

Katherine B. Cook

Obituary, March 1, 2001, *Boothbay Register*

Katherine B. Cook, 93, of Boothbay Harbor, music teacher and band and choir director at Wiscasset and Boothbay Harbor schools for 32 years, died Saturday, February 24 at St. Andrews Hospital.

She was born March 7, 1907 in East Boothbay, the daughter of Luthur and Lillian Barlow.

Mrs. Cook graduated from Boothbay Harbor High School, attended LaSalle Junior College in Massachusetts and completed a 30-credit correspondence course in advanced harmony and orchestration through the University of Chicago.

Her life-long devotion to music began at age three when her parents perched her on a box to sing to a local congregation. She took up piano at age eight and was hired in 1924 as a pianist at the Opera House.

She married for the first time in 1925 and had two daughters. She later married Carroll Cook.

In 1935, she began giving piano lessons. She went on to teach music in Wiscasset schools for five years before Superintendent of Schools Dr. Harold Clifford hired her in 1941 to be music director of Boothbay region schools. Within five years, Mrs. Cook, a renowned disciplinarian, had built a 48-piece orchestra and 47-piece band. The Boothbay Harbor High School band and orchestra went on to become one of the best in the state, earning top honors several times at the Maine Music Festival. The band was invited to play in a concert for the House of Representatives and played in festivals all over the state.

Besides teaching band, chorus and orchestra at the high school, Mrs. Cook was teaching music at 24 area schools every week by 1950.

Mrs. Cook was also a member of the Congregational Church of Boothbay Harbor where she was organist and choir director for 50 years.

Throughout her career, she sought out and studied with great musicians. From 1936 to 1959, she had summer sessions with such well-known musicians as Richard Elsasser, known as the youngest

person in history to have memorized and performed the 250 works of Bach; Virgil Fox, organist at Riverside Church in New York City; Dr. Norman Coke-Kephcott of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City; and Dr. James Allen Dash, composer and conductor of the Baltimore and Ohio Glee Club.

After building the Boothbay region's music program, Mrs. Cook taught music in York schools for 12 years, retiring as music director in 1969.

In 1991, she came out of retirement to become director of the Boothbay Region Alumni-Community Band, a band comprised of some of her former students and area residents.

She was a member of the Congo Guild, Order of the Eastern Star and the Maine Retired Teachers Association.

In 1992, Mrs. Cook was nominated for the Maine Broadcasting System's "Jefferson Awards," recognizing individuals who have performed outstanding public service in the local communities of Maine. In 1997, the Boothbay Harbor Rotary Club presented Mrs. Cook with its Lifetime Service Award.

A daughter, Grace Lewis, died in 1995.

Surviving are a daughter, Yvonne Morrissette of Portsmouth, N.H.; a sister, Florence Haggett, and a brother, Elliott Barlow, both of Boothbay Harbor; two granddaughters, Georgia Bronk and Bonnie Grodan, both of Brentwood, N.H.; three great-granddaughters and several nieces and nephews.

A funeral was held Tuesday, February 27 at the Congregational Church of Boothbay Harbor. The Reverend Peter B. Panagore officiated. Burial will be in the spring in Evergreen Cemetery. Arrangements are by Simmons, Harrington and Hall Funeral Home, Boothbay.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Congregational Church of Boothbay Harbor.