

Visitation will be held at the Finch Funeral Home in Mt. Morris, Ill., Saturday, June 29, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon. The funeral service will begin at noon at the funeral home followed by a graveside service at Oakwood Cemetery in Mt. Morris.

She was born Sept. 2, 1926, in Grinnell, the daughter of Edmund A. and Dora Lee Alexander Dobbs. She grew up in Grinnell and went by her middle name, Pauline "Polly" Dobbs until the age of 30. She loved to tap dance, and in 1934 at the age of 8 met Lawrence Welk and tap-danced with his band on the radio while on tour in Marshalltown. Her first job as a teenager was at a local grocery store, where she learned how to butcher meat and made 19 cents per hour.

She graduated from Grinnell High School in 1944, then moved to Madison, Wisc., and joined the United States Army's Cadet Nurse Corps near the end of World War II. She worked caring for injured soldiers at Madison General Hospital, and later at Cook County Hospital in Chicago.

After graduating from the Army's Cadet Nurse Corps, she had to repay the government with 4,000 service hours of hospital nursing. After completing her obligation to the government, she returned to her hometown of Grinnell to work at Community Hospital, making \$1 an hour.

In 1956, she moved to Iowa City to continue her education at the University of Iowa, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing. Later she pursued post-graduate work in psychiatric nursing while teaching OB nursing at the University of Iowa. She also held a position as charge nurse of the cystoscopy department at the university, and then as night supervisor.

In the late 1960s, she took a position as director at the School of Nursing at Mercy Hospital in Iowa City, where she also taught pharmacology.

With her husband, Henry Black, an English professor at the university, Frances was co-founder of Black's Gaslight Village, an iconic and eccentric student housing complex in Iowa City's north side. The success of Gaslight Village allowed her to become a generous and often anonymous philanthropist.

A documentary film is in production about Gaslight Village, and anyone willing to share their stories is encouraged to visit the facebook page "Black's Gaslight Village History."

Henry Black died in 1978, and Frances sold Gaslight Village in 1987. Frances remarried to Vernon Wright in 1995. They lived in Ashton, Ill.

Frances is survived by her husband Vernon Wright; four children, Cheryl Ann Dyer of Thompson, Pa., Doralee Erickson of Ashton, Ill., Henry Black of Rockford, Ill., and George Black of Galesburg, Ill.; ten step-children; 16 grandchildren; three step-grandchildren; ten great-grandchildren; and one sister, Grace Marty of Sun Prairie, Wisc.

She was preceded in death by her parents; her first two husbands, Robert Bahr and Henry Black; two sons, Curtis and Edmund Black; four step-sons; two grandsons; and her brothers Curtis, Arnold and George Dobbs.

'Polly' Dobbs G H - R  
Black-Wright 6-27-13



Frances Black-Wright, 86, formerly of Grinnell, died Saturday, June 22, 2013, at Franklin Grove Nursing Center in Illinois.