

*"The Last Editor"*

*The best cosmetic in the world  
is an active mind that is always  
finding something new.*

— Mary Meek Atkeson

People die every day but I usually let the test of time evolve before I write about them. However, such is not the case with Miss Irene M. Gibson for whom I feel compelled to give a tribute upon her recent death.

The Disciples Methodist Church was full at her funeral. Many people at ninety-six find themselves alone as they have out-lived their friends, but Irene continued to make new friends and acquaintances. She looked at the world and life from a bright perspective. "She was a people person." In one tribute at her funeral it was noted that no one ever had any ill to speak of her and she never spoke ill of anyone. Because of this, Irene exemplified the true meaning of living a Christian life. She was devoted to her family and church and took a great interest in children and a variety of community organizations. This 1976 photo shows Irene in the center before the typewriter. Bernard Lynch 1908-1980 is on the left and Howard Pratt 1889-1988 is on the right. These three were the editing and publishing committee of the Orleans County Centennial Corporation who edited and published Orleans County History Past to Present Bicentennial Year 1976. This photo was taken after the book was released as we see copies of the book standing on the table. Indeed, we are sorry to say that Irene M. Gibson was "the last editor."

In 1979 after several years' research, Irene Gibson authored "Historic Sites in Orleans County, New York" which was published by Orleans Chapter DAR and Orleans County History Association. This 215 page paperback book is still available. Indeed, Irene Gibson has left this county endowed with her research which is a legacy for the future. As an historian, author and editor, she was highly respected by her peers as her knowledge was often sought after.

Irene Mildred Gibson was born May 4, 1898 in Hulberton to Henry and Maude Gibson. When Irene was five, the family moved to Ingleside Farm on the Power Line Road. She graduated from Holley High School in 1914 and then attended Cornell University majoring in modern languages. In 1918-19 she taught in Martha Washington College. In 1919-20 she taught in Central College, Lexington, Missouri. In 1920-23 she became instructor in French and Spanish at Lynchburg College, VA. During these years she was coach of women's field hockey. In 1923 she decided to study for a Master's degree at Ohio State University where she received her degree in 1924. Irene then accepted an instructor's job at Denison University in Ohio through most of the school year 1924-25. In the spring of 1925 she accepted a position as modern language editor and social studies editor with Silver Burdett Company, a publisher of textbooks which later became a division of Time Inc. With this job she lived in East Orange, New Jersey until 1937 when she moved to Manhattan.

After the fall of France in 1940, Irene tried to become more directly involved in the war effort. In

May 1941 she resigned from Silver Burdett to take a job with Casey Jones School of Aeronautics in its Inter-American Program for Spanish-speaking trainees i.e. she helped prepare AAF manuals in Spanish. In 1942 Irene enlisted and did a month's basic training in Des Moines, Iowa after which with other WACS she returned to NYC. In early 1943 this detachment was sent to Mitchel Field, L.I. Here she was in charge of a WAC headquarters. In November Sargeant Gibson transferred to Gunter Field, Alabama where French cadets were getting the same instructions as American Flying cadets. In the summer of 1944 Sgt. Gibson was sent to Shaw Field, S.C. to work out a similar navigation program for other French cadets. In early 1945 she received word that she was to attend Officers Candidate School at Ft. Des Moines. In July 1945 she received a commission as Second Lieutenant. She received an assignment at Selfridge Field, Michigan as French Liaison Officer, the first WAC officer in such a job. In Feb. 1946 her request for separation from the service was granted.

At this point she took an editorial position with F.S. Crofts Company in N.Y. but in the fall of 1946 learned of a pressing need for French-Speaking staff at the United Nations. She was offered a job at once and began work with its printing division in Nov. 1946. In 1948 she spent a month in Geneva, Switzerland at the Geneva Headquarters. In 1956 Irene became head of the printing division which was housed in the Secretariat Building at 42nd Street, NYC but left the UN in 1958 to return to Holley. At that point she was to care for her ailing Mother and an invalid sister in their family home.

However, in 1960 she was offered the job of teaching French and Spanish in Holley High School which she undertook until 1965 when she was needed at home again to care for her failing sister.

It's interesting that Irene always kept up with speaking French. At her funeral Marjorie Boire noted that just a couple of weeks ago while visiting Irene, she offered to let her cat out. Irene said he won't go out for you. And much to Margorie's amazement, when Irene spoke in French to the cat, he went right to the door.

After Irene's second retirement in 1965 she became involved in many community organizations including: Orleans Chapter DAR where she was Regent from 1965-68. She was also a member of PEO and on the Board of the Western N.Y. Conference Board of Health and Welfare Ministries. She also served on the American Red Cross Eastern Orleans Chapter, the Orleans Historical Association and the Social Concerns Committee of the Disciples Methodist Church. She was historian for the Jewel Buckman post of the American Legion and a Life Member of the Cobblestone Society. She was also a devotee of the Murray-Holley Historical Society where she recently gave the museum a bronze tablet for its stone marker.

Active in her community until the end, she will be missed by all who had the privilege of knowing and learning from her. And so the final chapter is finished in a life full of good works and deeds. The edition complete, she lays down her pen as the "last editor."