

## **Angeline Vernon Milner (1856-1928)**

Angeline Vernon Milner, know as “Ange” and “Aunt Ange,” was born on April 9, 1856 in Bloomington, Illinois to John Vernon Milner and his wife Angeline Baker Milner. Ange was a frail girl and was educated at home by her mother who was a former governess and who felt the quality of the public schools was not acceptable. Ange had learned the alphabet at age two and could read at age four. She later attended a private school at age 11 and then attended Bloomington High School but never graduated. In the late 1870s she organized a club with the purpose of studying American Literature. Ange also belonged to the Palladian Club and became an honorary member of the History and Art Club of Bloomington.

Her connection with Illinois State Normal University came about following her employment by Stephen Forbes, head of the Illinois State Library of Natural History. During her time at the Illinois State Library of Natural History she mounted botanical specimens and cataloged books. From that time on she began her own study of library science. Meanwhile, at ISNU in 1889, President Edwin Hewett was given permission by the Board to combine several libraries of books on campus and hire a full-time librarian. Miss Milner was recommended for the position by Stephen Forbes and friends in the Fell family. Ange was officially hired in 1890 to catalog the several thousand books ISNU owned which were scattered throughout several different libraries on campus.

She began her tenure as librarian with only one assistant. At the end of her career, she had four assistants and many student assistants to manage over 40,000 volumes and as many periodicals and pamphlets. She had cataloged and written call numbers on each and every volume.

Miss Milner was a founding member of the Illinois Library Association and served as its President. Having developed knowledge of library science through experience and self-study, she wrote numerous professional articles and gave many presentations. Because all faculty members required their students to use the library, she developed lessons so that students could become familiar with the library and put it to better use.

During World War I, Ange began compiling a complete roster of men and women who were at ISNU and who had served in the war. This list eventually included 821 names and was declared as one of the most complete war rosters and files in the state of Illinois by the state historical library. She wrote over 800 letters during the war to local people who were serving in the armed forces.

Ange insisted on quiet in her library. She was shrewd and quick-witted, and always knew what a student wanted. She was familiarly called “Aunt Ange” by many of the students on campus.

Ange was well-known to faculty and students and went out of her way to be of service to them. For example, she would scan periodicals as they came in and alert any faculty member or student to articles that might be of interest to them. She was always helpful to students and would spend hours hunting down a reference needed for a thesis. But alternatively, she had no patience with those who waited until the last minute to seek out her help and would lecture them on getting an early start on their research.

Others have extolled her many virtues, but these did not necessarily include tactfulness. She herself recognized this and worked to improve it. Some called her outspoken. She

was not sympathetic to Women's Suffrage, but considered it her "religious duty" to vote when the privilege came into being.

She worked for 38 years at the library until ill health forced her retirement on October 15, 1927. When Miss Milner finished her career the library was in North Hall. In 1940, what is now known as Williams Hall was completed and dedicated as Milner Library in her honor. The library moved to its present location in 1976. Many of the older books remained in Williams Hall on the third floor.

Following a lengthy illness, Ange was confined to her bed for the last few months of her life. She died at her home located at 222 North University Ave. in Normal, Illinois on January 13, 1928 and was buried at Evergreen Memorial Cemetery in Bloomington, Illinois.

Much has been written about Ange's life and career and the definitive biography would appear to be a thesis written in her lifetime by Charles William Perry. It was printed in the Alumni Quarterly in 1924 and much that was written in articles thereafter seems to be taken from this thesis. In 2006, on the occasion of her 150<sup>th</sup> birthday, her grave in Evergreen Memorial Cemetery was located and a headstone was put in place to honor ISNU's first Librarian.

Edited by: Candace Summers, 2007