

ULSTER HISTORY CIRCLE



SARAH GRAND (1854 –1943)

Born Frances Elizabeth Clarke at Rosebank, Millisle Road, Donaghadee, Co. Down on 10 June 1854 of English parents, she was sent to English boarding school at fourteen and at sixteen eloped with thirty-nine year-old naval surgeon, David Chambers McFall. They had one son, David Archibald Edward and lived in the Far East, Norwich and Warrington before separating after which Sarah moved to London to pursue her own career.

Her first book, *Two Dear Little Feet* was published in 1873. Her novel *The Heavenly Twins* (the first of what came to be known as 'new woman' novels), published under the pseudonym Sarah Grand was rejected by numerous publishers because of the frank way it dealt with the effects of the spread of syphilis from men to their wives and children. When eventually published in 1893 it created a sensation and was reprinted six times in its first year. It was condemned on moral grounds but defended by Mark Twain and George Bernard Shaw. The novel changed Frances' life and created the new persona, Sarah Grand (often called Madame Grand), the matriarch, the beautiful female prophet.

Her later works include *Our Manifold Nature* (1894), short stories. Her autobiographical novel, *Beth Book: A study in the Life of a Woman of Genius* (1897) sold 20,000 copies in its first week, *Adnam's Orchard* (1912) and *The Winged Victory* (1916).

She was an active member of the Suffragette movement, lecturing in America. Mark Twain and George Bernard Shaw both held her in high regard. She moved to Bath in 1920 and was Lady Mayoress on six occasions between 1922 and 1929.

In 1942, when a bomb damaged her home, she moved to Caine, Wiltshire where she died on 12 May 1943. She is buried in Lansdown Cemetery, Bath.

Location of plaque: *Rosebank* 8 Millisle Road, Donaghadee, Co Down

[The Ulster History Circle erects blue plaques in public places throughout the province to commemorate people who have made a significant contribution to the community locally, regionally or in the wider world. Not all are well known and many have been forgotten in the place where they were born or worked.]