifelong member of the First Universalist Church of Canton.

Among surviving relatives is the nephew, Louis Heaton Pink, above mentioned, and a grand nephew, John Langdon Heaton, 2d, St. Lawrence, 1937.

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