

[Priest, Flora Eaton]

Mrs. Flora Eaton Priest
Benefactor, Social Worker
ALL HER LIFE INTERESTED IN TEMPERANCE CAUSE

Mrs. Flora Eaton Priest, widow of the late Dr. Henry Priest, many years a member of the faculty of St. Lawrence University and for nearly a quarter of a century Dean of the College of Letters and Science, passed away at Canton Community Hospital Friday afternoon, as the result of a shock [stroke] suffered twenty-four hours before at her home, 15 Judson Street.

Funeral services were conducted Sunday afternoon at 3 at the First Universalist Church, the Rev. Hugh S. Tigner, pastor, and the Rev. Dr. Edson R. Miles of St. Lawrence University officiating. Interment will be made at Evergreen Cemetery.

The passing of Mrs. Priest will recall to Canton people the work of this splendid woman who from the time of her coming to Canton with her husband, Professor Henry Priest in 1888, engaged in temperance, philanthropic and general work for the betterment of the community of Canton.

Mrs. Priest was born March 17, 1854, at Calais, Vt., daughter of Caleb Curtis and Susan Coburn Eaton. While she was a child the family moved to Montpelier, Vt., which was her home until her marriage to Henry Priest in 1881. She attended Green Mountain Seminary at Woodstock, Vt., and Goddard Seminary. To this school came Henry Priest, as principal. After her graduation Miss Eaton became preceptress of the seminary, and with the principal was a co-worker. Miss Eaton and Mr. Priest were married in 1881.

Mr. Priest, a Tufts College man, was called to St. Lawrence University in 1883 as professor of Mathematics. At this time the family removed to Canton and that had been their home from then on. They secured a home on Judson street, directly across from the Harrison street intersection and this was the home for many years and up to the time of Dr. Priest's death, suddenly in classroom, at the college in 1912.

A little later on Mrs. Priest purchased the home at 15 Judson street, further down the street. This has been her home since. It is recalled that during the first World War Mrs. Priest turned her home over to the Red Cross and here for the duration of the war women met and did war work.

The Priests, on coming to Canton, at once entered into the life of the community. Dr. Priest was a man of driving force behind the temperance cause. With others of like mind he waged through the years a most destructive war against the saloon and all that went with it. He was the sort of man who did not make bitter enemies by his constant pounding at evils as he described them. He was the leader in campaign after campaign that at

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times saw the temperance flag aloft and again trailing. These were days when the towns voted on the license question.

Mrs. Priest all her life was a temperance worker. Her work in the cause of temperance was not as violently outspoken as that of her husband, but she nevertheless secured the ends sought. She was the quiet worker. She always had charity to others in her heart, and her way of life one might say was according to the golden rule.

As age came on Mrs. Priest did not lose interest in her work. She was long interested in many vital things of the community: Canton Library—The Women's Library Association, the church, the public schools of which she served for some years as a trustee. She was interested in the betterment and beautification of the community. The Public Park, the little cemetery where sleeps a governor, the streets, the homes, everything that one might call community work.

Mrs. Priest came to Canton in 1883 and it is recalled that in those years and for many years later there was a group of unusually fine women. The older people will recall some of these women, all friends and co-workers in college and community work, Mrs. John Stebbins Lee, Mrs. Charles Kelsey Gaines, Mrs. Henri Hermann Lintard, Mrs. Frederic C. Foster, Mrs. Isaac Morgan Atwood, Mrs. Henry Prentiss Forbes and others who came later on. Looking back one feels that the term "magnificent" fits in here somewhere, for here were women who were the real salt of the earth.

Mrs. Priest was through her whole mature life an advocate of Women Suffrage. She was a worker with Dr. Lucia E. Heaton and other women for the cause of suffrage, forty years, almost, before suffrage became a fact. In all this she was the quiet worker, but her work counted. She drew the doubters to her side and as the years rolled on she saw the fruit ripen in the vineyard.

Mrs. Priest was a charitable woman, not only in that charity that gives in material things to the hungry and naked, but that charity that is of the spirit. She was the woman of the kindly tongue. She did not speak harshly of those who did not agree with her on temperance, on suffrage or in other things.

Mrs. Priest was always interested in the welfare of the young. She saw the lack of a playground at the public school and she set about remedying this lack, securing property near the school and one has today "Priest Athletic Field." Not named for her through her wishes but by the sense of justice of those who named it. It is one of the enduring monuments in Canton to this lovely woman whose whole life might be said was devoted to others.

Mrs. Priest was in the home as outside of the home a woman of charm. She was always thinking of others, one might say she gave her whole life to

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making others happy, and she did not fail in her endeavor to create happiness wherever she was.

Mrs. Priest was happily married and Dr. Priest and his helpmeet in the home were fully the complement of each other. They went out together, they traveled abroad together, in the old days they spent their summers at the Maine seashore, shortly before Dr. Priest's death they travelled throughout the country and abroad.

Dr. and Mrs. Priest were the parents of two children, a son and a daughter. The daughter died several hears ago. The son, Dr. Ward Curtis Priest, at the death of his father, succeeded the latter as Hayward Professor of Mathematics.

Mrs. Priest was a former county president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union; she was one of the first members of the Canton Women's Library Association. She was since its organization a shareholder in the Canton Savings & Loan Association, founded in 1889, her husband, Professor Henry Priest, being one of the organizers. At the fiftieth anniversary of the association in 1939 at Hotel Harrington she was called upon by the president of the association, and rose at her table, receiving an ovation as one of the first stockholders of the association. She was a member of the First Universalist Church of Canton and was for over fifty years a worker in the church and its societies. She was a member of Canton Branch American Red Cross and devoted much time to the work of this organization while able to do so. It is told that she knit for the Red Cross almost to the close of her life.

The passing of Mrs. Priest removes, on feels, almost the last of the "old guard" if one may call them that—the women who in the old day were in action on the firing line for temperance, for charity, for the schools, for a better community. She was the sort of woman who did not wish to be in the public eye or have her name in the headlines. She was so genuine in all the things she did that one must feel that here was one of whom might be said "She fought the good fight—She kept the faith."

Mrs. Priestly leaves her son, Dr. Ward Curtis Priest, a member of the University faculty; a sister, Mrs. Emily Eaton Hepburn of New York City; three grandchildren, Dorman Priest of Ann Arbor, Mich.; Mrs. Reginald (Helen) Rogers of Ottawa; Mrs. Jeremy (Alice) Graves of Brattleboro, Vt. A daughter, Alice Eaton Priest, died in 1907.

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