ELIZA MAY (1859-1937)
Progressive Change Advocate

Eliza May was one of the original board members of The Church Home. She would spend the next 38 years of her life committed to overcoming obstacles and advocating for progressive change in pursuing Sister Annette’s dream of making the Home a place of comfort. In 1930, Church Home Board of Managers decided women should take over total operation of the Home and made Eliza May the first female president in its history. Despite the economic and social crises of the Great Depression, Eliza May forged ahead with change. In the early 1930s the word “budget” is mentioned for the first time; the title of matron is changed to superintendent; the superintendent was given $15 extra dollars in the working fund for fruits and vegetables; flower beds were planted; the Home received exemptions from property tax; the Board developed the first fund to help poor residents; Wilder Charities began to assist women at the Home who could not afford their bills; and a portrait of Sister Annette was placed in the main hall. A sizable gift presented from Isabelle Cooke provided funding for a new building and Eliza May went to work immediately as a member of the building committee. With the dedication of the new building in 1936, a newspaper article states: “Last May in 1936, work was begun on a new wing, built with a maximum of sunlight. The fireproof addition has an elevator, rooms for 25 guests and a sunroom…” Two years after Eliza May’s death in 1939, a dedication for another new building took place – appropriately named Eliza May Hall.