

Augustana Endowment Society
Historical Reflections from Oct. 2019
by Janet Moline

Margaret Foss

Perhaps you have never noticed on the front page of our yearbook that our society was organized April 7, 1894 in Rock Island, Illinois. There is also a quote on that front page. Without looking at our yearbook, I wonder if you know what it is? I will tell you it was written by Mrs. C.W. Foss. (As you may know, we've been trying to let women of our society actually have first names!)

This is a copy of what Lillian Nelson wrote in Nov. 2011 about Mrs. Margaret Foss, who was a 55-year member of the Augustana Endowment Society and served as president 3 different times. How did she come to Rock Island?

Apparently an English professor by the name of Henry Reck was made chairman of the committee that had located a 16 acre plot between Rock Island and Moline, when the college moved to Rock Island from Paxton. After the first building on the campus was completed, credit was given to Professor Reck for "planting and landscaping." In May 1876, he petitioned the Board as follows,

Honorary Gentlemen, for the safety of our new edifice and the beauty of its surroundings, considerable grading and sodding has been done. This work of our hands is constantly liable to damage and defacement by the feet and dirty deposits of cows. I hold that we ought to ornament the grounds by the means within our reach. But if cows may tramp upon and graze over our ornamental grass and flower garden, then our labor will comparatively have been in vain.

I pray the Board to take such action as will rid us of this evil.

Respectfully, Professor Henry Reck

The response of the Board was to erect a fence around the area and the minutes noted that this was without cost to the college since the lumber was underwritten by a \$50 donation by Frederick C.A. Denkmann. Professor Reck died in 1881 after a lingering illness and left his family in meager circumstances. He had made a deep impression as an earnest pastor, an able teacher and an enthusiastic supporter of the college. Out of gratitude for his

contributions, the church raised a sum for the Board to make an interest free loan for his widow to build a home on the corner of 38th St. and 7th Ave. It also served as a boarding school for girls and bore the name of Fairview Academy. A young lady named S. Margaret Shuey from Virginia came to serve as assistant principal and teacher in this newly established academy and to "experience the wild and wooly West." This young lady became the wife of Dr. Claude Foss. (So now you have the name—Mrs. C.W. Foss. And the rest of the story...) She was the author of our Endowment Society motto: "The best endowment any institution can have is a host of loyal friends and intelligent supporters."