

THE RUTH SUCKOW NEWSLETTER

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Memorial Association Earlville, Iowa 52041

Fall 2007

Annual Meeting 2007 in Earlville

The meeting was called to order in the Suckow Memorial Library in Earlville by President Barbara Lounsberry. Also attending were Elsie Carter, Cherie Dargan, Mike Dargan, Bill Douglas, Marilyn Gallo, Mary Helgevold, Harvey Hess, Joanne Laxson, Marsha Lehs, Sara McAlpin, Martin Mohr, Irma Potter, Letha Walters and Terry Walters. Barbara introduced guests at the meeting: Karen Neubauer (winner of the 2005 Suckow essay contest) and her mother, Mary Neubauer. Barbara reported that George Day, at the last minute, was unable to attend the meeting. Bob McCown, Barry Benson, and Susan Radosti also sent regrets. Joanne reported that Ray and Geri Bly sent greetings to the group from Colorado where they now live. Barbara also noted that Wiley Mayne, husband of Suckow supporter Elizabeth Mayne, died recently. The minutes of the annual meeting on June 10, 2006 in Cedar Falls were accepted.

Treasurer's Report: Joanne Laxson presented the annual treasurer's report. Balance on hand as of June 5, 2007 was \$184.09. Balance in the savings account on the same date was \$2459.94 and in the CD account was \$5142.28. In response to a question raised last year about whether the town of Earlville or the Suckow Association owns the Ruth Suckow Park, Terry Walters reported that the city owns it. Another question arose: could the town, then, pay for maintenance? This is a possibility but there is concern that the ongoing care of the park might not be as dedicated as it is now; however, Terry will investigate this question. Barbara

the town could do basic maintenance and the association could insure that everything is kept in good order.



Ruth Suckow in 1928

In discussion about the association paying income tax, Mary Helgevold offered to check with her accountant about simply not filing a tax report next year. Her accountant handled our taxes using our traditional form this year and charged only \$100 for preparation—a saving of \$175 from our previous accountant's fee of \$275. However, since we paid only \$5 in income taxes this year, Mary and Joanne both pointed out the folly—indeed, the waste of time and money for the government as well as for the association. Later in the meeting, Mary requested funds to help with the expense of sanding floors in the Suckow birthplace in Hawarden. She will get an estimate of cost and confer with Barbara who will communicate with the officers about a decision. Board members informally agreed that the cost probably should not exceed \$1000.00.

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Birthplace Report: Mary Helgevold reported that work continues on the Ruth Suckow birthplace. Currently, the walls have been completed and work on the floors is in progress. Though not much will be done in the summer, other projects in the house will be taken up again in the fall. There is no more grant money for restoration of the house, which obviously impedes progress. Mary is not certain when the entire project will be completed. She is to be especially commended for perseverance! Security for the home when it is completed remains a concern since there will not be an attendant regularly present in the house. Rather than use valuable technology for displays, perhaps photo books and/or wall display of photos could be mounted.

Suckow Park Report: Terry Walters gave the report on the Suckow Park in Earlville, noting that shrubs and grass have been trimmed regularly, enhancing the beauty of the park. A new asphalt street makes it easier to reach the park. New signage has also made it easier to find the park. The current signs may be replaced with more durable metal signs, though it is also desirable to continue to have signs like those used elsewhere in town. In response to a suggestion that one additional sign be added to make it still easier to find the park, a motion was made and passed to authorize an expenditure not to exceed \$75.00 for a new sign. Another idea was offered to increase awareness of Suckow among visitors to the park. When a new flyer about her is created (see below), copies of it could be available in a container (like those used by realtors for house sales) at the park. Visitors could pick

up a flyer and take it with them for future reference.

Suckow Gravesite in Cedar Falls:

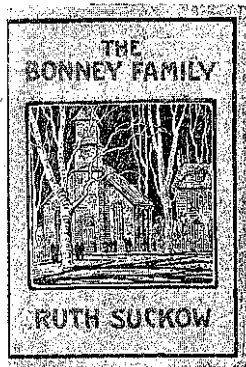
Cherie Dargan reported on her continuing interest in and care for the Suckow gravesite in Greenwood Cemetery, located near the grave of Suckow's father. Cherie and Mike Dargan have visited the grave frequently and taken several pictures for the website. They have also placed flowers on the grave in honor of the woman who is at the heart of the association.

New Ruth Suckow Flyer: Cherie and Mike Dargan are working on a new flyer about Suckow for distribution in various places where she might be introduced to people unfamiliar with her and her work: colleges, city libraries, visitors' centers, etc. A motion to authorize an expenditure of \$100.00 for printing a new flyer was made and passed. Thanks were expressed to Cherie and Mike for working on this project which could have far-reaching effectiveness.

Iowa Library Association

Presentation: Barbara, Cherie and Mike are preparing a presentation which they will give at the Iowa Library Association meeting in Coralville in October 2007. The 50-minute presentation will begin with a reading from *A Rural Community* and will concentrate on several questions related to awareness of Suckow's work (and other Iowa texts) among librarians, as well as access to that work: what are the available statistics on Suckow holdings in Iowa libraries? What are the best practices regarding keeping and circulating the

works of Iowa writers in general? Should they be kept in the general collection or housed in a separate collection of Iowa writers? The three presenters will elicit discussion of these questions and make some possible recommendations to those attending the meeting.



Old Business: There is, as always, a need to increase membership in the association and to increase visibility of Suckow wherever possible. Several ideas emerged in discussion. The proposed new brochure will be a great help in making Suckow visible to various audiences. Letters to editors about Suckow in Iowa towns where she lived could raise awareness about her as a "famous daughter." Articles in *The Iowan* and other state-centered publications could also be effective. Articles (and possibly even tours/pilgrimages) could be directed toward particular audiences: persons of German heritage, teachers, members of historical societies, etc. There might be a link on the Suckow webpage to the Iowa Commission for the Status of Women. In an attempt to make Suckow's work more available to the reading audience,

Barbara Lounsberry will contact Suckow's niece, Barbara Camamo, to ask for permission to print *Iowa Interiors* and/or *Country People* on the web.

New Business: It was decided that next year's meeting will be in the Cedar Falls Library on June 7, 2008. Bill Douglas was unanimously elected as a new member of the board of Directors. Officers re-elected for next year include President: Barbara Lounsberry; Vice-President: Mike Dargan; Secretary: Sara McAlpin; Treasurer: Joanne Laxson. Members agreed to read *The Bonney Family*, Ruth's third novel, in preparation for discussion at next year's meeting.

Suckow Website: ruthsuckow.org
Mike Dargan, who continues his dedicated work on the Suckow website, reported on additions to the site and ongoing work to make it not only accessible but very helpful to scholars, teachers, students and anyone interested in Suckow and her work.

Suckow Book Collection: A new project initiated by Cherie Dargan is to collect approximately 20 copies of as many Suckow books as possible. When enough books are collected, they can be made available to teachers, libraries, etc., for groups to read and discuss. This project directly addresses the complaint that Suckow's works are not available and will make them much more accessible to potential readers.