



- *Archivist*
- *Civic Volunteer*

Louise Frederick Hays

1881–1951

Inducted 2004

Dedication to community service was in Louise Caroline Frederick's family as she was born into a long line of civil servants in rural Marshallville in Macon County on April 18, 1881. Louise's parents implored her to make the most of her education, to be respectful of others and participate in society; guidelines that she would follow throughout her life.

Louise's civic work started at Wesleyan College in 1897 when she entered as a sophomore after being tested for advanced placement. She was President of the Philomathean Society, an organization founded at Wesleyan that later became the national Phi Mu Fraternity and also supported women's suffrage. In her first year at Wesleyan, Louise wrote, "Not to vote is utterly foolish; for it is known that a woman's mind is certainly equal to a man's.... Now as men have not attained the perfect government, why not give women a chance?" Louise was also the editor and leader of a staff of eight that produced the college's first yearbook and graduated Valedictorian of her class in 1900. She later served as Secretary of her Wesleyan class for 50 years and organized their golden reunion in 1950.

In 1902 Louise married another civil servant, James E. Hays of Montezuma. James became a state senator and representative and also was mayor of Montezuma, treasurer of Macon County and a trustee of several institutions including the University of Georgia.

They had two children, Louise Caroline and James Elijah. The demands of raising a family didn't keep Louise from volunteer work after her husband acknowledged that energy "as boundless as hers should be turned into some good purposes." Though bashful and reluctant to speak in public, Louise overcame her fears through her work with more than 50 clubs and

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– From a paper submitted by Louise Frederick Hays during her first year at Wesleyan College

organizations. She devoted her efforts to, among others, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, the Federation of Women's Clubs which she served as state president in 1919, the American Red Cross, and the Macon County Democratic Women's Club, which she served as president.

Louise was a trailblazer in many areas. Though her husband and son were opposed to coeducation, she was the first woman in the U.S. to receive an honorary degree for her club work – a Doctor of Letters from the University of Georgia in 1924 for her "outstanding contribution in education and welfare for the state of Georgia through club work" and the fourth woman to ever receive an honorary degree from that school.

Government work called Louise in 1925 when she became Montezuma's postmistress, serving for ten years due to family financial necessity after James died in 1929. Along with raising two children, the Hays family had been operating a large peach farm and those responsibilities fell on Louise's strong and capable shoulders. In 1930, Louise's interest in history was sparked by an assignment to write a history of Macon County and she became active in several historical organizations. Louise was appointed State Historian and Archivist and Director of the Georgia Department of History and Archives in 1937 and held that position until her death in 1951. During her tenure more than 50 volumes of important records were compiled and indexed and Louise was instrumental in securing one of only three available laminating presses to preserve Georgia's precious documents.

Upon her death, one of Louise's many affiliations, the Colonial Dames of America, proclaimed in its resolution recognizing her long life of service as a Georgia woman of achievement, "Georgia owes her a debt of gratitude that can never be repaid."

Additional Resources

Willet Memorial Library
Wesleyan College
Macon, GA