

Lucy Ely's View of Ingham University

by Lynne Belluscio

We recently received a very lovely oil painting of the Ingham University Campus by Lucy Ely. We have several paintings in the collection attributed to Lucy and all of them will be on exhibit this summer with the Ingham student art exhibit.

It has taken a little sleuthing to learn about Lucy, but I discovered a copy of her obituary in the files which gives a wonderful image of this interesting Ingham student. Lucy was one of six children of Calvin and Martha Ely from Cheektowaga, New York. Her oldest sister, Mary, who also attended Ingham, married Nicholas Keeney and it is through the Keeney family that we received all of Lucy Ely's paintings.

Lucy Maria Ely was born on March 6, 1839. Her parents were "children of pioneer parents who settled Erie County when it was an unbroken wilderness ..." Lucy was raised where "education was paramount ..." Her obituary mentioned that Mr. & Mrs. Ely gave their children the best educational opportunities within their power." That seems to be very true, since all five of the Ely



sisters attended Ingham, although it does not seem that any of them graduated.

Lucy entered Ingham when she was fourteen and attended Ingham for seven years. She attended the school at the time Ingham was granted a full university charter from the State. The Chancellor of the school was Rev. Samuel Hanson Cox and Lucy would have studied art under Phineas Staunton who was

serving as Vice Chancellor and was teaching drawing, painting and the arts of design. Phineas' sister, Julia was also teaching in the art department.

Lucy's physical condition was impaired by epileptic seizures, yet "she gave a great deal of attention to art and painting, in her zeal so greatly overtaxing a constitution never very robust, that her health was permanently impaired. Never thereafter in all

her life was she to know a really well day, never freedom from pain." Yet despite these health issues she was known for her cheerful disposition and her social duties and her commitment to the Baptist Church.

On January 10, 1866 she married Chauncey P. Avery of Wheatland who was described as a scientific farmer, "greatly interested in fruit and seed raising." Lucy and Chauncey moved to Grand Traverse in Northern Michigan. He later sold his holdings in that area and they moved back to Lancaster, New York, where he propagated seed peas, which laid the foundation for the work that would be continued by his nephew-in-law, Calvin Keeney.

Mr. Avery died in 1888 and Lucy and her mother continued living in Lancaster. In 1891, Lucy's mother died and Lucy moved to LeRoy. She lived with her nieces. The last year and a half of her life, she lived with her nephew Calvin Keeney and his wife. Lucy Ely Avery died in August 1919 and was buried in the Belcoda Cemetery.



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