

FROM BEAUTY TO TRAGEDY

Submitted by Village of Richfield Springs Historian Harriett Geywits

An article in the 1888 MERCURY proclaimed her as ‘The Belle of Richfield’. As a resort like this, says the Richfield Springs correspondent “where there are gathered together such a number of pretty dancers from all parts of the country, it becomes a difficult task to select one from their midst and say that she, of all the number, deserves the laurel wreath for the most graceful and beautiful dancing. Yet, if the selection must be made, there is no one here who could more fitly receive and wear the wreath than Miss Maud Earle, eldest daughter of Eugene M. Earle, proprietor of the New American Hotel (later named The Earlington).

She is a very pretty young lady, five foot five inches in height and weighs 126 pounds. Her features are regular, with finely arched eyebrows hazel eyes and dark lashes. She wears her abundant hair in a Greek knot, with fluffy bangs, and is about nineteen years old. She is the original of the picture known as ‘Maud’ representing a little girl in various poses, sometimes with her pet kitten on her shoulder and always wearing a large hat entwined with flowers. These were taken when she was about five years of age. Another, taken two years earlier with her cousin Lula Davies, also a little tot, is still better known having had a sale (unauthorized it is said) of 100,000 copies. These pictures are now on exhibition at the Fifth Avenue art gallery as is an eight-hundred dollar painting by Martinez taken from this photograph. He did not know until this summer, when he came to Richfield, who the originals were.

She is in great demand here at the cotillions and hops and has danced ever since she can remember, taking both private and class lessons from the best instructors in New York. Last winter she belonged to both the Wednesday and Friday evening dancing classes which were so popular. At a recent hop she wore a lovely gown of white silver dotted tulle with a spray of silver oats falling from the left shoulder. At another she wore a pretty combination of pale blue tulle, with corsage of sage green, ornamented with sprays of forget-me-nots. At one of the recent coaching trips about the lake, she occupied the box seat and looked particularly pretty in a dress of soft salmon silk ornamented with scrolls of olive green and combined with gold embroidered white mull. With this, she wore a large hat entwined with a wreath of salmon and deep red roses and buds, surmounted by a cluster of ribbons and faced with olive green tulle.

She is also quite an artist and several plaques of flowers and fruit from her brush adorn the walls of the New American.

Horseback riding has been taken up by her this season and she gives promise of becoming a fine rider.”



George and Dorothy Harder

Maud began coming to Richfield in 1887 and was a favorite socially. “Among the pretty girls of New York society is Miss Maud(e) Earle, the oldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Mortimer Earle, whose wonderful beauty when a child made her the pet of all photographers. She comes honestly by her beauty through her father’s mother and grandmother Earle, the latter always having described her as her beautiful granddaughter. Miss Earle is a tall, slight, well-formed girl of nineteen whose chief attraction is her personal charm. She is blond in complexion with brown hair and light hazel eyes and with a sweet, coy manner. Miss Earle is considered the finest country rider. At Richfield Springs, there was no more attractive sight than seeing her and her finance, Edward Annan, Jr., dashing over the country before breakfast.”

Maud and Edward were married in the winter of 1889. During their last visit to Richfield, artist F. F. Martinez is reported as “having just finished a beautiful pastel portrait, nearly life-size, of Mrs. Maude Earle Annan which hangs in the middle parlor of the Earlington.”

They had one child, Dorothy, born in July 1890. Sadly, on July 20, 1891, Maud died. Her obituary reads: “Mrs. Maud Earle Annan, wife of Edward Annan Jr., died at the Oriental Hotel Manhattan Beach from peritonitis, the result of internal injuries received some time ago. Mrs. Annan, who was but 25 years old, was the daughter of Eugene M. Earle, proprietor of the Hotel Bristol, New York and the Earlington, Richfield Springs, and a niece of General Ferdinand P. Earle, also a well-known hotel man of the city. She was well known in society circles of both Brooklyn and New York and her marriage to Mr.



Ladies Parlor, Hotel Earlington.

Annan two years ago was attended by many prominent people of both cities. Mr. Annan is also well known in Brooklyn and is a member of the Oxford Club. (The Club is a private network of investors and entrepreneurs.) The accident that has resulted in her death occurred last Thursday. Mrs. Annan was stopping at the Oriental and was descending the stairs with her baby in her arms when her foot caught and, with the child clasped to her bosom, she fell. Although she was considerably bruised no serious results were apprehended until the following morning, when peritonitis set in. Her parent and family physician were at once summoned but, in spite of everything they could do for her, she gradually slipped away until the end came at 8 o’clock yesterday morning. The funeral services will probably be held tomorrow morning at the Catholic cathedral, Fifth Avenue, New York of which the deceased was a communicant. Interment will be in Greenwood.”

Unfortunately, this was not the end of the family’s tragedy. In February 1893, the New York papers reported the death of Edward Annan, Jr, prominent in society and club circles in Brooklyn and New York. “It was shockingly sudden. A cystic growth appeared on his neck some time ago and his physician decided that it should be removed and summoned Dr. Geo. R. Fowler to perform the operation. The latter, with two assistants and a nurse, went to the Cumberland Street house Monday for this purpose and an anesthetic was administered to Mr. Annan with the effect that he was thrown into a convulsion. Although the doctors worked from 1:30 to 5 o’clock to restore him to consciousness, he passed away. Deceased was the son of Edward

Annan and associated with his father in the management of the Erie grain elevator and of the grain lighterage department of the Erie Railroad. (Refers to the loading and unloading of cargo by means of a lighter which is a type of flat-bottomed barge). He was about 25 years old.”

Their daughter Dorothy, was raised by her paternal aunt, Mrs. Thomas Richardson. Dorothy was described as being slight, at five foot two inches with blue-grey eyes, light blond hair,, an oval face and high forehead. In 1912 she married George Archilles Harder, a realtor from New York City and associated with his father in the management of the Essex Foundry.

The tragedies in this family’s lives continued. Following a three-month long honeymoon in Europe, the couple boarded the Titanic at Cherbourg as first-class passengers. After the collision, they were able to get off the ship before it sank and were rescued on Lifeboat #5, along with thirty others. The only possessions that they were able to save being her fur coat, a bottle of brandy and a button hook for her shoes. It was reported that there were eleven honeymoon couples aboard but they were the only couple among them saved. They were frequently asked to lecture on the disaster, but they understandably declined to do so.

Dorothy died at age thirty-six in 1926. She and George had two daughters. George remarried in 1928 and he and second wife had two sons. He died in 1959, bringing to an end a chapter in the lives of Maud, Edward, Dorothy and George that brought both beauty and tragedy to all involved.