

Phebe Mills

November 27, 1850 - April 11, 1943

Plot 15 lot 71

Miss Phebe Mills was born in Chestertown on November 27, 1850 to Irish immigrants who were in their 40's at the time of her birth. One of eight children, Phebe was able to graduate from school, and when she was of age, her father decided to move the family to the village of Glens Falls so that she could seek a teaching position.

In 1871, she obtained a position in the South Glens Falls school district. Phebe, her parents, and siblings Thomas and Margaret all moved to the village where they settled in a home at 16 Grand Street. When a position opened at the old South Street School in Glens Falls, Phebe applied to end her commute across the river to South Glens Falls. She accepted the position and found herself in a two room school lacking space and proper equipment. She appealed to her supervisors and was able to secure a new larger and better equipped school for her students. She was vice-principal, then appointed to principal of the school.

A life-long learner, Phebe attended classes every summer to improve her knowledge and skills. With over 300 other teachers from New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and Vermont, she attended lectures and studied such things as history, literature and ornithology. The summer institute was known as the Glens Falls Summer School and included opportunities for the citizens of Glens Falls to attend some of the lectures and seminars. The people of the city opened their homes to provide lodging to out of town attendees who shopped and dined throughout the village, bringing valuable commerce to the merchants as well.

In 1897, Phebe applied for and was appointed Vice-Principal of the much larger and newer Ridge Street School, receiving a salary of \$700. She remained in that position until her retirement in 1925.

For many years, the family lived at 6 Notre Dame Street. When her father died in 1883, Phebe and her mother went to live with Phebe's sister Mary, her husband, a grocer named Hollis Russell, and the couple's four teenage sons. Only five years later, Hollis died at age 50. Fifteen years later, Phebe's mother died at age 90.

Upon her retirement, Phebe went to live with her nephew Fred Russell. Her nephews cared for her, taking her to church and to her Tuesday art club. She became ill in 1942 and was cared for by her nephews until her death on April 11, 1942 at the age of 92. Thousands of children's lives were enriched by the tutelage of this devoted educator.

Prepared Evelyn Donahue from a theatrical script written by William Woodward for the Chapman Historical Museums fall Glens Falls Cemetery tour in 2014.

Questions and comments should be directed to the Glens Falls City Historian at: City Hall 42 Ridge St. Glens Falls, NY historian@cityofglensfalls.com 518-761-3871.