

THE RUTH SUCKOW NEWSLETTER

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Memorial Association Earlville, Iowa 52041

Fall 2006

Annual Meeting 2006 in Cedar Falls

The meeting was called to order in the new Cedar Falls library, with a welcome from Barbara Lounsberry, President. Each board member present introduced herself or himself: Cherie Dargan, Mike Dargan, Marian Dunham, Marilyn Gallo, Mary Helgevold, Joanne Laxson, Marsha Lehs, Barbara Lounsberry, Sara McAlpin, Robert McCown, Robert Neymeyer, Irma Potter, and Terry Walters.

Before beginning official business, Barbara announced the good news that she has retired! She also announced that Houghton Mifflin is interested in publishing Suckow's story, "A Start in Life," in the *Riverside Anthology*. This is also good news especially for teachers who are interested in teaching Suckow but who find only limited resources in print. The minutes of the annual meeting on June 25, 2005 in Earlville were accepted.

Treasurer's Report: Joanne Laxson presented the annual treasurer's report. Balance on hand as of May 21, 2006 was \$2722.65 plus the \$5000 three-year CD purchased July 14, 2005 which will mature July 14, 2008. There was brief discussion about the possibility of putting our limited funds into a Community Foundation Fund; however, that does not seem wise for such a small group since there would be a fee for being a part of a foundation. Concern continues about the shrinking funds of the Suckow Association. A question was raised about who owns the property where Ruth Suckow part is located: the town of Earlville or the Suckow

Association. Terry Walters will investigate an answer to this question.

Newsletter Report: Bob McCown, who edits and manages the publication of the newsletter, sends it to individuals as well as to state libraries, colleges and universities. The printing costs are relatively small and the publication is the best means of keeping interested people informed about the activities of the Suckow Association. Board members expressed gratitude for having the publication.

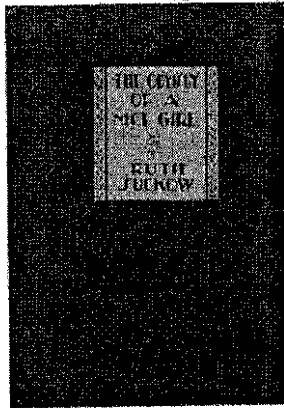
Birthplace Report: Mary Helgevold gave an encouraging report on progress being made on the Suckow birthplace home now located in the Calliope Village, an historical site in Hawarden.



Ruth in Hawarden, Age 5

Restoration work has been greatly advanced with the help of funds from a CAT grant (Community Attractions and Tourism Grant). Mary reported that work on three rooms in the house has been completed and continues on other

rooms. A current problem is the floors, most of which have linoleum glued down as covering. The city plans to open the house, if possible, by August 6, Suckow's birthday. It can then be a part of self-guided tours of Calliope Village which is open on weekend afternoons and for longer hours on Labor Day weekend.



In answer to a few questions raised by board members, Mary said that there is not much land right around the house; it is located near railroad tracks; it will need to be furnished with appropriate items. Board members suggested the possibility of a slide or a power point presentation which could be running in the house for viewing by visitors. Perhaps photographs, Suckow book jackets, copies of manuscripts and other items could be displayed. One concern that emerged is that of security for anything that might be displayed, since no one is regularly on duty in the village. In any case, association members are eager to make any contributions that are possible for enhancing the house, which has reached this stage of restoration largely because of the consistent, dedicated work of Mary Helgevold, the Hawarden Historical Society and other Hawarden residents.

Suckow Park Report: Terry Walters gave the report on the Suckow park in Earlville which he faithfully oversees. He noted that a woman has been hired to do the mowing and keeps the park looking attractive. Because of a sturdy new roof on the shelter, it is in good shape and available for use by park visitors. Terry will investigate the question of ownership of the park. He is also checking further on the possibility of a sign guiding out-of-towners to the park. The issue of a highway sign was again raised but the paperwork and cost seem to be prohibitive. The question of how to make Suckow better known, not only in relationship to the park, but in general, continues to be a rather vexing one. In the course of this conversation a related issue emerged: the possibility of some kind of logo or "brand" that could be used on any printed materials connected to the association. These might include signs, the newsletter, paper, etc. Board members will continue to think about this issue.

