

A Belated Memorial (to Luella Parks Edwards)

by

Alice Baker

Even though this memorial is a quadrennium late, it is none-the-less heart-felt. and grateful to the memory of Luella Parks Edwards. Probably no woman and possibly no person did more for the people of Eagle than this staunch, active, intelligent woman.

Born on the Ides of March, 1861, of Vermont parents, in the town of Vernon, she was endowed with dynamic energy and organizational ability rarely found in one person. While just an infant, her parents moved to Eagle.

No record is kept of her school attendance until the academic year of 1878-9 when she is listed on the Carroll College rolls. She attended this institution only one year.

Very little biographical information can be found concerning her. Even her marriage to Mr. H.B. Edwards of Whitewater Wis. and the social rites connected with it at this late date are no longer available. No one has a photograph of her. Only in group photos can one see her slight figure and her pleasing facial features.

But members of the older generation have a high regard for her dynamic ability and grateful memories for what she contributed to the social and civic well-being of town and county.

Mrs. Edwards first attempt at organization was that of the After-noon Whist Club designed for pleasure only, but that association became singularly useful as years passed and social needs changed

Another social group organized by this lady and earliest in point of time (1903) was the OPEN DOOR CLUB. Its members included women of town and country who had a hunger for service in the projects of the expanding world of the first quartile of the twentieth century. Affiliated with the State organization, the club was to become a resource for other organizations. Its interests were: Home Economics, health, farm problems, child and adult welfare, political and legislative subjects, and current happenings.

A review of the minutes of their meetings reveals their intense patriotic leanings and also their friendly acceptance of the foreigner. It was the time of the "Melting Pot " theory and to reveal their whole-hearted support of that sentiment, the club hunted up all foreign women, feted them, and welcomed them to the Eagle neighborhood.

The ODC was only three years old when some businessmen recognized the need for village improvement and came to Mrs. Edwards for help in organizing the EAGLE ADVANCEMENT ASSOCIATION. The first improvement that these men, and more women, sought was cement sidewalks. During the early spring months, roads were quagmires, lasting sometimes almost a month. Owners could pay for their own walks but there were some important

paths that served the populace which showed the EAA that a community project must be undertaken. Money was needed. How could the money, about \$100 be raised?

This need was told to the ODC. The members scratched their collective heads and came up with the idea of a Country Fair. Villagers and farmers brought in their apples, melons, pumpkins, sheep, cattle and horses. The women made doilies, embroidered pillowcases, and a miscellany of articles that would serve as gifts. They also made candy, pies, cakes and sold luncheons and when the Fair was over the take was \$104.75. With this unexpected munificence, cement sidewalks were built in front of the Methodist Church, the I.O.G.T. Hall, along the north side of the road to the Oak Ridge Cemetery, and walks for the homes of two indigent widows. The cementing of the long stretch, now Hy 67, antedated the hard road building by twenty years (1906-1926).

In 1914 WWI came on. By 1916 appeals for help were made from overseas. Mrs. Edwards saw the demand for a Red Cross organization and immediately solicited helpers for this very crying need. Calling her very willing card-players for a ten-cent fee for playing, she received a generous response. Women who didn't know a club from a spade decided to learn to play cards and with the many ten-cents, raised money enough to buy a token supply of yarn and cloth for garments.

Mrs. Florence Pardee was made president of the Eagle Red Cross, and in securing this helper, she had a peer organizer. Knitting socks and helmets could be done at home but making garments necessitated a center and a supervisor. The homes of members became rotating centers. Sewing Machines were needed and many (six), and to provide this necessity, Don Pardee took his pick-up truck and carried all six machines to whatever center was the choice of the day. Finished garments were sent to the Milwaukee Red Cross. When the Milwaukee women found out that Eagle was having difficulty making money to buy supplies, they were Yang to Eagle's Yin and they gladly doled out their supplies to Eagle's willing workers.

For some time, Eagle was affiliated with the Milwaukee Red Cross and not until Miss Julia Rockefeller headed the Waukesha Red Cross was Eagle incorporated into the Waukesha County group.

In post WWI years there was much concern about the prevalence of Tuberculosis, and especially in rural communities. The whole state was becoming conscious about health conditions and many counties were adding to their staffs of officers a permanent nurse. To care for known cases and to teach preventive measures a permanent guardian was needed,

Mrs. Edwards went to the County Board, gave a talk on the great need of Waukesha County for health improvement and nominated a nurse an Illinois Training School Graduate who had served six months as a Red Cross nurse in Russia, and who had recently returned from eighteen months service in the Vitel sector of France. Through Mrs. Edwards influence, the County Board hired the first county nurse, Aurel Baker Pardee.

Another civic group which Mrs. Edwards brought together, one still existent after fifty-two years was the PARENT TEACHERS ASSOCIATION. When it was first organized it was

affiliated with the State group, with its and regulation that delegates must be sent to dedicated State meetings often times Proving hardship for many dedicated parents. The PTA, consequently, decided not to observe this rule or retain membership in the State group hence became the Parent-Teachers Organization, PTO, instead of PTA.

How much did this energetic, canny, gifted woman bring to the people of Eagle? I am asking the readers of this article to make the evaluation.