

West Aurora Schools

Grace M. Nicholson

(Montgomery School Teacher & Principal 1902-1949)



Grace Nicholson, 1905 photo



Grace M. Nicholson Elementary School
649 North Main Street, Montgomery
Constructed as new Montgomery School 1961
Named for Grace M. Nicholson 1962



Montgomery School opened 1891
1903 photo



Young Grace Nicholson



Grace Nicholson with students 1944



Grace Nicholson with students 1946



Grace Nicholson with students 1940s



Grace Nicholson's retirement celebration 1949



West Aurora Cemetery

Profile of Grace M. Nicholson

Grace M. Nicholson (1878-1966) was born in Rock Island, Illinois to Edward J. and Maria Greves Nicholson. She and her family moved to Aurora when Grace was a young child.

She was a graduate of West Aurora High School, and attended Northern Illinois State Teacher's College and DePaul University in Chicago.

Miss Nicholson, fondly known as "Nicky" to her friends, taught for a total of fifty years. She began her career at Paw Paw, Big Rock and the Red Brick School on West Galena Boulevard.

In 1902, she became a teacher at the Montgomery School. She later served as principal of the school until her retirement in 1949.

Miss Nicholson was a dedicated teacher who used her personal funds in 1911 to start a library at the school.

She also was active in establishing the first kindergarten at the school in 1915. After WWI, she helped organize the first Montgomery School PTA.

During her entire teaching career, she was only absent one day because of illness. Even inclement weather did not keep her away from school. When streetcars could not run because tracks were filled with snow, she would walk from her home on View Street in Aurora to the school in Montgomery.

At the renaming ceremony of the school in 1962, it was stated that the secret to Miss Nicholson's success as a teacher was respecting each of her pupils as individuals. Nicholson was a speaker at the ceremony attended by more than five hundred friends and former students.

Also in 1962, a former student commented on the Aurora Radio Station (WKKD) that Miss Nicholson would be remembered and loved for many things, but the most vivid would be her ability to bring the classics, poetry and travel experiences to her students in such a way that they became a part of it and lived the story as it was being told. "When speaking to Miss Nicholson, one learns to appreciate the phrase 'The Hallowed Halls of Ivy.'"

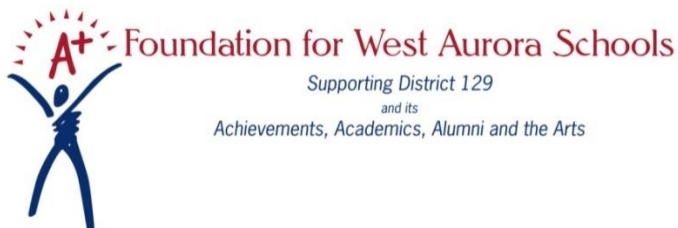
Grace Nicholson was a member of Wesley Methodist Church and a charter member of the Business and Professional Women's Club. She died in 1966 and is buried in the West Aurora Cemetery.

Sources for this profile: West Aurora Schools, Aurora Beacon-News, Aurora Historical Society and the Village of Montgomery Historical Society. The photos of the gravestones are from Find-A-Grave. The West Aurora Buildings and Grounds Facilities Inventory Report indicated that there was a 1961 addition to the 1891 Montgomery School. A West Aurora narrative of the schools reported that the 1961 addition replaced the former 1891 school structure. A March 12, 1962 article in the Aurora Beacon-News reported that the school was renamed for Grace Nicholson in 1962. This profile, completed in 2016, is courtesy of the A+ Foundation for West Aurora Schools and the Community Foundation of the Fox River Valley.



Grace M. Nicholson

In 2016, the A+ Foundation for West Aurora Schools and the Community Foundation of the Fox River Valley collaborated in the development of biographical profiles of those for whom District 129 schools are named. Financial support for the project was provided by the following Special Friends of West Aurora School District 129: Sherry Eagle, Gary and Mary Jewel, Neal and Mary Clark Ormond, Char and Frank Voris, and Brent and Jean Wadsworth. The research, writing and editing of these profiles were courtesy of the Community Foundation and its President Emeritus Sharon Stredde, Research Associate Judith Iverson and Past Chairman of the Board Neal Ormond III.



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