

Maud Brodt – Local Leader in Public Service

In the past, professions open to women were often limited to teaching, nursing, and secretarial positions. In today's society, there are many more opportunities for women than were available a century ago. There are many women who have proven successful in medicine, business, law, politics, and many other fields. However, in the first half of the last century, Martin County had a true pioneer in modeling leadership positions for women of that time. Her name was Maud Brodt.

Who was Maud Brodt? Although she passed away almost 60 years ago, she left an indelible imprint on Martin County and was a significant contributor to many of the positive aspects of our county that we enjoy today.

Maud Murphy was born near Watertown, Minnesota, in 1880. She came to Martin County in 1899 and taught in District 59, Fraser Township. She met her husband, Herman Brodt, when she was employed as a teacher.

After Maud and Herman were married in 1904, they built a new farmstead in Section 35 of Fraser Township. Their family eventually included a son, Warren, and a daughter, Juanita. Although primarily a homemaker and mother, Maud Brodt became active in many civic endeavors and would soon become known well beyond Martin County's borders.

Maud Brodt was named one of Minnesota's Master Homemakers by the *Farmer Magazine* in 1927. Her work as a homemaker was also publicized in *Picture Magazine* and *Ladies Home Journal*. In addition to these accomplishments, she served as Chairperson of the Martin County Safety Council and became well known for her work in promoting farm safety. She was also active in organizing the Fairmont Community Hospital, she worked for the county library in an effort to better serve rural residents, she served on the Martin County Fair Board which in turn made her the first woman to serve on a Fair Board in Minnesota, and she organized the Rural Sunshine Club for World War I work.

She also organized the Martin County Farm Bureau Women's chorus. This group had many singing engagements, including an appearance on WCCO Radio. She served as chairman of the Martin County Women's Democratic Educational Club, she was a precinct chairman with the County Jubilee in 1932, and she worked to promote 4-H in Martin County. Her work in the area of 4-H eventually led to the construction of a 4-H building at the Martin County Fairgrounds. In addition, she was appointed to a Minnesota State Senate Tax Committee the early 1930's, as reported in the May 11, 1950, edition of the *Fairmont Daily Sentinel*.

Perhaps her greatest accomplishment, according to the previously mentioned article printed in the *Fairmont Daily Sentinel*, was being instrumental in founding the Martin County Historical Society in 1929. She served as vice-president of the first board of directors. That article goes on to state that she treasured a letter written to her by Judge Julius E. Haycraft in August of 1949, in which he wrote, "You have done a fine and useful work in your life, particularly in the

Farm Bureau and in historical matters. You are the originator of the Martin County Historical Society and should have been its first president.” Judge Haycraft’s letter was written in honor of Mrs. Brodt’s seventieth birthday.

Maud Brodt passed away in May of 1950. She was obviously an active advocate of countless civic endeavors that would prove beneficial to many of that era as well as future generations. Although gone for nearly sixty years, her efforts and actions created a legacy that has undeniably left a positive and long lasting effect on Martin County. She was a leader and certainly well ahead of her time as an example for women in a wide variety of leadership positions.

To learn more about Maud Brodt, visit the Pioneer Museum in Fairmont.