

Mrs. Earl May Dies in Wisconsin

Mrs. Earl (Gertrude) May, 80, widow of the founder of May Seed Co., and life long resident of Shenandoah, died early this morning after fire swept her summer home on Echo Lake near Mercer, Wisc. No one else was injured in the blaze.

Sketchy reports from the county sheriff near Mercer, indicated that Mrs. May was asleep in the downstairs portion of the home while Mrs. Myrtle Welda and Mrs. Edna Buntz, Shenandoah residents, were asleep upstairs.

It is believed the fire broke out someplace downstairs and Mrs. Welda and Mrs. Buntz escaped. Mrs. May, who was suffering from arthritis, was unable to get out of the home, the sheriff's office said.

Services are pending at Buntz-Tawzer Funeral Chapel.

The sheriff's department said the fire marshall is investigating the cause of the fire.

Chairman of the board of the Earl May Seed and Nursery Co. and of KMA radio, civic and social leader throughout her lifetime in Shenandoah, Mrs. May was the daughter of Edward S. Welch, founder of Mount Arbor Nurseries. She was a member of the board of Mount Arbor and until recently had served for long years as chairman of the board of Hand Community Hospital.

Born September 14, 1892 in Shenandoah, she graduated from Shenandoah High School with the class of 1911. She attended National Park Seminary at Forest Glenn, Maryland in 1913 and the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, 1913-15 where she was a member of Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority.

She married Earl E. May, founder of the May Seed & Nursery Company June 8, 1917. They were parents of two children, Mrs. J. D. (Frances) Rankin and Edward



Mrs. Earl May

May.

Mrs. May was prominent in many organizations and was past matron of the Order of Eastern Star and worthy grand matron of Iowa in 1935. Other groups with which she was affiliated were PEO, DAR,

Daughters of Mayflower Society, Garden Club, Tri-H Club, Study Club, Meta Grada, Thursday Music Club. Her church affiliation was Congregational Church in which she was very active. The home is at 1606 Maple Street.

Mrs. Earl (Gertrude) May Services Have Been Set; More Details Available

Funeral services for Mrs. Earl E. (Gertrude) May, 80, who died as a result of a fire at her summer home at Echo Lake near Mercer, Wisc., will be held at 2 p.m. Friday from the Congregational Church, the Rev. Ed Cox officiating.

Additional details on the fire indicate the fire broke out shortly after 5 a.m. apparently in a small room next to the kitchen that housed the furnace, a deputy Wisconsin fire marshal reported.

The fire marshal said Mrs. Myrtle Welda, a friend of Mrs. May, helped Mrs. Edna Buntz, another friend, out of the house and on the way called to Mrs. May. A response was heard and Mrs. Welda attempted to go back into the cottage but the smoke was too thick.

Mrs. May's body was found near the door of her bedroom indicating she had made some attempt to get out of the cottage. Medical authorities ruled that death was a result of smoke inhalation.

Survivors include: one daughter, Mrs. J. D. (Frances) Rankin, Jr. of Shenandoah; one son, Edward W. May of Shenandoah; five grandchildren, Edward W. May, Jr., Shenandoah, Mrs. James (Karen) Sislo, Wausau, Wisconsin, Mrs. David (Annette) Sanders, Madison, Wisconsin, Mrs. Michael (Betty Jane) Sherman, Shenandoah and Mrs. John (Diane) Kidd, Shenandoah; and five great-grandchildren: Amy Sislo, Bill Sislo, Gordon Sherman, Melinda Sherman, and Jordan Kidd; one brother, Wayne Welch of Yakima, Washington; J. D. Rankin, Jr., son-in-law; Eleanor J. May, daughter-in-law; and Mrs. Carl J. Wolford of Shenandoah, sister-in-law.

Gertrude Frances Welch May was born in Shenandoah on September 14, 1892, the daughter of E. S. Welch, founder of Mount Arbor Nurseries, and Ida Ann Boydston. She was educated in the Shenandoah public schools and graduated from Shenandoah High School in 1911. She then attended National Park Seminary at Forest Glen, Maryland. She completed her education at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln where she was a member of Kappa Kappa Gamma Sorority.

On June 18, 1916, Gertrude Welch married Earl E. May, who at the time was associated with Mount Arbor Nur-

series. In 1919, when Earl May started the May Seed & Nursery Co., Mrs. May assisted her husband in running of the new company. Then, in 1925, when radio station KMA was started, Mrs. May assumed a prominent role in establishing the station's reputation.

During the early years of KMA, Mrs. May served as a vocal soloist, and had charge of Sunday noon sacred service. Long after she left the airways listeners continued to request her songs.

She was also an active force in shaping the policies of KMA. Her suggestions throughout the years have been extremely important in shaping the activities of both May Broadcasting Company and May Seed & Nursery Co.

Mrs. May's participation in the business continued with the founding of KMTV in Omaha, Nebraska, starting with the official ground breaking in April of 1949. She assisted in putting KMTV on the air in August of 1949. She continued the same enthusiasm she had for radio into the new medium of television.

Mrs. May recently received the Distinguished Service Award from the Shenandoah Chamber of Commerce for her 25 years of service to the Hand Community Hospital.

Memorial funds to the Congregational Church and Hand Community Hospital have been set up. Burial will be in Rose Hill Cemetery and Buntz-Tawzer Funeral Chapel is in charge of services.

Echo Lake, where Mrs. May met her tragic death, was a second home for members of her family. E. S. Welch joined with other nursery men from this area including Omaha and Fremont, Nebraska, in building homes on this lake. They chose a spot about four miles from Mercer, Wisc., which is close to Lake Superior.

In the early days the families spent considerable time there as getting to Mercer was a journey by train and boat. They had a caretaker for the cottages, as they still do, but in the early days they also had joint dining facilities.

They are located near a river inlet into the large lake. It is close to many resorts as this is in the heart of the Wisconsin resort area. No doubt some of the happiest days of her life have been spent there with her family and with guests.