



Grace Isabel Erb, Alpha



Grace Isabel Erb became a member of Alpha Chapter in 1904. She taught later in the public schools of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and was principal of the Stocking Elementary School from 1929 through 1951.

After leaving Ypsilanti, she kept close touch with the Alpha Chapter and helped organize the Grand Rapids Alumnae Chapter in 1923.

She attended the First National Convention and upon Ada A. Norton's recommendation, was elected National President.

Shortly afterward, she married Harold Thomas Ritchie. Not much is known of her later years except that she and her sister Irma cared for their aged, ailing mother.

While National President, Grace also served as the Representative for the Association of Education Sororities.

Grace wrote "Our Responsibilities" which appeared in *The Anchor* in December 1926. At that time she had been National President for a year. She began the article with the quotation: "*It is not the spirit at the start, but the continued unrelenting, unending advance that wins the day.*"

She spoke of her office as being a "pioneer responsibility" and praised all officers and chairs who devoted time to Sorority work in addition to their duties in and outside the home.

She saw the necessity of putting the Sorority on a footing acceptable to the Association of Education Sororities. She, therefore, had Alpha Sigma Tau registered in Ida Shaw Martin's *Sorority Handbook* and in Banta's *Greek Exchange*. She placed in a safety deposit box the Sorority's important papers:

1. The articles of Incorporation, dated April 28, 1917

2. The Sorority's letter of application for membership in the Association of Education Sororities accompanied by letters of recommendation and our chapter roll call.
3. A letter from Mabel Lee Walton, S.S.S., chairmen of AES certifying the admission of Alpha Sigma Tau into the Association of Education Sororities in April 1926
4. A copy of the Ritual

In another *Anchor* article she said, "*We must no longer think of the 'EMERALD and GOLD' by itself, but must rejoice in our colors as we see them flying with those of others whose purposes and achievements are similar to our own.*"

In an article "Me to You" after the Second Convention, in the March 1928 issue of *The Anchor*, she spoke about the need for an official jeweler and the copyrighting of our name.

In the June 1928 issue *The Anchor*, shortly after Grace resigned as President, her friend and fellow Alpha Sigma Tau Ada Norton wrote an article of appreciation. She said:

"The first years of an organization are vital ones in its history and to be willing to assume the responsibility of leadership at such a time shows the true worth of Mrs. Ritchie [Grace].

The two and one half years have been marked by steady growth and stabilization so that today we are on a much stronger national basis than when she accepted the responsibility of leadership in November 1925. The topic assigned to her at the 'open' meeting of the AES Conference in Denver was 'Sorority Friendship.' Her treatment of it revealed her high ideal of friendship and reflected great credit upon her and Alpha Sigma Tau.

May I express our heartfelt thanks to her for the time she has done, and ask her to lend us her wise counsel to the furtherance of our efforts to attain the highest standards possible for women in the field of education."

Grace died on March 2, 1954, at her home in Grand Rapids, Michigan, from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. Her sister sent her pin to the Central Office. The pin was then sent to the Alpha Chapter.

Alpha Sigma Tau gave money to the Stocking Elementary School to add to their memorial to Grace. The memorial is a picture, a copy of *Madame Charpentier with Her Children* by Renoir, along with a plaque that bears Grace's name and the name of Alpha Sigma Tau.

Positions held: National President (October 1925 - May 1928); Association of Educational Sororities Delegate (October 1925 - May 1928)