



MARY POWER, COOLEGGE PHOTO, DE SMET
PHOTO © L. ROBINSON

Mary Power

by Gina Terrana, Seattle, Washington

“Mary Power’s eyes smiled. They were dark blue eyes, fringed with long, black lashes.” – Laura Ingalls Wilder, The Long Winter

“Mary Power moved to Washington State and died young.” – From a letter to a reader by Laura Ingalls Wilder

Born in Tuscarora, New York on April 3rd, 1866, Mary Power was the fourth surviving child of Thomas and M. Elizabeth Power. Thomas had served in the Civil War, and was discharged in June of 1865, quickly resuming his trade of tailor.

Mary was the second daughter, sister Susannah(Susie) was five, and brothers James and Thomas Jr. were nine and six years old at the time of Mary’s birth.

Father Thomas had heavy competition from other tailors where the family lived. He also had a taste for strong drink. In the late 1860's he made a decision to move his family west, settling in Kasson, Dodge County, Minnesota.

Kasson, located about 90 miles or so west of Lake Pepin is where Mary first attended school. In The Long Winter, Laura was proud of being able to keep up in class with Mary Power, who had attended school in the east. Laura first attended school in Wisconsin. So it was Laura who had gone to school in the east!

While living in Kasson, the Power family added sister Eliza Jane (Lizzie) and brother Charles (Charley) to the group of siblings.

By 1880, Father Thomas felt the lure of the western prairie, homestead lands, and sodbusters needing suits. He moved his tailor business to De Smet, and his family to a claim on the SW quarter of section 29 in township 111 of Range 56.

On the claim a frame house, 12x16 ft., with a board floor, shingle roof, one door and two windows was built. Mary’s brothers James and Thomas did not move west, so there were only six people living in the claim shanty. The family did not spend much time on the claim the first summer in De Smet. The little town was bustling, and Tailor Power had many suits to stitch. The youngest Power children, Charley and Eliza Jane, attended a small



SITE OF POWER CLAIM, KINGSBURY COUNTY, SOUTH DAKOTA

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private school in the summer of 1880. About 15 town children were enrolled, Laura and Carrie Ingalls did not attend.

Mary Power did not teach school as Laura and many of her friends did. She helped her mother on the homestead, and when they wintered in town. Edmund “Cap” Garland was her frequent escort for cutter and buggy rides.

The summer of 1883 saw the marriage of Mary’s sister Susie to Jacob “Jake” Hopp, publisher of the first newspaper in De Smet. Mary’s own courtship with the new cashier at Ruth’s bank did not begin for a few more years.



MARY, LIZZIE, AND SUSIE POWER
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KATHLEEN MAVOURNEEN.

Andante.

1. Kathleen Ma-vourneen, the gray dawn is breaking, The horn of the hunter is
2. Kathleen Ma-vourneen, a-wake from thy slumbers; The blue mountains glow in the

Small notes to be sung for 2d V.

heard on the hill; The lark from her light wing the bright dew is shak - ing;
sun's golden light; Ah! where is the spell that once hung on my numbers? A -

Kathleen Mavourneen, what! slum - bring still? Kathleen Mavourneen, what
rise in thy beauty, thou star of my night; A - rise in thy beauty, thou

con amore affetto

slum - bring still? Or hast thou for - got - ten how soon we must sev - er? Oh!
star of my night! Ma - vour - neen, Ma - vour - neen, my sad tears are falling, To

hast thou for - gotten this day we must part? } It may be for years, and it
think that from E - rin and thee I must part! }

semplice

may be for - ev - er; Then why art thou si - lent, thou voice of my heart? It may be for

Mary was a member of the De Smet Dramatic Company, which traveled to Howard and Lake Preston after debuting in De Smet, with a performance of “Kathleen Mavourneen.” Mary Power portrayed the title character.

The skating rink was another favorite destination for Mary. A Mr. Le Suer and she were the winners of a mile race at the popular rink.

