

Eliza Chapman Meredith crosses five decades of inquisitive minds

EAGLE — Eliza Chapman Meredith is a teacher with the unique distinction of outlasting a number of schools.

Meredith began her career in 1912 at the Randall District school near Troy Center. The one room structure closed in 1914 and Meredith went to Baker school until in 1916, with only three scholars, its doors were shut.

Born in 1893 into a farm family of nine, Elizabeth Chapman's early years were spent teaching younger brothers and sisters. "We were fortunate with good parents. There was lots of love and kindness in that house and someone always wanted to help another understand a situation," she recalls.

Chapman Meredith went to Whitewater Normal School in 1912 to obtain a teaching diploma. At that time it was a six-week course. The first place she began as teacher was the same school she graduated from, Randall District school.

From 1912 until 1921, Chapman

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Joan Holman

Meredith taught children at Randall District, Baker, Adams and Stewart schools. All have since closed. In 1921 Chapman married Irving Meredith, a farmer in the Eagle area.

Her farm background allowed the adjustment to rural life to be easy. But in 1923 her husband died and she was told by her parents to come home.

In 1923 the teaching career resumed at Baker Corners school and in 1929 she went to Jericho school. She taught at Jericho until the school closed in 1944.

Chapman Meredith continued to live with her parents and drove to Eagleville. Times were changing. The few students she had at the start of her career in 1912 increased to 48 by 1944, her first year at Eagleville.

"After the war it seems many people were moving out to the country and to the lakes," she said. "Eagle Springs lake area was growing, which increased Eagleville school attendance. My sister, Elizabeth, would help me correct papers at night until ... our staff grew."

"In 1941 there were 231 teachers under this office, by 1958 the figure was 902. And the students went from 6,587 to 20,329 in the same years. No wonder I was having trouble with names."

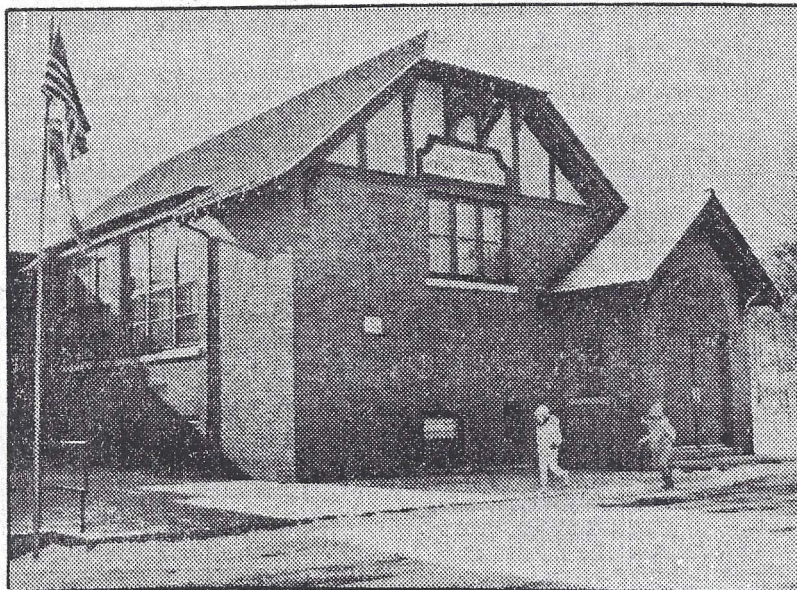
"But I do remember the name of Frances Onisch. She was special in her drawing ability. Her poster got first at the former Waukesha Dairy Show. She took honors for Eagleville."

The village of Eagle became home in 1956 when her parents' farm was sold to the scouts and became Chapman Hills. After her father's death, Chapman Meredith retired from Eagleville to spend time with her mother.

Her mother's death brought Chapman Meredith back to teaching. She continued on the Eagleville staff as a substitute until 1966. "I could plan my sub schedule around the deer hunting season," she said. "Dorothy Mason (a teacher) always accompanied her husband."

When the regulars at this school were no longer there, Chapman Meredith retired completely. "From then on I could enjoy visits from former students, but, their children and grandchildren also came. I know I taught in the best of times. Those less crowded days gave me names I remember — and they know me, too."

(Joan Holman is a Freeman correspondent who lives in Eagle.)



Sarah Tews, FREEMAN STAFF

Eliza Meredith has outlived the children and some grandchildren of her students from the original Eagleville District School.

Retired teacher recalls career

by Joan Holman

EAGLE - It certainly speaks strongly for a teacher's ability when she outlasts the schools in which her work was accomplished. So it is for Eliza Chapman Meredith.

Meredith's teaching career started in 1912 near Troy Center at the Randall District School. The end of this institution came in 1914, so she went to Baker School where she stayed until 1916 when, because of only three scholars, its doors were shut.

Born in 1893 into a farm family of nine, Eliza Chapman's early years were spent teaching younger brothers and sisters. "We were fortunate with good parents. There was lots of love and kindness in our house with someone always willing to explain a difficult situation in terms of understanding," she recalls.

Chapman Meredith went to Whitewater Normal School to obtain a teaching diploma in 1912. In those years, the course lasted six weeks. The diploma put her into the first teaching position which happened to be at the same school from which she graduated - Randall District School.

That part of her career lasted from 1912 until 1921. During those years Chapman Meredith taught at Randall District, Baker, Adams and Stewart Schools. All have since closed. In 1921 Chapman married Irving Meredith, a farmer in the Eagle area.

Her farm upbringing allowed an easy



Eliza Chapman Meredith

adjustment to rural life. However it did not go on long for her husband died in 1923. Her parents then asked her to come home.

The teaching career resumed in 1923 at Baker Corners School and in 1929 she went to Jericho to stay until the school closed in 1944.

Chapman Meredith continued to live on the family farm with her parents and drive to work at Eagleville School. Times were changing. The few students she had at the start of her career in 1912 increased to 48 by 1944, her first year at Eagleville.

"It seems after the war many people were coming out to the country and to the lakes," she said. "Eagle Spring Lake area was growing. This increased Eagleville School enrollment. My sister would help correct papers at night until our staff grew."

In 1921 there were 231 teachers under the county education office. By 1958 the figure was 902. And the student numbers grew from 6,587 to 20,329 in the same years. No wonder I was having trouble with names."

"But I do remember that of Frances Onisch. She was gifted in drawing ability. Her poster was awarded top honor at the former Waukesha Dairy Show. The recognition came to Eagleville School."

In 1956, the Village of Eagle became home when her parents farm was sold to the

scouts to become Chapman Hills. After her father's death, a short time later, Chapman Meredith retired from Eagleville to spend time with her mother.

Her mother's death brought Chapman Meredith back to teaching. She continued on the Eagleville staff as a substitute until 1966. "I could plan my sub scheduled around the deer hunting season," she said. "Dorothy Mason (teacher) always accompanied her husband."

When the regulars at the school were no longer there, Chapman Meredith retired completely. "From then on I would enjoy visits from former students, and their children and grandchildren. I know I taught in the best of times. Those less crowded days gave me names I remember - and my name is still with them."

People
Meredith, Eliza Chapman