

Eunice Alvina Miller Steele



Lifespan: 86 years, 1892-1978. Born on a farm near Plankinton on 01/06/1892. Died on 03/19/1978 in a nursing home in Chamberlain, SD. She is buried in Plankinton Cemetery.

Locations: Farm near Plankinton (1892), Farm northwest of Plankinton (1911), three different farms in Pleasant Lake Township (1912+, 1936 and 1942), Plankinton (1967), Chamberlain, SD (1978).

Spouse: McGrady McCulla McSteele, later changed to Grady C. Steele, 1884-1968, born in Fairfield, IA. Married 06/28/1911 in Plankinton. Came from Iowa with his family at age of 14. Farmed northwest of Plankinton briefly, then several different farms in Pleasant Lake Twp, sections 4, 9, and 16.

Eunice Alvina Miller Steele: Eunice Steele, the granddaughter of an Aurora County homesteader, loved the outdoors and growing things in her garden and in the farm fields. She was a hard worker and worked outside along with her husband. When her daughters were older, they took responsibility for most of the housework, so Eunice could do farm work. She especially loved her garden and her flowers.

For Eunice, family was most important to her. Her oldest four children were born in the first twelve years of marriage. Seven years later, she gave birth to her only son Marvin. Nine months later, when her unmarried daughter Mildred gave birth to a daughter, Eunice raised granddaughter LaRayne as her own child. Sadly, her second born, Myrna, died at the age of three from Scarlet Fever. All her children attended Pleasant Lake Consolidated School, where Eunice volunteered her time to help with school activities. She delighted in visits from her grandchildren.

Some of their fondest memories are helping their grandmother in her garden and with farm chores. Granddaughter Marlis Gilbert Walsh remembered visiting her on the farm, enjoying her chocolate chip cookies, and helping to gather eggs. Marlis also recalled helping pick green beans and then later seeing those canned beans lined on a shelf in the root cellar. Grandson Maurice Gilbert shared fond memories of picking berries and green beans, collecting them in an old steel pot. Eunice let him crank the separator after milking cows. She also let him play pitch (a card game) with his grandfather and his uncle. Those activities created a loving bond between Eunice and her grandchildren.

Eunice also enjoyed gathering with friends. She would meet with the Dudley Ladies Aid group to sew, quilt, dress poultry, and do other activities. She also met with friends in her extension club and the Rebekah group, associated with the Odd Fellows. Her faith and membership in the Methodist Church sustained her through some of the hardest times of her life, especially the loss of her daughter, the Great Depression, the loss of a grandson, and providing care to her husband after he suffered from a stroke.

Born in Aurora County, Eunice never moved far from her birthplace. At the age of 76, she moved into the town of Plankinton, but continued to miss the farm. Due to illness, the last few months of her life were spent in a nursing home. Eunice lived her life close to home, caring most about her family, her friends, and the good earth that she so loved.

Roles/Talent: Daughter, wife, mother, grandmother, farmer, gardener, school, and church volunteer. She made delicious cinnamon rolls.

Parents/Ethnicity: Christian C. Miller, German, and Christina Tidemann//Tiedmann/Tideman, Danish immigrant in 1881.

Children: 5 children, born 1912-1930. Mildred (Clay Hurni), Myrna, Velma (Arthur Gilbert), Virginia James Nelson (died), William Hobson, Marvin (Donna Fraser). She also raised Mildred's daughter Constance LaRayne (Robert Johnson), born 1931, as her own. Myrna died of Scarlet Fever at age three.

Sisters: Lorena/Rena Robinson, Myrtle Eda Oakes (in Ziegfield Follies), both moved to New York

Brothers: George, moved to New York.

Education: Educated as rural teacher.

Work Experience: Taught school in Dudley Twp before marriage.

Church, Clubs/Organizations: Member of Plankinton United Methodist Church, Pleasant Lake Extension Club, Dudley Ladies Aid, and Daughters of Rebekah (Odd Fellows)

Family Connections: Eunice's Aunt Hannah Tiedmann married Thomas Mullivan, and many of their descendants still live in the area. The farm that the Steele's moved to in 1942, and passed down to their son Marvin, had belonged to Eunice's first cousin Mary Mullivan and her husband Neal Flynn. The only child of Eunice's to remain in Aurora County was Marvin and his family. Today, in 2021, Gregory Paul Steele, son of Marvin and Donna Steele, born in 1968, and his wife, Rachel Ann (Engel) Steele live on the Steele farm. Eunice's great grandson, Caleb Gregory Steele lives at home with his parents.

Physical Appearance: She was short, maybe 5'3" with brown hair, and she walked with a slight limp. She wore glasses and always, a dress and apron.

Date of Submission: July 08, 2021. **Updated:** September 8, 2021

Submitter: Donna Steele Korus, widow of Marvin Steele, who was Eunice's only son.



Photo 1: L to R Eunice, Marie Lally, Florence Justman, Marnee Nolan
Photo 2: Family, 1952: L-R Constance La Rayne Johnson, Velma Gilbert, Eunice, Virginia Nelson, Mildred Hurni, Zora (Grady's sisters), Grady, James Nelson Back L to R is a cousin, Bob Johnson, Clay Hurni, Marvin. Two children are Lynda and Larry Nelson.
Photo 3: Eunice and Grady wedding photo.