



### Obituary for Esther Walton

5/8/1933 - 11/11/2010

HASTINGS, MI - Esther May Walton, age 77, of Hastings passed away November 11, 2010 in Hastings. She was born May 8, 1933 in Kalamazoo, the daughter of Alva L. Summerlott and Ruth Estella Nash. She attended Kalamazoo Central High School graduating in 1951, and she graduated from Western Michigan University with a B. A. in education. She also received her master's degree in historic architecture in 1981 from Western Michigan University. Esther's first employment was in her father's pharmacy in Kalamazoo where she worked as a soda jerk. Esther taught early elementary in both Decatur and Portage in the mid-50s. She worked in historic preservation at Charlton Park Village and Museum from the 1960s onward working to promote the preservation of the Sixberry House, the Upjohn House, and the Village Church, and others. For her efforts, she was awarded numerous certificates of appreciation from the Barry County Parks and Recreation Commission from 1977 until 1993. In the 1970s Esther worked for the Michigan Department of Transportation as an historical researcher for highway projects in Coldwater, Battle Creek, and other places. Esther conducted research for the Lincoln Life Museum, Fort Wayne, IN and the SS Valley Camp Museum in Sault Ste. Marie. She helped list several houses and historic buildings on National Register both locally and statewide. Historic research performed for Michigan Mutual Insurance Co. resulted in her winning a Michigan Addy Award from the American Advertising Federation in 1985. Esther served on the Hastings City Council from 1984 until 1991 when she was recognized among other things as, "The final authority on matters of historical value and significance," and she was proud to be named on a plaque located on the Birch fire truck belonging to the Hastings City Fire Department. For over two decades, she was a columnist for the Hastings Banner, author of From Time to Time. She began in 1984 and contributed weekly articles until 1993 and then again from 2006 until 2009. She celebrated her 50th wedding anniversary with John Walton in 2008; they were married in Kalamazoo's first Quaker wedding on July 5, 1958. Esther served on the first board of the Barry County Parks and Recreation Commission in 1967, served for over a decade, and occasionally as chair. She revived and was a charter member of the Barry County Historical Society. Esther was also a member of AAUW, WMU Alumni Association, the Mom and Pop's Supper Club, and the Bay View Campus Club in Petoskey. Her hobbies included genealogy, travel, sewing, scrap-booking, reading, caring for her pets, and collecting antiques. She was passionate about local history. She was preceded in death by both parents, many aunts and uncles, and a baby grandson, John Gardner Walton.

She is survived by her husband, Dr. John B. Walton of Hastings; daughter, Kim Walton (Darryl Tietz) of Hastings, son, David (Linda) Walton of Port Huron; daughter, Ruth (Gary) Abbott of Majuro, Republic of the Marshall Islands; daughter, Martha (Fritz) Bowerman of Hastings; and daughter, Mary Walton (Bryan Dipp) of Hastings; her sister, RuthAlva Keyes of California and her brother, Paul (Margaret) Summerlott of Mason; grandchildren, Lander (Frank) Glenn of Three Forks, Montana, Mariah (Ross) VandenBerg of Grand Rapids, Katheryn (Jim) Settimo St. Clair Shores, Elizabeth Walton of Big Rapids, Alexandra Walton of Marine City; Christopher Abbott of Marquette, Stephen Abbott of Majuro, Sadie Mae (Brad) Kovich of Hastings, Joshua (Christina) Bowerman of Middleville, Tucker Bowerman of Hastings, Bryce Spurgeon of Hastings, and Nikki Jo Spurgeon of Hastings; step-grandchildren, Kristi Erb of Indiana and Matthew Spurgeon of Middleville; great-grandchildren, Claira Kovich and John Bowerman; many nieces and nephews; and 36 first cousins.

Memorial contributions can be made to the Hastings Public Library Historical Digitization Project to digitize local historical records.

Services are to be held Saturday, November 20, 2010 at Girrback Funeral Home in Hastings. Visitation with family will be from 1 to 2:30 p.m., and a memorial meeting for worship to celebrate her life will begin at 3 p.m.

Arrangements are by the Girrback Funeral Home in Hastings.

Please visit our website to leave a message or memory to the family.

[www.girrbackfuneralhome.net](http://www.girrbackfuneralhome.net).

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