Laura remembered Mary attending singing school with her new beau, Ed. Edwin P. Sanford was born the 12th of January, 1865 in Prairie City, Illinois, one of nine children of Herman and Mary (Hollister) Sanford. Edwin began working in a bank in Prairie City, and remained there until March of 1884, when he came to Dakota Territory. He accepted a position as bookkeeper in the Kingsbury County bank, and after the bank incorporated in 1885, he became a stockholder and cashier.

Edwin wanted to lay a solid financial foundation for marriage, and Mary wanted security in a marriage. T.P. Power’s problem with strong drink was remembered by his children, and they did not recall their father fondly.

On August 9, 1890, Edwin and Mary were joined in marriage. Their wedding announcement in the *Leader* read: *“It is hoped they will live to see many happy days and will never have cause to regret the step taken. They have moved into their cosy little home on Third street where they will commence housekeeping.”*

Mary and Edwin became social leaders, and frequently entertained at their home, and were in high demand as guests.

In 1900, the Sanfords completed a new home on Third street, and added a sidewalk. This house is still standing in De Smet, quite near the Ingalls house.



SANFORD HOME IN DE SMET
PHOTO © N. CLEVELAND

The Sanfords traveled quite a bit by train, visiting relatives, friends, and World’s Fairs. Mary’s sisters had moved to the Pacific Coast, and her mother enjoyed the climate there, it was much like her native Ireland. Mary’s brother Charley had moved to Idaho.



CHARLES POWER, GENESEE, IDAHO
PHOTO © L. ROBINSON

Her father had died in 1900, and was buried in the De Smet Cemetery.

In 1906 the Sanfords were on their rounds of western visits. In the spring they passed through San Francisco a few days before the massive earthquake. By 1907, Mrs. Power sold her house on Second Street, and a Dr. Dyar purchased the Sanford residence. Mother, daughter and son-in-law were all moving to Bellingham, Washington State. The De Smet newspaper mourned, *“De Smet people do not take at all kindly to the idea of the Sanfords moving away, and yet the decision has been made and we must submit.”*

Edwin had made inquiries while visiting relatives in New Whatcom, and purchased a lot on Holly Street,

next door to Jacob Hopp. He built a new kind of apartment, three stories, with each story its own apartment. Mary and Edwin had the ground floor, and Mrs. Power the next floor, with its own entry, and the third floor as a rental. A state Normal school, now Western Washington University and a nearby hospital provided a steady demand for the space.

This home stands to this day, and has been further divided for student renters. The Hopp residence also survives.



FORMER HOPP HOME, BELLINGHAM WASHINGTON
 PHOTO © GINA TERRANA



SANFORD HOME, BELLINGHAM, WASHINGTON
 PHOTO © GINA TERRANA

The Sanfords visited De Smet many times after they moved to Washington. The Carter Sherwoods, the D.W. Wilmarths, the F.W. Wrights, and the Dawleys are a few of their friends that entertained and hosted them on their visits. During their 1923 visit they stayed with the F.M. Andrews.



BELLINGHAM NATIONAL BANK AS IT APPEARS TODAY
 PHOTO © GINA TERRANA

Edwin Sanford became a director of the Bellingham National Bank in 1916, and he purchased a beautiful large piece of land, with views of Bellingham Bay, and Mt. Baker, across the street from Whatcom Creek. There he built a modern house, with central heating, hot water plumbing and a billiards room in the basement, where it would not disturb his wife. Outside on the grounds they planted shrubs and fruit trees, flowering vines. Even though the original property has been subdivided, the surrounding of the home has a park like atmosphere to this day. Deer graze in the yard amongst the beautiful landscaping.

Mary became ill in 1928, and her death was announced in the De Smet paper in October of 1929. Mary was 63. Mary and Edwin did not have children, but they were favorites of their many nieces and nephews. Edwin lived until 1932, and was buried beside Mary in Bayview Cemetery in Bellingham Washington.

Mary became ill in 1928,



EDWIN AND MARY POWER GRAVESITE,
 BAYVIEW CEMETERY,
 BELLINGHAM, WASHINGTON
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