

EDNA LEE MURPHY WATKINS

September 2, 1898

June 22, 1998

Edna Lee Murphy Watkins, 99, died peacefully at her home on Taylor Street, Liberty, on Monday morning, June 22, 1998. She had been preceded in death on February 28, 1990, by her husband of seventy-three years, Willie Moss Watkins.

Mrs. Watkins was born September 2, 1898, the oldest of five children of Robert Lee Murphy (of the Boyle community of Casey County) and Riley Ann Sanders Murphy (of the Pelleyton community of Casey County). Her siblings were Robert Preston Murphy, Elizabeth Sanders Murphy Moser, Dr. William Riffe Murphy and James Welby Murphy.

Edna Lee joined the Church at Antioch and was baptised in Goose Creek when she was twelve. Later that same year, the family moved closer to Liberty to operate the toll gate (south of Liberty on the W.K. Shugars farm). The family later operated a restaurant and a butcher shop on the northwest side of the town square.

Edna Lee attended Liberty Elementary School. When she was in the seventh grade, she was "advanced" to the ninth grade to fill a high school class. As a high school student during the 1915-1916 school year, she played on a girls' basketball team with Anna Miracle, Ollie Phillips, Gertrude Cundiff (Carrigan) and Anna Richards (Barger).

As a high school student, she fell in love with the principal, fourteen years her senior. The clandestine romance, in which they passed love letters in library books, succeeded and on June 19, 1916, she married Willie M. Watkins in the First Christian Church of Liberty. They honeymooned at Golden Dawn (later named Wa-Kon-Da-Ho) and visited Cincinnati by train. Her paternal aunt, Edna Murphy Wilkinson, was a Liberty milliner and had taken her by horse and buggy to Danville where she bought a navy blue suit and matching hat. The cloth did not last, but the marriage was durable and she kept the memories of the romance and wedding fresh by using the buttons from the wedding suit on other clothes for the rest of her life.

Their first child, Josephine Lenore Foster, was born in Liberty on September 20, 1918.

In early 1919, the Liberty school was closed due to a flu epidemic and Willie, Edna Lee and Josephine moved to Albany, Kentucky, for Willie to become principal of the Albany system. Edna Lee had not finished high school before leaving Liberty, but she got her diploma from the Clinton County system in 1920. There were three graduates in her class.

Elizabeth Lee Baker was born in Albany on July 4, 1921, and Sharleen Murphy Power was born in Albany on January 23, 1923.

In 1923, the family moved to Kings Mountain where Mr. Watkins taught until 1926. During this time Edna Lee operated a millinery shop out of her home, ordering hats for resale rather than making them.

Dr. James William Robert Watkins was born at Kings Mountain on February 17, 1926. He was given his names from all three of Edna Lee's brothers.

In 1926, after waiting to harvest and can the garden produce, the family moved to Liberty and the house on Taylor Street where both Mr. and Mrs. Watkins lived at the time of their deaths. Josephine started fourth grade in the Fall to Edna's sister, Elizabeth Murphy Moser.

During World War II, her own children raised, a shortage of teachers arose and Edna Lee went back to school at Lindsey-Wilson at Columbia to qualify to teach under an emergency certificate. From about that time, and for several years, she was also a successful Maccabees Life Insurance salesperson.

Mrs. Watkins was an active volunteer for the Red Cross and for the American Cancer Society. She was a charter member of the Liberty Garden Club and of the Liberty Book Club. She was the oldest living member of the Casey County Homemakers.

She was always very active in her church. She taught a Sunday School class and was president of the Ladies Aid and Christian Women's Fellowship. She was the first woman Elder of First Christian Church of Liberty. She actively sang in the choir until she was 95.

Edna Lee Watkins is survived all four children, all ten grandchildren, all fifteen great-grandchildren, and both great-great-grandchildren:

Josephine Lenore Watkins Foster (9/20/18), Daughter, Liberty, Kentucky

John Watkins Foster, Jr. (12/6/39), Grandson, Waterford, Conn.

Ainslie Elizabeth Watkins Foster (1/12/76), Great-Granddaughter,
Boston, Mass.

Jonathan Watkins Foster (9/11/78), Great-Grandson, Waterford, Conn.

Jerry Lee Foster (7/10/44), Grandson, Liberty, Kentucky

Alice Lenore Foster McCallum (11/10/65), Great-Granddaughter,
Boston, Mass.

Luke Foster McCallum (9/3/95), Great-Great-Grandson, Boston,
Mass.

Riley Jane McCallum (7/18/97), Great-Great-Granddaughter,
Boston, Mass.

Rebecca Jane Foster (11/6/70), Great-Granddaughter, Liberty, Kentucky

Elizabeth Lee Watkins Baker (7/4/21), Daughter, Kihei, Maui, Hawaii

Sherry Jo Baker Dahman (10/6/46), Granddaughter, Cincinnati, Ohio

Benjamin William Baker, III (4/23/48), Grandson, Arcadia, California

Sharleen Murphy Watkins Power (1/23/23), Daughter, Richmond, Kentucky

Jo Anne Power Perkins (3/30/47), Granddaughter, Glasgow, Kentucky

Heather Elizabeth Nichols (2/28/74), Great-Granddaughter, Glasgow,
Kentucky

Laura Ellen Nichols (7/22/78), Great-Granddaughter, Glasgow,
Kentucky

Kathryn Lou Power (5/23/50), Granddaughter, Richmond, Kentucky

Amy Jo Sorrell (7/27/70), Great-Granddaughter, Lexington,
Kentucky

Melissa Kathryn "Kate" Sorrell (9/8/72), Great-Granddaughter,
Richmond, Kentucky

Sarah Elizabeth Power Carl (4/18/57), Granddaughter, Brooksville, Kentucky

Justin Bowman Bonnell (7/19/78), Great-Grandson, Brooksville,
Kentucky

Trebor Lloyd Bonnell (6/4/81), Great-Grandson, Brooksville, Kentucky

James Robert Watkins (2/17/26), Son, Burgin, Kentucky

Lauren Lee Watkins Leatherbarrow (2/13/56), Granddaughter, Philadelphia,
Pa., and Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Sara Rhea Leatherbarrow (10/31/87), Great-Granddaughter,
Philadelphia, Pa., and Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Ethan Eric Leatherbarrow (1/17/91), Great-Grandson, Philadelphia,
Pa., and Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Pamela Marie Watkins Shields (6/15/58), Granddaughter, Ludlow, Kentucky

Daniel Patrick Shields, (6/21/90), Great-Grandson, Ludlow, Kentucky

Andrew Lee Shields (4/7/92), Great-Grandson, Ludlow, Kentucky

Jamie Ruth Watkins (5/25/62), Granddaughter, Sunrise, Florida

Daniel James Semkow (9/22/96), Great-Grandson, Sunrise, Florida

Revised: January 22, 2008 (4:58pm)