

Shining Light on Local Women's Lives

Women Who Made McLean County History



Presented By: Candace Summers
McLean County Museum of History

Clara Louise Kessler (1893-1968)

She had a lifelong interest in books, songs, and children. During her 33 years as the head children's librarian at Withers Public Library (today named Bloomington Public Library) she not only presented the very best children's literature and encouraged its enjoyment but created environment which stimulated children's imaginations and encouraged them to freely express themselves.





Librarians at Withers Public Library, 1926.
Louise is in the back row, second from the right.

Louise Kessler with two of her young patrons; Ruth
and Robert McNabb. *The Pantagraph*, April 23, 1944



Louise Kessler leads participants of
the children's story hour in a game.
The Pantagraph, December 31, 1945

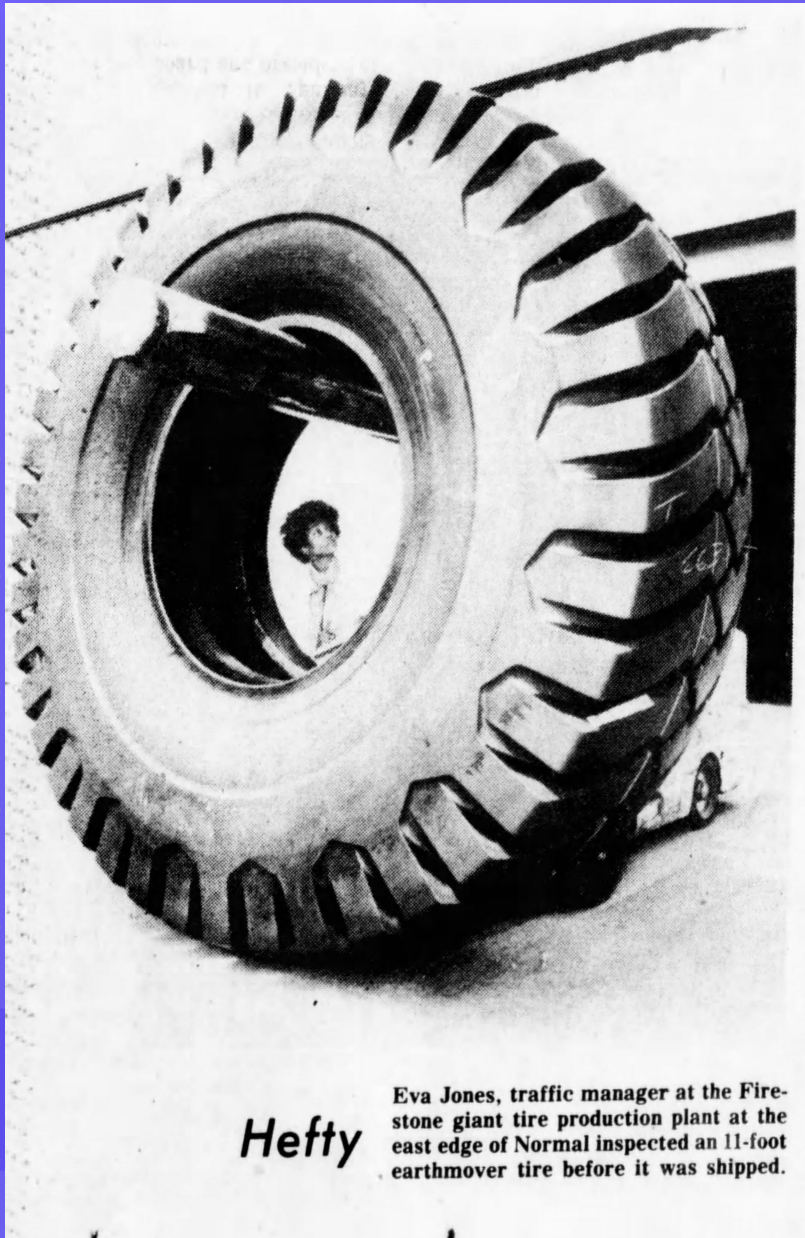


Eva Gaiter Jones (1930-1987)

“Tho’ she is little, she is mighty.” That is how she described herself in the 1948 *Aepix* yearbook when she was a senior at Bloomington High School. And that quote certainly seems fit for a woman who never turned away from challenging situations or tough decisions.



Eva Jones, seen left, was the traffic manager at Firestone when this photo appeared in the Pantagraph on October 22, 1979.



Jones is seen here during a particularly tense moment at the August 16, 1978, meeting between the Bloomington Education Association and the Bloomington Board of Education.

Nellie Carnahan (1875-1943)

Was one of the “movers and shakers” of her time in Lexington, Illinois. She was a savvy and energetic businesswoman whose career was one born of necessity. Not only did she own and operate her own business for 15 years, but she was considered a leader in the business community, and religious and social life in Lexington.





Nellie, Louie, and Charles
Carnahan, ca. 1897

Advertisement for N.J.
Carnahan & Co., ca. 1924
Lexington Unit Journal

Just received a new line of Ladies
and Childrens

HOSIERY

Prices from 25c Up

A New Line of Ladies'
House Dresses, also
Silks and Piece Goods

N. J. Carnahan & Co

The Store of Quality 1924
Lexington, Illinois

Dr. Marie Louise DePew Crothers (1833-1920)

Believed to have been the first female physician in Bloomington. She established her own practice at a time when very few women had achieved that level of mastery within the profession.





Marie Louise Crothers after she
became a doctor

Site of the first Girl's Industrial Home. Today, this
location is now the site of Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church.



EDWARDS PUBLIC SCHOOL.

Emily Howard (1836-1914)

The City of Bloomington boasts of many talented female artists at the turn of the Twentieth Century. Emily Howard was one of those women. She dedicated her life to not only establishing her artistic identity, but to helping people understand that “art has its positive influence, not only in developing character but in making life better and more useful.”



Signed by “E.A. Howard” in lower right-hand corner. Created circa 1895.



Painted by Emily Howard, circa 1895.

Built in 1870, Old Main was IWU's second building on campus



The biographies of 136 history making women of McLean County are featured on the museum's website.

For more information and to read their biographies, scan the QR Code below



Scan me





Who is a
woman that
has influenced
your life?

Thank you!