

Margaret Hankey Curtis

A quiet force for women

*D*elving into the life of Margaret Hankey Curtis revealed a calming and generous spirit. Margaret came to live in Petoskey at the age of three in 1881 with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Christopher F. Hankey and one sister and two brothers. Her father entered into a partnership with Mr. Rigg to operate a flour mill referred to as “The Cable Mills.”

Margaret spent her school years in Petoskey and attended college at Mrs. Soule’s School in Indianapolis. One can assume she came home after graduating, for on Jan. 9, 1901, she was married in Petoskey to Chalmers Curtis, the son Mr. William L. Curtis, who was an owner of the Petoskey City Bank. Chalmers, at that time, was employed at the bank as its cashier.

The wedding was a lavish one, warranting quite a write-up in *The Petoskey Record*, “The decorations were elaborate and an elegant supper was served after the ceremony. The gifts were notable in number and value, the largest we understand being a check for \$8,000.”

Once the wedding trip was over, Margaret settled into married life as a young mother. But as her first son, Thomas Chalmers, grew out of babyhood, she began to serve her community post-haste, her first role being one in the Girls’ Auxiliary of Lockwood Hospital.



Photo from Little Traverse Bay Historical Society

She worked to get donations of linen and money for the free bed program at the hospital and was instrumental in arranging “A Night of Melody” as a fundraiser for it. The party, full of musical recitals, garnered \$50 for the hospital.

That same year, the Lockwood group was adopted into the Petoskey Federation of Woman’s Clubs (Petoskey FWC), and Margaret, subsequently, got looped into various committees.


Besides being in the banking business, there is evidence of the Curtis family buying and

selling and even donating real estate. So it likely didn't come as much of a surprise when another news item from *The Petoskey Record* on Feb. 9, 1910, stated that Chalmers and his brother-in-law, Guy Hankey, had each bought a Mitchell auto in Detroit. Once their car was delivered in the spring, Margaret and Chalmers, along with friends and family, used it to take several road trips in the east. They drove to Cheboygan, sent the car over to Buffalo by boat, and took several weeks traveling by auto through the east — New York City, Atlantic City, Washington DC and more — before driving back north. Often on these adventures, Chalmers would take note of what other areas of the country were doing with roads, such as speed limit signs and curve warnings, and report back to Emmet County.

In March, Margaret was placed on the standing town improvement committee of the Petoskey FWC. That summer, she was a hostess of the Girls' Auxiliary of Lockwood Hospital (called "one of the most energetic organizations of the city"), which met in her home to plan "Hospital Day."

On Jan. 27, 1911, Margaret gave birth to a second son, Frederick, and likely as a result, had no activities outside of the home recorded in the news that year.

FLAG DAY



WEDNESDAY

JUNE 24

Conducted under auspices
of Child Welfare Department of
Federation of Women's Clubs
in Petoskey, for Benefit of
Michigan Child Welfare
League.

— COMMITTEE —

Mrs. Mary Curtis, Chairman;
Mrs. Alick Rosenthal, Vice
Chairmen; Mrs. W. W. Johnson,
2nd ViceChairman; Mrs. Homer
Sly, Sec'y and Treas.; Mrs. C.
W. Fallas, Miss E. Agnes Dean.

**HEADQUARTERS FOR THE
DAY AT HOTEL PERRY**

A year and six months later, however, a headline of the *Petoskey Evening News* stated, "Women organize for equal rights. Men took part in Monday night session." A guest speaker, Mrs. Huntley Russell of Grand Rapids, vice president of the state equal suffrage organization, spoke at the Presbyterian church in the afternoon and again in the evening to a crowd full of men, who, according to the reporter, seemed more enthusiastic than the ladies had earlier that day.

