

PEARL POHL

(1887-1882)

Pearl Louise Pohl was born in 1887. She was raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where she graduated from West Division High School in 1906. Having chosen elementary education as her career, Pearl Pohl graduated from the Milwaukee State Normal School two years later.

In her long career as an elementary school teacher, which lasted from 1908 until her retirement in 1953, Pohl combined her interest in education with an interest in conservation. Both of these subjects became lifelong pursuits of Pohl's. She was one of the foremost advocates of conservation education in public schools in Wisconsin. Miss Pohl saw the need for environmental education in the public schools long before it became "fashionable". She "was among an early group of conservationists who worked successfully on getting legislation passed which made environmental education mandatory in Wisconsin Schools --- and this in 1936!"

She was a pioneer in the more recent methods of getting students out-of-doors which included all day trips to farms to study soil conservation, observe forest fire fighting demonstrations, plant trees, work on clean-up projects, panel discussions and other conservation activities. In addition, Miss Pohl involved her

sixth grade students in writing letters to Congress reflecting their concern over environmental issues.

According to the Wisconsin Conservation Department's Assistant Director, Walter Scott, "She believed that conservation was a way of life and that it was not difficult to secure interest from young people in these problems if they were explained with both illustrated lectures and field contacts.

In 1952, Pearl Pohl became president of the Milwaukee Chapter of the Wisconsin Izaak Walton League Association, and afterward served many years as its secretary. In 1960 she organized the LaBudde Memorial Ladies Chapter in honor of her close friend and conservationist, Wilhelmina LaBudde. At the time it was the only women's chapter of the IWLA in Wisconsin. With the sponsorship of IWLA she founded the Young Wisconsin Conservationists Association.

Pearl Pohl was extremely active wherever conservation and environmental issues were at stake. She participated and supported the Soil Conservation Society of America, she was a member of the Citizens Natural Resources Association, and the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters. Other associations that have benefitted from Pohl's leadership include "Wisconsin Citizen's Committee for the Moraine National Park, the Trees for Tomorrow Workshop, the Environmental Education Council

of Greater Milwaukee, and Chairman of the Milwaukee Chapter's Educational Council.

Miss Pohl was named to Governor Kohler's Committee to Keep Wisconsin Clean and Beautiful in 1956. The committee's efforts resulted in an effective state-wide antilitter campaign as well as new anti-litter legislation.

She fought to preserve the Flambeau River State Forest and the Namekagon River. She took an active interest in helping with Mewnominee Indian Reservation problems. She worked closely on various other environmental projects, including efforts to keep portions of Wisconsin rivers under wild river designation --- especially the Nemakogan and the Wolf, the struggle to save the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, and numerous reforestation projects, "a particular favorite of Pearl's." Her other conservation interests included watershed management and fisheries.

Pearl Pohl was also the founding member of the Wisconsin Council for Conservation Education, which, in 1965, helped to sponsor the Governor's Conference on Forestry and Forest Recreation Land Use.

Miss Pohl has received many honors on behalf of conservation and conservation education. Most notable among them are the 1948

Izaak Walton League Award for Accomplishment in Conservation Education, the Milwaukee County Conservation Alliance in 1951, the IWLA Braughton Conservation Award in 1959, a citation of merit from Governor Warren Knowles in 1965, and a recognition award for distinguished service to the state of Wisconsin by the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters.

Walter Scott, Assistant Director of the Conservation Department, said of Miss Pohl in 1965, "Her enthusiasm has encouraged others to follow her good direction, and conservation in Wisconsin and the nation both have moved forward as a result of her efforts." A League Leader Publication of 1972 saluted Miss Pohl and remarked that "Pohl has made truly astounding advances in the area of environmental education. And when it comes to furthering sound environmental practices, Miss Pohl has spared nothing of her time or fortune."

Sources:

League Leader of the Month. Publication. 1922. Wisconsin Historical Research Library. Madison, Wisconsin.

Pearl Louise Pohl Wisconsin Conservation Materials - 1901-1981. ms. #M85-584. Wisconsin Historical Research Library. Madison, Wisconsin.

Scott, Walter E. Letter to Miss Helen Porter. 1965. Wisconsin Historical Research Library.