

BIOGRAPHY OF THEODORA YOUMANS

Theodora Winton was born in Ashippun, Wisconsin in 1863. She was raised on Prospect Hill in the New Berlin area where her father was a merchant. After graduation from Carroll College, she worked for the *Waukesha Freeman*, and in 1889 married Henry Youmans, Editor of the *Waukesha Freeman*.

In 1896, Mrs. Youmans was one of Waukesha's representatives at the organizational meeting of the Wisconsin Federation and was selected as Fifth District President. In 1898, she was elected President of the Wisconsin Federation of Women's Clubs and her influence had a marked bearing on Federation policies and growth for many years.

Her illustrious life was well summarized by a reporter for the *Waukesha Freeman* following the death of Mrs. Youmans on April 17, 1932.

"At the close of another newspaper worker's career had been written '30', a symbol that has long been used by the press to denote the end of a story, the close of the day, the termination of an event. And so the story of Theodora W. Youmans came to a close at Wednesday noon. Her death was the termination of an eventful life. It marked the close of a career which won not only personal success but was useful to others, to society, specifically the society of women, on whose behalf she was a constant and untiring worker. Her efforts to obtain woman's suffrage were notable, her counsel as a member of the state board of normal school regents was outstanding, her political efforts are not without their reward, her place in the home secure, and her ability as a writer was unquestionable.

"And so we find a remarkable combination of talents and abilities in one woman that gave her predominance among women and men alike. Her life can easily be written down among those falling partly in the 19th and partly in the 20th centuries when the emancipation of thought and action among women was making its greatest strides. She was among the group of crusading women who helped speed that emancipation and bring her sex to its rightful place in the sun. The world about her will long remember Theodora W. Youmans and it will never be permitted to forget the part she took in shaping its immediate destiny.

"As a co-worker of Mrs. Youmans for five years, the writer had an opportunity to observe her closely and learn her reactions to many things. Politically, she was a strong party woman, socially, she was a champion of reform. Her opinions were carefully weighed and then welded. 'Be sure you are right, then go ahead' could well have been her motto. It was as easy for her to say 'no' as 'yes' and thus she commanded the respect of all those with whom she came in contact.

"But above all, she exemplified womanhood and therein lay her greatest virtue. Her moral excellence is engraved as upon marble, there is nothing to write upon the sands. With her, the distinguishing character of women was paramount. Nothing was higher in rank or jurisdiction, and so in paying final tribute to Mrs. Youmans, nothing could be said to please her more or fit her more exactly than that she was a woman who worked tirelessly for women"