"As the result of the meetings, under the auspices of the Petoskey Federation of Women's Clubs, a county committee was organized with Mrs. Louis Grosenbaugh as president and

Mrs. A. B. Klise, vice chairman. Mrs. Emma Lamb Barnes is secretary and Mrs. Leon Chichester, treasurer. The county committee is divided into other committees, Mrs. Grosenbaugh being chairman of the organization committee; Mrs. Chalmers Curtis, of the literature committee; and Mrs. E. E. Gilbert, of the speakers committee."

After the program, Margaret helped with refreshments at a reception.

When not away for the winter in Florida or taking auto tours of the east, Margaret, along with her mother, continued their good works. In December of 1912, Margaret was named chairman of the Ladies Home Benevolent Association. For that holiday, she headed up the Presbyterian church Sunday school Christmas program. The next spring, she sold tickets for the musically filled May Festival, a fundraiser for the Petoskey FWC. In the summer, she served on the finance committee, along with Minnie Rosenthal and Edith Sly, of the Flag Day benefit for the Child Welfare League. That Christmas, she judged the high school debate competition.

On Jan. 17, 1915, Margaret's mom, Mrs. CF Hankey died after a gall stone procedure. At the time of her death, she had been the treasurer for the Home Benevolent Society. It was only



natural then, that Margaret followed her mother's footsteps. That fall, she was named chairman of finance and put in charge of Ward 1.

In the summer of 1916, according to the *Petoskey Evening News*, Margaret was elected to the board of directors for the Petoskey FWC. It was during this meeting that the Emmet County Suffrage Club was added to the federation.

Beginning in the spring of 1917, Margaret turned her attention toward the American Red Cross. She was named chairman of the distribution committee for the Petoskey branch formed for emergency work. That summer, she served on the bureau of supplies and shipment of the Emmet County chapter, along with her husband, Chalmers. In the fall, Margaret became the leader of the Petoskey branch when her friend, Edith Sly, stepped down.

She continued her Red Cross work through 1917 and 1918, but along the way, had also hosted gala social events and parties. Her work in the winter of 1917 as leader of the surgical dressings and bandages department for the Red Cross, received special notice. According to the *Petoskey Evening News*, "Many thousands of articles have been made by this division and its auxiliaries."

In 1918, Margaret was named to the board of directors for the Petoskey FWC. In addition to serving the Home Benevolent Association and the Petoskey FWC, she and her husband

Mrs. Curtis Is Taken By Death

Mrs. Chalmers Curtis, prominent Petoskey resident for nearly 70 years, died today following a lengthy illness.

Services will be held at 2 p.m. Thursday from the family residence on Bay street with burial following in Greenwood cemetery. The Rev. E. P. Linnell of the First Presbyterian church, will be in charge.

Born Margaret Hankey in Danville, Ill., January 22, 1878, Mrs. Curtis came to Petoskey in 1881 with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. C. F. Hankey. She attended the Petoskey public schools and Mrs. Soule's School in Indianapolis. On January 9, 1901, she was married to Mr. Curtis.

For many years, Mrs. Curtis had been a director of the First National Bank of which her husband is president. She was a member of the First Presbyterian church and was active in church circles and hospital auxiliary work.

Surviving are: Mr. Curtis; two sons, T. Chalmers and C. Frederic Curtis, both of Petoskey; four grandchildren, Thomas Chalmers, Margaret Louise, Caroline Clark and Mary Wooding Curtis, all of Petoskey; a brother, Louis C. Hankey, of Petoskey; five nephews, Louis W. Hankey and Heber Curtis, of Petoskey, William Curtis of Dallas, George Forman, of Lexington, Ky., and Malcolm Curtis, of Chicago, and three nieces, Mrs. Norman Shaw, of Grand Rapids, Mrs. Humber Burford, of St. Louis and Mrs. Frank Pierce of Chicago.

had helped bring a band, the "Jackies" up north for an event to raise money for the Liberty Loan, which was "badly behind" that fall.

In July of 1943, Margaret joined her husband and sons on the board of directors of The First National Bank. Seven years later, after many years of illness, she died at the age of 72.