

OUR CLUB FOUNDER

A note about Grace Cummings Villars, our club Founder:

Grace Cummings was born on April 2, 1898 in Stillwater, Minnesota and later moved to St. Paul with her family. Grace worked as a secretary for the Superintendent of Public Recreation. He asked Grace to determine if there was an interest in a hiking club in St. Paul. Grace found that there indeed was an interest and the first group of hikers gathered on January 15, 1921. They formed the St. Paul Municipal Hiking Club with the 22 year old Grace Cummings as its first president.

Grace met Gerald Villars, a fellow hiker, who also worked for the Recreation Department. They were married in April 20, 1924. They managed to continue their hiking with the club despite raising their seven children. The entire Villars family formed a musical group, the Junior Pennsylvanians, who performed for various civic and professional audiences through 1941. At last count, Grace had 25 grandchildren and 28 great-grandchildren.

Grace was honored and treated to a surprise 92nd birthday celebration on April 7, 1990 at the St. Paul Hiking Club's annual awards banquet which was held at the Governors Restaurant. Many thanks to you, Grace! Your life is an inspiration to all hikers who seek a long life and good health.