

*THE
RUTH
SUCKOW
NEWSLETTER*



*fall
1999*

OBJECTS AND PURPOSES OF THE RUTH SUCKOW MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

The objects and purposes of this corporation shall be the development of appropriate memorials to the late Ruth Suckow and to further a literary and educational interest in her works, and to receive and maintain a fund or funds, real or personal property, or both, subject to the restrictions and limitations set forth, to use and apply the whole or any part thereof and the income therefrom and the principal thereof exclusively for charitable, religious, scientific, literary or educational purposes.

Ruth Suckow Memorial Association Board

Barry Benson, Des Moines
George Day, Waterloo
Marian Dunham, Grinnell
Mary Helgevoid, Hawarden
Harvey Hess, Waterloo
Leedice Kissane, Grinnell
Joanne Laxson, Earlville, *Treasurer*
Barbara Lounsberry, Cedar Falls, *Vice-President*
Elizabeth Mayne, Sioux City
Sara McAlpin, Dubuque, *Secretary*
Robert McCown, Iowa City, *President*
Fritz Melberg, Hiawatha
Martin Mohr, Decorah, *Editor*
Robert Neymeyer, Parkersburg
Irma Potter, Earlville
Terry Walters, Earlville
Rodney L. Smith, Dubuque

About the cover: In this collection of photographs from the University of Iowa Special Collections, we have found what we hope will prove an interesting way of tracing Suckow's life and career, the revealing record of family background and the artistic identity she strove to create. The cover photographs show her in 1904 as a studious, beautifully dressed twelve year old and again in an almost swashbuckling pose from a 1932 snapshot taken during a vacation in Minnesota after she had begun to make her mark as a promising young writer.

—a word from the editor

The RSMA Board has agreed that this issue of *The Ruth Suckow Newsletter* will be the last to appear in the expanded format we have used for the past few years. Several concerns have moved us to try a less ambitious format. The editor has not been successful in eliciting articles from scholars whose research interests include the work of Ruth Suckow. We have had to face the fact that the number of readers who are interested in scholarly work on Suckow has declined along with the number of dues-paying members. *The Newsletter* in this form is relatively expensive to print and to mail. The "literary" editor of the past few years, Martin Mohr, has found the work of soliciting manuscripts, seeing the *Newsletter* through a computer publishing program, and getting even these few pages distributed to the membership a stimulating experience. But it is also time-consuming to the point where he no longer wishes to continue. He is grateful to the RSMA for the opportunity of this experiment in publication. We can at least hope that these few newsletters that have come out since the centennial observances will provide a record of scholarly interest in the author as it has survived into the 1990s.

This 1999 issue will provide the members of RSMA with a visual reminder of the life of Ruth Suckow. Bob McCown has made a selection of photographs from the archives at the University of Iowa, which we have arranged chronologically, along with commentary by the editor, (which depends heavily on the biographies by Kissane and Omrcanin.)^{*} We hope that publishing them in this form will provide readers with a visual supplement to the biographical and critical work that many of us know and have in our libraries.

In future, we expect the RSMA newsletter to contain information and announcements concerning organization members, minutes of meetings, and reporting of events that have occurred since the last annual meeting. We hope you will continue to support this organization with your donations. When you read the report of the annual meeting, held in June in Earlville, you will be reminded of the kind of ongoing expense the association incurs as well as an indication of hoped-for future projects.

^{*}Kissane, Leedice. *Ruth Suckow*. New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1969.

Omrcanin, Margaret. *Ruth Suckow: A Critical Study of her Fiction*. Philadelphia: Dorrance and Company, 1972.

FIRST FORMAL PORTRAIT

This studio photograph of Ruth Suckow (1892 - 1960) must have been taken in 1893, probably when Ruth was just over a year old. Ruth's father was pastor of the Congregational Church in Hawarden, Iowa. Ruth is the younger of two children born to William John Suckow and Anna Mary Kluckhohn Suckow. Ruth's mother died in 1919, while her older sister Emma died of tuberculosis in 1923.



THE SUCKOW FAMILY

This carefully composed family "garden" grouping must have been taken in 1897 or 1898 if we accept Omrcanin's chronology. She notes the family's return to Hawarden in 1896 and their departure again in 1898 to accept a pastorate in Algona. (See Omrcanin 197) Therefore, Ruth would be four or five years old in the picture. Emma, looking ever so slightly awkward, is standing, while Ruth's mother gazes past the camera, her somewhat pensive face handsome in half profile. The Rev. Suckow's uncomfortable,



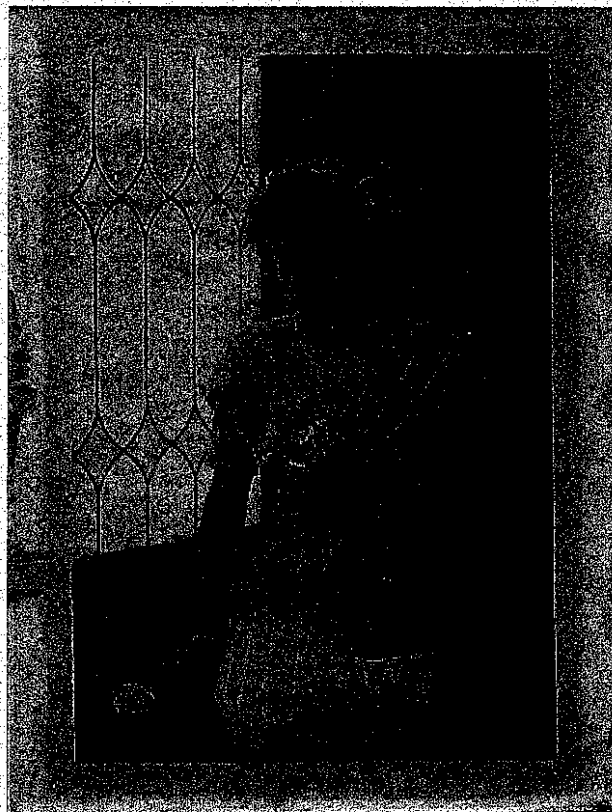
informal sprawl is calculated to convey casual domesticity. His graceful hands, prominently displayed on the book suggest refinement and gentility. We know from Ruth's writing how much she enjoyed being with her father, accompanying him on parish visits and playing quietly in his study as he worked. Her half-embrace of her father suggests a closeness that is borne out in her recorded memories of him.

RUTH SUCKOW AS A SCHOOL GIRL IN ALGONA

The years 1898-1902 saw the Suckow family in Algona, where Ruth's father had accepted a pastorate. Ruth attended Central School. This photograph appears to have been taken toward the end of their Algona stay, when Ruth would have been eight or nine. This charming view reveals the sensitive face of a fashionably dressed young school girl with long, flowing hair and a quite fancy hat.



RUTH AT AGE EIGHTEEN



The Davenport years brought significant changes in the life of the Suckow family. After graduating from high school in Grinnell in 1910, Ruth and her family moved to Davenport, where her father became pastor of the Edwards Congregational Church. Ruth entered Grinnell College. Emma married. In 1911 the Rev. Suckow left the ministry temporarily and took a position writing lectures for the Victor Animatograph Company, a manufacturer

of stereopticons. (Omrcanin 198) The special occasion for the photograph is not identified, although it is possible that this lovely picture of Ruth at age 18 shows her dressed as an attendant for her sister's wedding.