



**Helen Holmes
(1865-1938)**

The following is a copy of a tribute given to Miss Holmes shortly after her passing.

“Many of us treasure the memory of the light in her eyes, the sweetness and warmth of her smile – the firmness of handclasp – the great charm of her personality. She had a sensitive gift of recognizing and appreciating and encouraging the latent potentialities of all she met. Young people in this Town had reason to be grateful for her generous enthusiastic help.

Miss Holmes had the advantages of higher education, much travel, extensive study in music and languages. She was an accomplished pianist, as well as a gifted linguist, speaking German, Italian, and French fluently.

After graduating from Smith College in 1887, and knowing she was to return home to Hillholm to carry on the responsibility of maintaining the broad acres of the family farm at Triphammer, she took extension courses at Massachusetts Agricultural College so that she might more efficiently and successfully perform these duties. She was a firm believer in the importance of fundamentals – there was nothing superficial in her character. Her resulting close connection with the college was to continue throughout her life.

Kingston people knew the hospitality of her home. Evenings of music, education and of programs dealing with problems and projects of historic research and local interest are still remembered.

She was eager and alert to bring into the every dayness of Kingston village glimpses of the life and culture of a wider world. So it is not surprising to record that on the evening of February 13, 1910 at such a gathering the present day Jones River Village Historical Society was formed. Then known as the Club, the Society was to be a working club concerned with all matters vital to the community. Miss Holmes was the motivating force and its first president. A devoted group was assembled to carry out the ambitious programs and projects. Theories became working solutions, of which the results are visible today. At about this time in the field of local education Miss Holmes was elected Kingston’s first superintendent of schools. Again she took extensive college courses – this time in the field of education, studying at Radcliff.

Suddenly there was a tragic change in the pattern of her life: it was the complete loss by fire of her truly beautiful home with all its intrinsically precious contents. How she

adjusted herself is a lesson of her faith, her courage, and her philosophy of life. To quote her own words: “No matter what happens or how it seems, it is a blessing in disguise.”

Realizing her great gifts would now be available in a wider field, Miss Holmes was asked to become dean at two different colleges. She declined (both offers) to accept the honor of serving as Head of the Maison International House, in Geneva Switzerland (an environmental organization.) “There she walked and worked with the very great, the near great, and the humble.” Miss Holmes also served as president of the New England Farm and Garden Association and gave numerous courses in art, drawing and design at the Reed Community Building.

Records are invaluable. Tangible reports of Miss Holmes’ activities are preserved – but the elusive qualities and great charm have to be held in affectionate memory by those who enjoyed the blessing of the friendship of a great and gracious lady.”