

# WISCONSIN WOMEN MAKING HISTORY

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### LORENA "HICK" HICKOK

1893–1968

City: Appleton, East Troy, Milwaukee

County: Milwaukee, Outagamie,  
Walworth

Lorena "Hick" Hickok was a journalist during the US Great Depression and a close friend of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt.

Alice Lorena Hickok was born in 1893 in East Troy, Wisconsin. In 1901, her family moved to South Dakota. Her father was abusive and often unemployed, and the family moved from town to town as he searched for jobs. Hickok left home to work at 14. In 1909, she moved to Battle Creek, Michigan, to finish high school. She started attending Lawrence College in Appleton, Wisconsin. Because of the gaps in her education, she struggled. She left Lawrence in 1912 and went back to Michigan to work as a reporter for the Battle Creek Journal.

When she was 22, "Hick" (as she came to be known) moved to Milwaukee and began working for the Milwaukee Journal. Because of sexism in the newspaper industry, she was mostly stuck writing about social events. At 25 she moved to Minnesota and tried to finish college, attending the University of Minnesota while working for the Minneapolis Tribune. That newspaper gave her the opportunity to work on more serious stories, so she left college to be a full-time reporter.

Hickok moved to New York City in 1928. She briefly worked for a tabloid before getting a job doing serious reporting for the Associated Press (AP). She gained respect over the years, going from being called "that girl" by her boss to being the only woman reporter assigned to Franklin D. Roosevelt's (FDR's) campaign train in 1932. Hickok was especially interested in reporting on FDR's wife, Eleanor. Hickok formed a personal relationship with Eleanor, and by the time FDR was elected, they were very close friends.

Hickok's friendship with the Roosevelts made it hard for her to be neutral when writing articles about them, though it also offered some advantages. For instance, Hickok was the first reporter to interview a First Lady at the White House on Inauguration Day. But her career as a journalist did end; she resigned from the AP in June 1933.

Hickok's next job came through her connections with FDR. She was hired by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration to travel the country and write about how the Great Depression was affecting people. Many of her reports led to changes for struggling people. After that, she traveled the country again to write about the impact of the government's Work Projects Administration.

In the lead-up to the 1940 presidential election, the Democratic Party hired Hickok to interview people about their opinions of FDR and the Party. After FDR was re-elected, Hickok worked as the executive secretary of the women's division of the Democratic Party. This position allowed her to advocate for progressive politics and candidates.

Hickok retired in the late 1940s but still spent most of her time writing. She co-wrote the book *Ladies of Courage* with Eleanor Roosevelt, and she authored a biography of Eleanor, *Reluctant First Lady*. She also wrote chapter books for children.

Hickok had serious romantic relationships with women, and there is evidence that her relationship with Eleanor may have been romantic. In any case, their strong friendship lasted for the rest of their lives. Hickok died in 1968.