

## Ellen Fellows Young NSCDA-MN's First President

Born in Edgartown, MA, in 1846, Ellen was the only child of Daniel Fellows and Sophronia Smith, Daniel's second wife, who was 30 years his junior. Ellen's father, Daniel Fellows Jr., was a well-known attorney who was appointed Guardian of the Indians in 1828. He died in 1856 when he was 78 and Ellen was ten years old. In 1860, she lived with her mother, and by 1870, her aunt Olive Smith had joined them. That year, at age 24, Ellen was a school teacher in Edgartown.

Ellen married George Brooks Young in September 1870 and moved to MN that same year. George was born in Boston in 1846, graduated from Harvard Law School, and studied law in New York City. His parents were the Reverend Alexander and Caroline Young of Boston. George and Ellen lived in Minneapolis for four years, moving to St. Paul in 1874.

George served as associate justice and as reporter for the Minnesota Supreme Court before returning to private practice with his partner William Lightner, where he served as attorney for Great Northern Railroad and for James J. Hill. In 1886, George and William had a duplex built at 322-324 Summit Avenue, where both families lived. In the photo above, George and Ellen lived in the three story right-hand side, and the Lightners lived on the left, with the slate roof and dormer. The Lightners, a much younger couple, raised three children there. The Youngs had no children.



Figure 1 322-324 Summit Ave, Young/Lightner Residence  
Courtesy MNHS

During their time in St. Paul, Ellen was known for her work with the Saturday Morning Sewing School and the Protestant Orphan Asylum, where she served on the board for many years and was President for 11 years. She was a member of the House of Hope Presbyterian Church for many years.



Figure 2 The Youngs (Ellen, center) at their summer home in Edgartown. Courtesy Martha's Vineyard Museum.

Ellen was the first elected President of NSCDA-MN and served as such from 1897 -1904. She was succeeded by Helen Gilman Noyes, one of the original organizers of the society. Ellen died in 1905 and was buried in her hometown of Edgartown, MA. George died in 1906.



### New England Roots

Edgartown, MA was founded in 1642 by Thomas Mayhew. Known for fishing and whaling in the 18th century, the town began to be known for hosting summer camps and by the time the whaling industry declined, tourism was the main industry. In 1850, when Ellen was a child, the town had 1,990 people. By 1870, when she and George left for Minnesota, the population had declined to 1,516.

Ellen is descended from Governor Thomas Mayhew (1592-1682) through her mother's line. The family moved to Maine for a time, despite their long roots on Martha's Vineyard, and it was in Maine that her mother Sophronia was born. Ellen's great grandfather Matthias, born in Edgartown, had earned the rank of Captain in the French and Indian War, and also served in the Revolutionary War. He received a land grant of 200 acres in Readfield, Maine, provided he clear land to farm and build a log cabin on it. Sophronia returned to Martha's Vineyard and it was there that Ellen was born.

Matthias' father, Deacon Thomas Smith, was born and died on Martha's Vineyard. His father, Benjamin Smith, was an attorney who married Jedidah Mayhew, daughter of Rev Thomas Mayhew and granddaughter of Governor Thomas Mayhew.



Figure 4 Thomas Mayhew sketch (geni.com)

### Colonial ancestor

Governor Thomas Mayhew was born in Tisbury, England in 1593 and came to America during the great migration in the 1630s. He was deputy of Watertown from 1636-1641 and in 1641 he acquired Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket, and other islands from Lord Stirling, paying 40 pounds and two beaver skin hats. As there were competing claims, he

made arrangements with the other claimants as well: Ferdinand Gorges of Maine, and the Wampanoag Indians. Thomas established himself as



Figure 3 Thomas Mayhew Home built in 1630s

Governor of Martha's Vineyard in 1642. Through conflicting factions and challenges, he eventually was officially granted status as Governor and Chief Magistrate for life in 1671. He hoped to secure the family's status as aristocrats whose titles would be passed down through the generations. His son, the Reverend Thomas Jr. was lost at sea during a voyage to England in 1657. After his loss, Thomas Sr. took up his son's work and ministered to the Indians on the island for the rest of his lifetime. Thomas Sr.'s grandsons became involved with and helped him run his businesses. Some years after Thomas Sr. died in 1682, the island was annexed by Massachusetts, ending the family's claim to a hereditary government. Eight of our Colonial Dames in the State of Minnesota are descended from Governor Mayhew, including Ellen, our first president of NSCDA-MN.

## Resources

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Young House Porch, South Water St., Edgartown, photo by Shute, E257.jpg, Martha's Vineyard Museum, 16 July 2020.