

Miss Augusta Denton Roddis

Nominated by the North Wood County Historical Society

Miss Augusta Roddis was the last descendant of the William Henry Roddis family to call Marshfield home. While the Roddis Lumber and Veneer Company was Marshfield's largest employer for many years, the Roddis family members were strong proponents of public education and community service - a tradition continued by Miss Roddis throughout her life.

The fourth of six children born to Hamilton and Catherine (Prindle) Roddis, Augusta grew up in Marshfield. She attended local schools and graduated as valedictorian of the Class of 1933 at Marshfield's McKinley High School. She then attended Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois where she graduated with honors in 1937. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in English. Following graduation, she worked in Chicago for a time but then came home to Marshfield to serve as her father's personal secretary and assistant secretary to the Roddis Plywood Corporation.

In Marshfield she was active in community affairs, serving as a worker or a leader of local civic organizations. She was a lifetime member of the Marshfield Women's Club and was a faithful sister of PEO Chapter AJ in Marshfield, a philanthropic educational organization supporting the education of women, for almost 60 years. She mentored many young women over the years, encouraging them to further their education and be involved in their communities.

Following in the footsteps of her mother, Miss Roddis joined the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) holding many local, state and national positions with the DAR over the next sixty years. She is likely remembered locally as the gracious host for DAR events held at her home recognizing high school seniors chosen as DAR Good Citizenship winners, scholarship recipients, and organizational milestone events. In 2008, Miss Roddis was honored by the DAR with a Lifetime Achievement Award. At the time, fellow DAR member and friend, Chris Buchanan, commented that Miss Roddis "embodied the DAR ideals of patriotism, education and good citizenship."

Miss Roddis also valued history and historic preservation. From the earliest days of the Marshfield Historical Society, now the North Wood County Historical Society, she was an active member. It was Miss Roddis who suggested the society might purchase the former Governor William H. Upham home and use it as a community museum. That purchase was made possible by a grant from the City of Marshfield, donations from Marshfield businesses, organizations, and private citizens, and a generous grant from the Hamilton Roddis Foundation arranged by Miss



Roddis. Augusta was a key member of the society's leadership, and participated in its events and activities until she physically was no longer able to do so.

As the city prepared for its 125th Anniversary in 1997, Miss Roddis was one of the volunteers who worked to put together the Marshfield Story, Piecing Together Our Past book project. A witness to nearly 80 years of Marshfield History, Miss Roddis, acted as one of the fact checkers as the local history narrative developed, as well as assisting with editing, proofreading, and indexing duties for the book.

Besides her advocacy for history and historic preservation, Miss Roddis worked for many community causes, notable among them, education and literacy.

Believing in the power of education to promote social change, Miss Roddis successfully ran for a position on the Marshfield School Board in 1971 and went on to serve six consecutive three-year terms. During those eighteen years she served as the secretary for the board and worked with the District's Program Evaluation Committee. Recognizing her service, then School Superintendent Ken Krahn said, "She has offered hope, understanding and credibility to the evaluation process." The editor of the Marshfield News-Herald later added, "She served faithfully as a member of the Board of Education," and that she had represented, "the interests of the community."

In 1994 Miss Roddis was appointed to serve as a member of the Marshfield Library Board, a position she held for the next thirteen years. For seven of those years she also served as a member of the Marshfield Public Library Foundation. It was during this time that the library began exploring options for expansion, including land acquisition. Augusta recognized the library as the educational resource it is for the community, so working through the Hamilton Roddis Foundation, she arranged for a donation that served as the necessary "seed money" for purchasing the needed property.

In 2005, Miss Roddis was instrumental in establishing the Hamilton Roddis Library at the University of Wisconsin-Marshfield/Wood County, now University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point. Total construction costs for the project were about \$300,000, with contributions from the city of Marshfield, Wood County and the Hamilton Roddis Foundation. Prior to the renovation, the library had been virtually untouched since it was constructed in 1971 as part of the Helen Connor Laird Fine Arts Building.

Miss Roddis sought to improve her world by supporting causes in which she believed. With much patience and perseverance, she worked tirelessly for Marshfield. An extremely civic-minded woman, she never did anything for the accolades or the attention. Instead, she valued the opportunity to serve others and worked to improve the community by her efforts with civic and service organizations.

Miss Augusta Roddis died January 30, 2011, at age 94 in the home where she was born.