

Who was who in Washburn—¹⁴⁶ Notable People—2

Albert A. Axley was born on April 22 1887 in Manitowoc County. He attended Rush Medical College in Chicago and the University of Wisconsin, receiving his medical degree in 1910. He joined the Army Medical Corps in 1917, serving in France, and was discharged with the rank of captain. In 1919 he came to Washburn, taking over the private practice of a departing physician. In February 1921 he established a hospital in the former Du Pont Haskell Club building, which he developed into a modern facility to serve the medical needs of the people of Washburn and the surrounding area. He was active in public affairs as the city health officer and president of the board of education. He was a member of the Masonic fraternal lodge, the American Legion, and medical societies. On April 11 1935 he suffered a paralytic stroke and died on April 16th. His wife, Jessie Lowe Axley, continued as owner of the hospital, which was operated as a non-profit institution by a local hospital association, with Mrs. Axley as manager. In the fall of 1941 a new hospital association was organized which purchased the hospital from Mrs. Axley and operated it as a non-profit community enterprise. Mrs. Axley died on February 22 1957.



Lars Larson

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May Maria Smith Greenwood was born on September 16 1869 in Downsville, the daughter of George and Maria Smith. On a trip to Washburn to visit her sister, Louisa Smith Irish, she met Richard Greenwood. He had come to Washburn from England in 1884, taking over an established meat market. They were married in Downsville on November 9 1887, returning to Washburn to live. On February 23 1896, he died after a long illness, leaving her a widow with two young daughters. On July 11 1898 she was appointed city librarian, at an annual salary of \$400. Under her direction the library collection grew to 1,665 volumes by July 1901, with a total circulation of almost 8,500. The financial stringency of the post-boom years affected her personally—her sal-

ary for a 13 month period ending July 9 1911 was \$250—the city appropriation for the library for the same period was only \$1,800. By July 1918, during the boom of World War I, the collection had grown to 6,058 books, with total circulation for the past year of 23,681 volumes. During the depressed conditions of the 1920s and 1930s library hours were reduced and other economy measures were taken, but under her leadership the number of books in the collection increased, cooperation with the public schools continued, and special events to familiarize the public with the library were held. In mid-November 1931 she completed a third of a century of what the Times praised as her long, “constructive community service,” in recognition of which the library board placed a large framed portrait of her in the library. In August 1938 her completion of four decades of service as the city librarian was recognized with further praise in the Times:

“Four decades of service as librarian of the Washburn Free Public library were completed Wednesday, July 13th, by Mrs. May M. Greenwood, who has been directing the destinies of the library and the reading taste of the community since July 13, 1898, and probably will continue in that capacity for years to come, so firm is the place she

has made for herself in the affection and esteem of her fellow-citizens and so youthful is she in body and spirit in spite of her long term of service. . . . Under the capable guidance of Mrs. Greenwood, the library has become a cultural agency of real value and prestige in the community and has experienced a steady, rapid growth until it is now one of the best among libraries in cities of Washburn's size in the entire state.”

The Times prediction that she would continue as librarian “for years to come” would prove to be correct. In November 1960 her 62 years of service were observed with a “May Greenwood Day” held at the library. The Times reported that “friends from this city, Ashland and Bayfield dropped in . . . to pay tribute to Mrs. Greenwood for her long service—62 years as librarian—a very distinguished record.” In a program arranged by the Women's Study Club she was presented with letters of appreciation and a gift from her grandchildren. She continued in her work until August 1964, when the library board finally relented and allowed her to retire at age 94 after 66 years for service, “the oldest librarian in the nation, with the longest record of service,” according to the Times. She died on May 31 1967 at age 97 and was buried in Greenwood Cemetery in Bayfield.