

Eva Hemans Thomas McConnell

Eva Hemans Thomas was born in Lucasville on July 23, 1871, third child of William Marion and Rachel Rebecca Morgan Thomas. She was one of seven children born to William and Rachel, and four of the children would grow into adulthood.

Her father, William Thomas, had suffered ill health for most of his life. His death in 1882 was a profound blow to the family, but her mother was determined to see that her children were educated.

Indeed, Eva received an excellent education in the Lucasville schools, which was supplemented by her parents' and grandparents' libraries. When Lucasville established a high school, she was one of two graduates in the first class in 1888.

After the Thomas children had advanced as far as possible in the local schools, Rachel Thomas moved the family to Delaware, Ohio, so the children could further their education at Ohio Wesleyan University. Eva entered Ohio Wesleyan University 1888 in Literary course, registered in Academical course in 1889, returned to the University in 1890 in Classical course (freshman standing), and was graduated in 1894.

While at Ohio Wesleyan, she met a young divinity school student, Francis J. McConnell. The two would marry in 1897.

Francis McConnell would soon rise in the ranks of the Methodist Church, eventually becoming bishop. The family resided all across the country, including San Diego, California; Denver, Colorado; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and New York, New York.

When Bishop McConnell retired in 1944, the couple returned to Lucasville, taking up residence on the farm established by Eva's grandparents, James D. and Nancy DeHart Thomas. They spent summers in Lucasville and winters in New York City. The couple decided to turn the farms in Lucasville into a successful business enterprise. Through selective hiring of management, their goal was achieved, and Eva continued to manage the farms well into her 90's.

In his biography, "By the Way", Bishop McConnell said this of his wife, Eva. "She is of enduring and persistent idealism. Through more than a half century of knowledge of her character, I have never known her to weaken or slip in any compromise with what she holds as ideal. For easy going adjustments to ideals or activities which she does not think worthy, she has no place and holds to what she thinks best without any trace of that priggishness which makes the pretensions of some self-satisfied good people a delusion and a snare."

And a 1966 newspaper article stated, "At 4 feet 10 ½ inches in height and 90 pounds in weight, Mrs. McConnell is considered a giant by those who work with her at the farm. She still does her own banking, assists with the weekly shopping, and carries on a wide correspondence."

Eva Thomas McConnell died on February 19, 1968 at the advanced age of 96. She is buried next to her husband in Lucasville Cemetery.