

Bessie Payne, Woman of the Year 1975

Honored at the 50th Anniversary of AAUW in 1975

From the program of the celebration of this anniversary:

Mrs. Payne was born in 1895 in Poughkeepsie and has had a long and varied career, all dedicated to the helping of people. She has taught in a missionary school in So. Africa, worked with retarded children, been a member of the advisory board for the Office of the Aging in Dutchess County, and is past chairman of the Hudson Valley Chapter of the Red Cross.

In 1974, Mrs., Payne was presented the N.Y. State Legislative Achievement Award, by the Joint Select Committee on Problems of the Aging, for her work in improving the quality of life for senior citizens. She is currently involved in the drive to establish the Catherine St. Community Center.

...a humanitarian legend (Bessie Payne). Bessie Payne was a remarkable woman. When she died in 1991 at age 96, she left Dutchess County with a much richer and more diverse array of services due to her involvement. She was instrumental and considered a driving force behind the development of many Poughkeepsie civic organizations – in 1913 along with her mother and 10 other women she created the Poughkeepsie Neighborhood Club. She is best remembered by The Arc of Dutchess as the Principal of “The Little Red Schoolhouse” in Poughkeepsie. When you talk about services for the developmentally disabled in Dutchess County – you might say it began right there; with her, and other educators in our community who devoted their lives to the “children” we serve today. It is in her memory, and with her vision of service that we present this award. *From The Arc of Dutchess*