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LORINE NIEDECKER

1903-1970

City: Fort Atkinson

County: Jefferson

Lorine Niedecker, an important 20th-century poet, was highly regarded for the poems she wrote about her Wisconsin surroundings.

Niedecker was born on Blackhawk Island in Rock River, and attended school in nearby Fort Atkinson, where a high-school English teacher inspired her interest in poetry. She graduated in 1922 and then attended Beloit College, where she joined debate and poetry clubs. In 1924, she left college to care for her ailing mother.

After Niedecker married, she worked at a local library. But the Great Depression brought financial hardship to the couple, and neither the marriage nor the library job lasted. Niedecker's early poems were about dreams and the subconscious. A friendship with New York poet Louis Zukofsky developed her interest in poetic objectivism, in which the attention is on an object rather than on one's feelings. Blackhawk Island was the inspiration for much of her poetry, which she wrote outside of her job with the Federal Writers Project, where she researched state biographies and wrote for radio station WHA. Later she worked as a proofreader for the publication *Hoard's Dairyman* and as a cleaner at a local hospital. In 1946, Niedecker's poetry collection *New Goose* was published. She published three more books in her lifetime—*My Friend Tree*, *North Central*, and *T&G*—and her poems appeared in many literary magazines. After her death, her reputation continued to grow and her poetry received international recognition. Critics have called her the Emily Dickinson of the 20th century.

To learn more, visit womeninwisconsin.org/profile/lorine-niedecker



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