

Pioneering Women of Lake County - Part II



Margaret M. Hurlburt (1914-1947) - WASP

This Painesville resident was born and resided at 244 Richmond Street until her untimely death in Decorah, Iowa, in 1947. Her early years provided no indications of the greatness to come. Even her early years as an aviatrix couldn't foreshadow her accomplishments from 1943-47.

Margaret began her amazing trek thru history in 1943 as a member of the Women Airforce Service Pilots during WWII. From 1943-45 she ferried aircraft

to military bases for wartime use, towed targets for gunners and flew C-60s, B-24s or B-17s as needed. After the war, she competed in women's air races around the country including Cleveland. In March 1947, she joined the first ever All-Women Air Show in Tampa, Florida. A crowd of 13,000 showed up to watch her set an air speed record of 337 mph. Soon thereafter, Marge had a desire to raise funds for her prototype plane design. Joining the Flying Tigers Aerial Circus in the same year, a slow roll stunt on an AT-6 led to a crash and, tragically, her death.

Her aviation accomplishments led to her induction into the International Women's Air & Space Museum (Cleveland, Ohio - Burke Lakefront Airport). Her artifacts and history are there to honor her legacy.



Eleanor B. Garfield - 'Gramma G'

Her birth in 1899 and marriage to a grandson of our 20th President are merely two footnotes in the 95-year life of this pioneer woman from Ohio's smallest county. As a widow, she lived in a red house behind the Garfield Presidential mansion and, for a brief four period from 1952-56, changed the fate of Mentor forever. Eleanor became the first and only female mayor of the city to date. Her \$75 a month salary required her to refinish antiques to support her family. She even painted City Hall while mayor. Yet three major accomplishments in Mentor history can be directly attributed to her mayoral impact. First, she convinced Ohio Governor William O'Neill to relocate the Lakeland Freeway (Route 2) construction thru Mentor to implement her hand drawn on shelf paper vision of a Tyler Blvd. Industrial Park. Secondly, her desire to end illegal gambling on the Old Newell Estate (Garfield Park) saw her hide police in the foliage to finally end this vice. Finally, her relationships with the Bolton, King and Moore families led to the summit of summer estates in Mentor proper. Her popularity in the small village known as Mentor caused all who knew her to call Eleanor - Gramma G. Mentor Recreation Park was named Eleanor Garfield Park in 1982 as a lasting tribute to a visionary mayor. More about her life: <https://youtu.be/6eZnyc8iRe4>



Adeline Electra 'Addie' Nye Norton (1883-1969) - Probate Judge

'Addie' has the unique distinction in Ohio history as being the first woman to be selected as a Probate Judge. A 1901 graduate of the Painesville City Normal School, she continued her education to earn a teaching degree. This career was short lived as a 1903 political career trumped it. Probate Judge Clark H. Nye selected her to be his assistant. A brief retirement in 1917 saw her marry Nelson N. Norton. By 1920, the pending retirement of Judge Clark coupled with the 19th Amendment saw her reenter political life as his replacement. A long and storied court career followed for this Painesville resident.

Other Women of Influence - abridged



Dr. Amy Kaukonen (1891-1984)

A well-known figure with an oft-reported story in county history, Amy was of Finnish descent. In her lifetime she was a doctor, politician and much more. She was one of the first women to graduate from the Medical School at the University of Pennsylvania. Doctor Kaukonen set up offices in Ashtabula and Fairport by early 1920. The 19th Amendment opened the door for her to become the first female mayor in the U.S. An ardent prohibitionist in an era of rum-running, her tactics and laws were not well received. By 1923 she left for Seattle, married in 1928 and enjoyed a long and successful career. Her Airdales, a gift from President Harding were always by her side. She returned home to Lake County and Dr. Amy Kaukonen-Grandeur died in Painesville at age 93. Her Fairport residence on Eagle Street was torn down in the early 2000s.

Connie Luhta - Aviatrix

Born Connie Naumann in Painesville, this 90-year-old county resident ended a 28-year run as Concord Township trustee last month. Signing 24,900 checks or attending 780 council meetings were merely an epilogue to the years before. Connie graduated Painesville's Harvey High and earned a chemistry degree from Ohio Wesleyan University. She worked as a chemist for Sohio and spearheaded many improvements in the industry. Her marriage to Adolph Luhta led to her next career as an aviatrix and co-owner of Concord Airpark (1954-present). A business degree led to a new vocation in the construction business of her husband and in other ventures. Connie filled the rest of her day with involvement in the Experimental Aircraft Association and duties as President of the International Women's Air & Space Museum. Visit: <http://iwasm.org/>

Gretchen Reed - Educator

This local legend influenced many readers, students and aviation enthusiasts in her storied career. In 1965, Gretchen entered the work world as a reporter for the Painesville Telegraph. From 1967-1995 she was an English teacher for the Mentor and Riverside Schools. In 1969, she developed an aviation ground school course that became part of the Riverside High School curriculum for generations of students. In 1977, the purchase of 68 acres led to Pheasant Run Airport and Aviation Museum. Flight lessons and more followed for Gretchen the Educator. Today, her passion for flight and classic cars are shared with the public thru a partnership with Lake Erie College (2011).

Submitted by Dan Maxson Local Lore by Max, 2010-2016 - Community Media Lab, The News-Herald - Volunteer Trustee, Curator - FHHS/ Fairport Harbor Lighthouse & Marine Museum - Volunteer Curator / Docent - Old Stone School, Concord Township