

Ahead of Her Time

In today's society women have opportunities that were unheard of a generation ago. Today, women hold positions in medicine, engineering, business, and government. Although it may still be questioned, legitimately so, that women still don't have equal opportunities to their male counterparts, compared to the past they have made giant strides.

In that respect, there are many individuals that have contributed to the rich heritage of Martin County. If asked to name some of those individuals that have helped to shape Martin County, the names first mentioned will likely be male. However, there have been a number of women that have made very positive contributions to the history of Martin County. One woman that was undoubtedly ahead of her time was Mabel Hall, and her accomplishments well preceded the days of women's lib.

Mabel Hall was born in Fraser Township, Martin County, in 1886. She attended country school and worked for her room and board while attending Fairmont High School and graduating in 1905. Following graduation from high school she taught in a country school for one year. She then took correspondence courses from the University of Minnesota and the University of Wisconsin before obtaining her teaching certificate from Mankato State Teachers College. Following graduation from college, she taught in a number of country schools in Minnesota and then became a principal in Bricelyn, Minnesota. While in Bricelyn, she organized their first athletic team, in self defense, the diminutive five foot tall Hall once stated.

In 1920, she became assistant superintendent of Martin County schools. When the superintendent retired in 1923, she ran for Superintendent of Martin County Schools as this was at that time an elected position. She was elected and served in that capacity for twelve years. During her tenure as superintendent, she was required by law to visit each of the 125 country schools in the county at least twice annually. She fulfilled her duty, and more, by visiting each country school at least four times annually. Considering road conditions and transportation at that time, that was certainly a feat in and of itself!

Then, in 1935, she assumed the position of Martin County Clerk of Probate Court. She held that position until she retired in 1973 at the age of 87.

She was also very civic minded playing an instrumental role in the Fairmont chapter of Business and Professional Women remaining active in that organization for thirty-nine years. During that time, she held all local and a number of state offices, including being

state president for two years. She was honored on her 100th birthday as being designated National Mabel Hall Day by the National Federation of BPW. She was also a Sunday School Teacher, Superintendent at the Fairmont Congregational Church, and worked with Campfire Girls groups.

Mabel Hall, the last living member of the Fairmont High School Class of 1905, passed away on April 11, 1991, at the age of 104.

It seems that Mabel Hall never outwardly advocated for women's liberation or equal rights. Rather, she simply modeled what could be accomplished in her day to day life, not allowing any form of "glass ceiling" to limit her achievements. She is but one of many women that have played an important role in the development of Martin County and that have been positive role models for younger women to emulate.

For more information on this topic, or to become a member, visit the Pioneer Museum in Fairmont or its website at www.fairmont.org/mchs.



