



## A Notable Woman - Eleanor Hays

In the 1960s, when the Whiting Motor Hotel bustled with activity, hosting nearly all of the city's commercial guests, Eleanor Hays greeted them all.

Some thought she owned the place. Her presence was everywhere in the main traffic of the hotel. It provided opportunities for engaging conversations.

Hays was an instructor of English for a decade, from 1961 to 1971. At the same time, her son, Rhys, taught medieval history. The two were Whiting residents, and Hays referred to a corner of the dining area as her literary salon.

It was worth anyone's time when it was spent with Eleanor Hays. "The best conversationalist for miles around," a *Milwaukee Journal* reporter noted in a personality sketch of her.

Hays had worthwhile things to talk about. She had often brushed shoulders in New York City with the giants in the arts and literature, especially during the 1920s. Her saucy reminiscences attracted students and teaching colleagues to her side. Her stories included anecdotes about parties with Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck and Thomas Wolfe.

After graduating from high school in Cleveland, Hays pursued higher education there at Western Reserve University. Then it was on to New York to pursue a master's at Columbia followed by additional graduate study at Stanford University in California.

For many years, she was active in liberal political causes. To the delight of old time Democrats in Stevens Point, she remembered that as a young woman in New York, she distributed campaign literature for Robert M. La Follette of Wisconsin during his 1924 bid for the presidency on the Progressive ticket.

Her marriage to Paul Hays was influenced by politics. The couple had become acquainted working together as campaign volunteers in New York. They were later divorced. Mr. Hays became a senior judge of the U.S. Court of the Appeals of the 2<sup>nd</sup> District headquartered in New York City.

Hays brought prestige to Stevens Point merely by her personal and professional experience. As a teacher, she had assignments at New York University, Columbia University Extension, Adelphi College and Sarah Lawrence College.

She died in Ohio in 1981 at the age of 82. She was buried beside her son at Restlawn Memorial Park, near Wisconsin Rapids, where he had been interred about five years earlier.