

Mary Oelke, 103, Dies Thursday, 1970

Mrs. Mary A. Oelke, 103, the mother of Prof. William C. Oelke of Grinnell College, died Thursday, Aug. 13, at the Mayflower Home.

She was born Mary Alice Kreutter April 21, 1867, near Utica, N. Y., the second daughter of John Kreutter of Tallheim, Germany, and Salome Widmer Kreutter of Ober Entfelden, Switzerland. In 1879, the family moved to Decorah, Iowa, and a year later to National in Clayton County, where Mary Kreutter attended the local school and worked in the general store owned by the family. After completing her schooling at National, she attended summer institute and began teaching in the rural schools of the county. She later taught in the National school.

For several summers, she studied painting under the artist and anthropologist, Dr. Althea Sherman. From 1893 to 1896 she taught in the Salem, S. Dak., school system.

In 1896 she was married to William C. Oelke of Farmersburg, Iowa, where they operated a drug store for 12 years, at which time Mr. Oelke became a banker. It was at Corwith that their only child, William, now professor of chemistry at Grinnell College, was born in 1906.

In 1921, the Oelkes moved to Goldfield, Iowa; in 1926 to Magdolia, Minn.; in 1929 to Nodaway, Iowa; and in 1933 back to Farmersburg. Here Mrs. Oelke lived until 1958, four years after the death of her husband, when she moved to Grinnell.

Since 1960 she was a resident of the Mayflower Home here. She was an active member of the Eastern Star for many years and was a past matron of that order. She attended the Methodist Church and

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earlier taught Sunday school at Corwith. She later joined the United Presbyterian church at Goldfield.

She is survived by her son William; three grandchildren, Mrs. Dorsey (Mary Elizabeth) Holt of Gig Harbor, Wash., Mrs. Daniel (Nancy) Hillman of Ames, and William H. Oelke of Waseca, Minn.; and four great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by four sisters and four brothers.

Memorial services for Mrs. Oelke were held at 4:30 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 16, at the Mayflower Home chapel, with the Rev. Newell E. Davis, minister of the United Church of Christ-Congregational, officiating. He was assisted by the Rev. Ralph Beebe and the Rev. Lawrence Murphy. Pianist was Miss Ruth Campbell. Burial was in National Cemetery at National, Iowa, at 2 p.m. Saturday.

Should friends desire, memorials may be made to the Infirmary Fund of the Mayflower Home.