

Mavourneen Morris

Lebanon, Boone County

1871 – April 21, 1910

Mavourneen Morris (nee Burch) was born in Greene County, Indiana, in 1871. She married Nathan A. Morris in 1893 and moved to Lebanon not long thereafter where she spent the rest of her life. Historical evidence demonstrates that she was an enterprising and independent individual who quietly helped break ground for women in Indiana.

After moving to Lebanon, Morris worked for a while as a stenographer for C. F. S. Neal, a prominent local businessman. She also studied law and in 1898 became the first woman admitted to the bar of the Boone County Circuit Court. That same year, she left her stenographer's position to become a teacher of shorthand and typewriting at the newly opened Lebanon Business College. Though the school closed after only a year, Morris believed that a successful business school was possible in Lebanon, and, in 1900, she founded the Morris Business College. Despite opening with an enrollment of but two students, within a couple of years Morris's school had grown so much that she had to move to larger quarters. Morris sold the school in 1903, during the height of the institution's success.

Despite being denied the right to vote, Morris participated in state politics. In 1908, the Hearst Independence Party in Indiana nominated her for State Superintendent of Public Education.

Morris was also known in Lebanon for her literary and artistic talents. She was a member of the Tourist Club, a women's social group dedicated to the study of history and literature. Her presentations to the club demonstrated her independence of thought; a fellow member observed of Morris: "In her literary work she was original, seldom giving the opinions of critics preferring rather to present a subject as she saw it." As well, Morris was a member of the Indiana Ceramic Club, which exhibited her artwork. At the time of her death, she had a group of pupils whom she instructed.

Mavourneen Morris died April 21, 1910, and is buried at Lebanon's Oak Hill Cemetery. One newspaper reporter eulogized that hers was a "useful life filled with high ideals and good deeds."

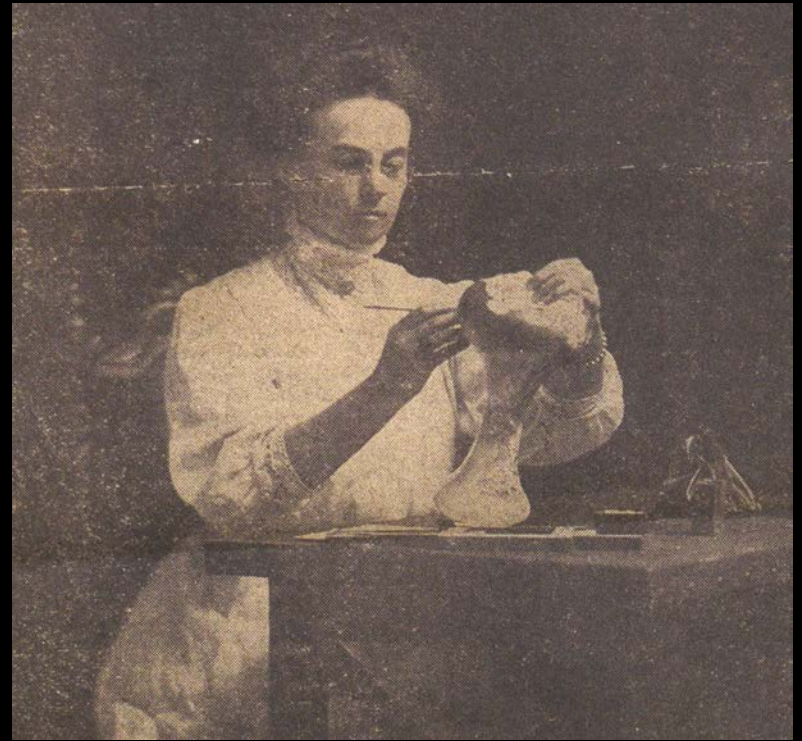


Photo Courtesy: Boone County Historical Society



This profile was provided to ICW by Eric Spall, Boone County Historian

References will be published at the end of Women's History Month.