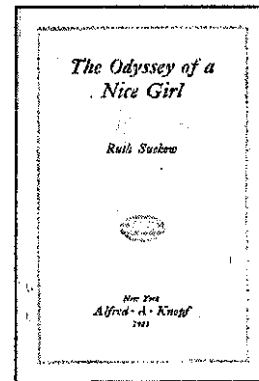
Other Business: Cherie Dargan reported that with some searching she was able to locate the Suckow gravesite in Greenwood Cemetery in Cedar Falls, a site which is apparently not too difficult to locate. She also circulated some photographs of the site. Mike Dargan continues his dedicated work on the Suckow website, as demonstrated in the report and presentation he gave concerning progress with the site. A simple Google search quickly reveals the site which includes a chronology of Suckow's life, several photographs, a list of her works, and links to other sites which include information about Suckow (notably the extensive collection at the University of Iowa: <http://www.lib.uiowa.edu/spec-coll/MSC/ToMsC750/MsC706/suckowaugust2005.htm>)

Additions to the site include three new links: "Ruth Suckow and Midwestern Farm and Community Life," "Ruth Suckow and Women: The Feminist Suckow," and "Ruth Suckow and Cats." Barbara Lounsberry wrote a series of brief summaries of pertinent Suckow stories for these sites, and invited all members to add other items. These materials will be invaluable resources for anyone interested in Suckow's work. (Again the problem of unavailability of texts was mentioned here.) Board members volunteered George Day to write an entry on Suckow for Wikipedia, the people's encyclopedia. Earlier in the meeting, Bob McCown noted that he has completed a new biographical sketch of Suckow for a publication of the Iowa State Historical Society. It was noted that a bibliography of Suckow criticism would be helpful to have on the website. Mike will be happy to add this kind of information and any other items that people send to him for inclusion. He is to be congratulated for his ongoing efforts to keep Suckow alive on-line.

Old Business: There is, as always, a need to increase membership in the association. Barbara suggested that each current board member invite one person to the next annual meeting. Other suggestions included: printing book marks for Suckow books and/or use in libraries; a presentation on Suckow at the Iowa Library Association meeting; library programs on Suckow; encouraging librarians to feature Iowa author collections and displays; permission from Suckow's niece for additional reprinting of Suckow's works.

New Business: It was decided that next year's meeting will be at the Suckow Library in Earlville on June 9, 2007 and will be hosted by Shari Cummings, the

new director of the library, who brought with her "Just suppose" book bags commemorating Suckow. Next year, members will discuss Suckow's second novel, *The Odyssey of a Nice Girl* (1925).



Officers elected for next year include:
--President: Barbara Lounsberry
--Vice-President: Mike Dargan
--Secretary: Sara McAlpin
--Treasurer: Joanne Laxon

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at noon and was followed by a delicious sack lunch. At 1:00 p.m. Shari Cummings and several Cedar Falls and Waterloo residents joined the board members for a discussion of Suckow's *Country People*. Informed by excellent materials prepared by Barbara Lounsberry and energized by her comments and enthusiasm, participants engaged in a lively conversation about the book, demonstrating that Suckow continues to "speak to" her reading audience.

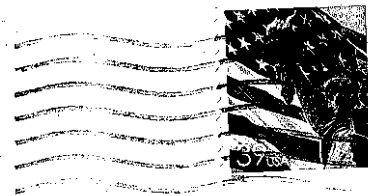
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Mike Dargan, Waterloo, V.P.
George Day, Waterloo
Marian Dunham, Grinnell
Marilyn Gallo
Mary Helgevold, Hawarden
Harvey Hess, Waterloo
Marsha Lehs, Independence

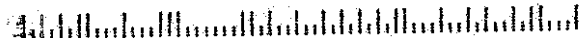
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