

Historical legacy of Lucille K. Fales

By June W. Kennedy

"Indefatigable, energetic, positive and cheerful" describe the personality of Lucille K. Fales, whose death on Oct. 1 ended her lifetime devotion to family, God and historical research.

Born on May 15, 1896, in Wasioja, Minnesota, Lucille was the daughter of Martha Libby Benjamin and John Baltzar Knudson. While she could trace her ancestry back to the Mayflower on her mother's side, she was equally proud of her immigrant Norwegian father. The family led a rather nomadic life as her father moved from town to town establishing the business departments for the town schools, including Dover High in New Hampshire.

During her teen years, the family lived in the Boston area while Knudson taught at Burdett Business College. Although Lucille dreamed of becoming a librarian, she dutifully attended Filton Pianoforte School for eight years; her mother thought a musical education was proper for a young lady.

At her father's practical insistence, Lucille graduated from the secretarial course at Burdett before her marriage to Raymond Davis Fales in Boston on May 11, 1918.

As a World War I bride, Lucille worked in Boston. Following her husband's return from the service, they took a two-week vacation to Canada in a Model T Ford coupe. Friends thought such a trip incredulous! Most roads were unpaved and rutted; many small streams had no bridges. In fact, the roads were so rough that a red lantern soon replaced the tail light.

Thus began the Fales' Family Rambles, 14 volumes, hand-typed with photographs, cover-

ing all trips between 1918 and 1972.

Between the years 1921 and 1932, sons Robert and Richard, and daughter Ruth arrived. The family had moved to Needham by 1923. Although times were hard during the depression, Lucille's skill at handling family finances and her grandmother's admonition, "Waste not, want not", held them in good stead.

Lucille was an avid genealogist and historian. She and her husband traced 16 family lines back to their entry into this country. To their children, it seemed that Sundays, after church, were reserved for a trip to yet another graveyard.

In the late thirties, Lucille won second prize in a women's club statewide contest. In one year, she and her husband, Ray, located 159 Massachusetts churches and former churches that were 100 years old. The churches were listed by architectural type, with pictures and history. (Many, of course, have since been destroyed by wind or fire). The resultant book was presented to the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester.

The history of genealogy and church led to the scholarly study of a famous architect of the 1800-1830 era, Asher Benjamin. Although she was not a direct descendant of Benjamin, Lucille believed they had common roots. Under the terms of her will, all Asher Benjamin material will be presented to the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester.

During the years following World War II, Lucille and her husband became charter members of the Needham Historical Society and also members of the Governing Board of the Bay State Historical League. Following Ray's death in 1952 and her own retirement, Lucille moved to

Westford in 1961 to keep house for her son, Robert. At that time, she served as vice-president and secretary of the Bay State League.

During her years in Westford, Lucille was employed as secretary to the guidance counselor at Westford Academy, retiring at the age of 70. She continued making trips to Europe to visit friends, and on her last trip to Great Britain in 1975, she spent one week in London at the National Archives researching Fales' genealogy.

Lucille became a member of the First Parish Church United of Westford. Recently a memorial flower was lovingly placed in the church sanctuary in celebration of her faithful and full life.

Lucille was also a staunch member of the Westford Historical Society. On Thursday, Nov. 17, at 8 p.m. at the Tadmuck Club, the Society will present her program "New England Meeting Houses and Church Architecture." It will be an evening for friends and members to pay tribute to Lucille K. Fales.

Lucille joined the Needham Congregational Church in 1925 and for many years was active in women's groups. It was from the chapel of that church that family and friends gathered on October 6, 1983, to say 'farewell' to this remarkable lady of 87 years. She was buried beside her husband, Raymond, in the Needham Cemetery. Memorials in Lucille's memory may be made to the American Antiquarian Society, 185 Salisbury St., Worcester, MA 01609-1634.

At the time of her death, Lucille Fales left her son, Robert O. Fales of Westford, Richard L. Fales of Tewksbury and Ruth C. Derby of Norton. She is also survived by 10 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.