

Williamsport Women

Ada Carter Remley: Williamsport business woman

By JANET McNEIL HURLBERT
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Ada Carter Remley (1893-1983) possessed all the characteristics sought after by many 21st century women. She valued education, pursued a number of career paths, supported community causes, nurtured her home life and realized the value of building a community of women. Pulaski Carter, Ada's grandfather, came to Lackawanna

County from Connecticut and established the extremely successful Carter's Capouse Works, which claimed to make "nothing but the very best axe, a favorite of lumbermen." He also came with a background in the great 19th century Concord philosophers, and donated the land for the first free school in the Scranton area. Ada's father, Pulaski Pliny Carter, was a Scranton businessman who educated all of

his children at colleges in the eastern U.S. **Early years** Ada B. Carter graduated from Smith College in 1916. The yearbook lists her as a member of the Physics Club. She then pursued several professions. After working as a teacher at the Mary Lyon School in Swarthmore and as an executive secretary for the American Red Cross in Scranton, she con-

tinued her education at the School of Social Work in Philadelphia, subsequently assuming positions of responsibility in that field of work. Ada married in her late-20's, but she and her husband, Donald G. Remley, did not move to Williamsport until their middle years. They were co-owners of the Coslett Publishing Co. when they came to the city. Donald took a position teaching mathematics and physics at

the former Williamsport Dickinson Junior College just before it transitioned into Lycoming College. Ada assumed responsibility for running their publishing business. Her husband is quoted in a newspaper article as saying, "I leave the Coslett Publishing Company business up to my wife." **Coslett Publishing Co.** The original owner of Coslett Publishing had offered two (See ADA, Page E-3)

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titles — "Leaves of Gold" and "Rainbows" — to a very limited market. These inspirational works were sold to funeral directors, who presented the books to bereaved families. The Remleys acquisition of the business in 1941 was somewhat of a fluke. When Donald Remley had been forced to give up teaching temporarily because of an extended illness, he had become a salesman for the Coslett company. The owner of the company died and the business floundered, and the Remleys purchased it in 1941.

'Leaves of Gold'

The approach of World War II and gas rationing posed a threat to the business as they could no longer afford traveling salesmen. But Ada found a national market for the books, starting with religious book stores. She was especially successful with "Leaves of Gold: An Anthology of Prayers, Memorable Phrases, Inspirational Verse and Prose" from the best authors of the world, both ancient and modern, by Clyde Francis Lytle.

Sales grew, not from traveling salesmen or because of extensive advertising, but by word of mouth. Eventually, copies were shipped to bookstores and major department stores in all 50 states as well as many foreign countries. The volume of orders increased steadily until it was normal for a printing to number 75,000 copies.

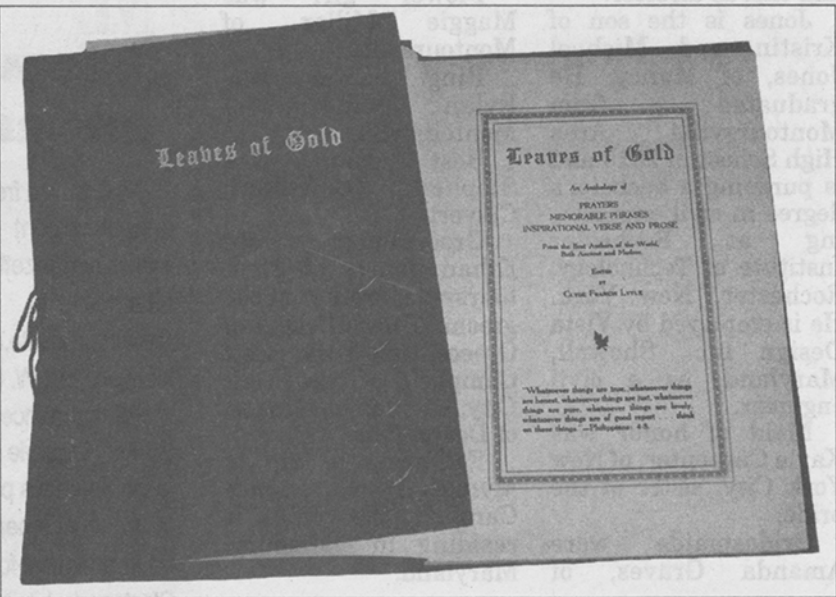
When the Supreme Court banned reading from the Bible in public schools, educators viewed "Leaves of Gold" as a substitute, increasing sales even further. The business was a phenomenal success, very financially lucrative, and Ada Remley earned a reputation as a skilled businesswoman.

For many years, the books were assembled in a Williamsport facility on Walnut Street, and quite a few Lycoming College students paid their way through school colating and shipping the books.

Today, eBay displays the wide range of printings, editions, and bindings that were available including a "gold deluxe" version. Additionally, a page on Facebook keeps the spirit of the book alive by offering a place for "friends" to share their favorite quotes from the book.

Civic leader

Well known as a civic leader who generously shared her monetary wealth, Remley was active in the League of Woman Voters, Business and Professional Women's Club, Soroptimist Club, Clio Club, American Association of University Women, Lycoming County Heart Association, Lycoming County United Fund, the United Methodist Church (serving as an official delegate to three World Conferences), Williamsport Chamber of Commerce, Woman's Club, PTA and YWCA — just to list a few. She wasn't merely a joiner, but a leader, holding many posi-



tions of responsibility within these organizations.

Remley served on the executive committee of the Lycoming College board of trustees. She also was a member of the board of trustees for Pine Street United Methodist Church with the position of treasurer.

She was one of the first women to hold these positions. In meetings, her words were respected. She spoke frankly about her views, and her insights were progressive.

When she retired from the board of trustees of Lycoming College in 1978, after a decade of service, she was cited as someone who provided "wise counsel, material wealth, regular attention to campus needs and unflagging encouragement to all her colleagues."

Faculty wives

Remley opened her home on Vallamont Drive to various groups, especially the wives of Lycoming College faculty members.

Her beautiful silver serving dishes, Spode china for daily use, and a standing order each week for a fresh flower bouquet from Nevill Florists had many of the young women in awe.

It was at one of these gatherings that the Faculty Wives of Lycoming College (now called the Women of Lycoming to reflect the growing number of woman faculty and administrators) came about.

Through this organization, founded in 1949, the women not only formed closer associations with each other, but also enjoyed cultur-

PHOTOS PROVIDED
Above is a photo from Tami Hutson, Lycoming College, showing "Leaves of Gold: An Anthology of Prayers, Memorable Phrases, Inspirational Verse and Prose," a best seller from the Coslett Publishing Co. At left is Ada Carter Remley in the Smith College Yearbook, 1916 from the Smith College archives. When the Supreme Court banned reading from the Bible in public schools, educators viewed 'Leaves of Gold' as a substitute, which increased sales of the book.

al programming together. They supported the college with various fundraising events, including fashion shows and producing and acting in plays, and reached out to individual students who needed emotional or financial support.

Remley's name figures prominently in the early Faculty Wives' activities. In her memory, a financial award named the Ada B. Remley Memorial Scholarship is still given each year to a female in the junior class with outstanding academic performance and community involvement.

Remley raised two children, traveled the world and lived to know two great-great grandchildren. She and her husband celebrated 50 years of marriage with 300 friends and family at the Woman's Club where they were avid bridge players.

She was a business woman and humanitarian whose approach to life might be described by a quote taken from "Leaves of Gold," "Whatever your hands find to do, that do with all the might that is in you" (Goethals).

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Williamsport Women is published the second Sunday of each month. Sieminski can be reached at lcwhcmanager@gmail.com.