

A Notable Woman – May Roach



After her retirement, a Milwaukee newspaper reporter described her as a “civic workhorse who wouldn’t be put out to pasture.” When she was about 70, students elected her UWSP’s homecoming queen. When she died, newspapers across Wisconsin called attention to her life and the way she used it to make this a better state.

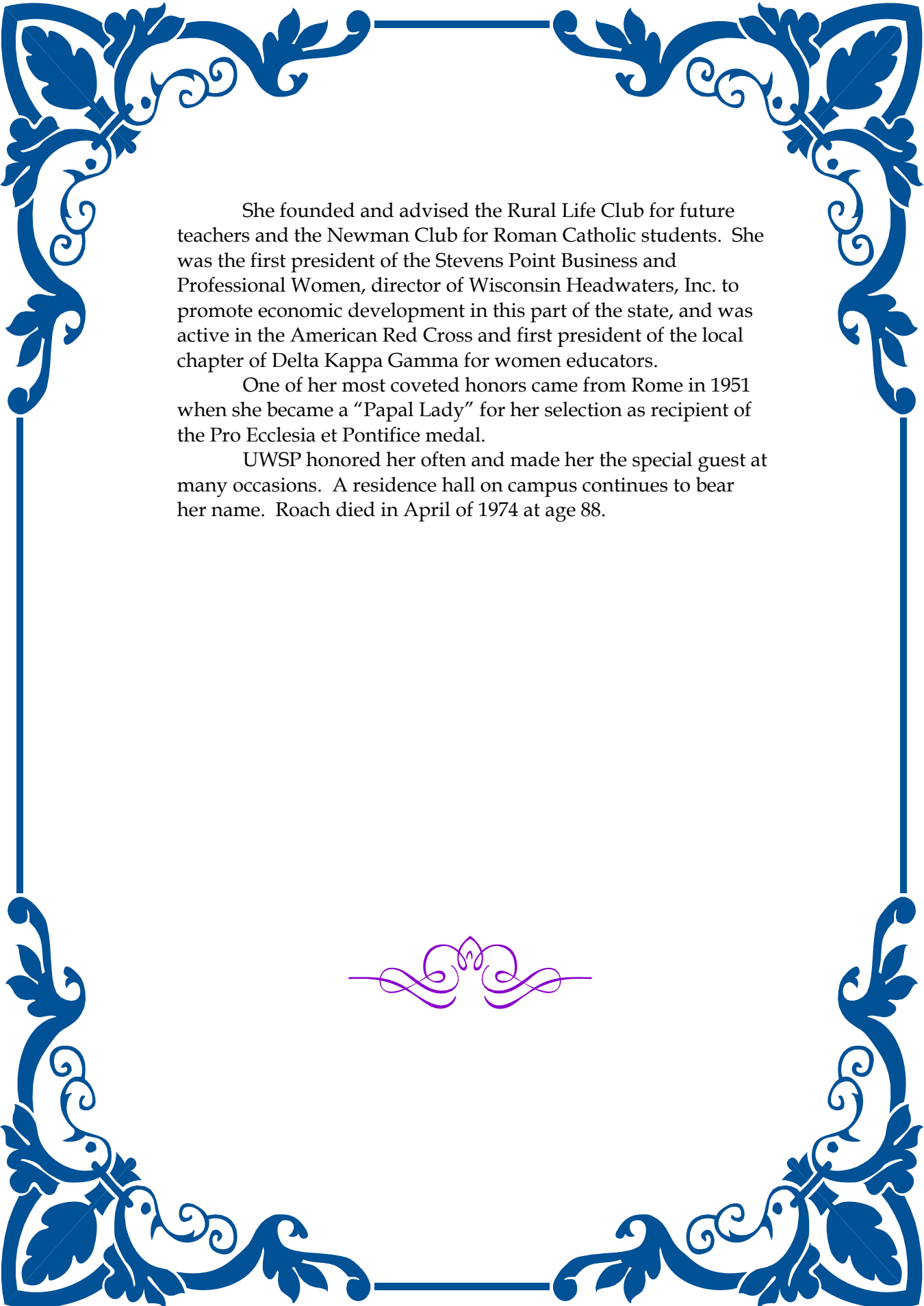
Her name was May Roach, and she was one of UWSP’s most beloved, all-time great professors. She enjoyed

immense popularity among the student body.

The Eau Claire native had attended Stevens Point State Normal School in 1905 and 1906, after gaining experience as a classroom teacher and as a state graded school principal in the western side of Wisconsin, she received additional academic preparation and then joined the faculty of her alma mater in 1914. She remained here until 42 years- until retirement in 1956.

Her specialty was rural education, preparing teachers to serve in the country schools that once dotted the state. She also taught English courses, was a much sought after public speaker, a lobbyist in the State Legislature on behalf of Wisconsin higher education and this campus in particular, an adviser of student activities and a civic booster with high visibility.

She was a founder of the natural resources program, having attended a conference in the 1930s in Chicago, where one of the speakers, a physician, expressed more concern for loss of elements in the soil than for germs. When she returned, she joined President William Hansen and Professor Fred Schmeackle in developing offerings in conservation education.



She founded and advised the Rural Life Club for future teachers and the Newman Club for Roman Catholic students. She was the first president of the Stevens Point Business and Professional Women, director of Wisconsin Headwaters, Inc. to promote economic development in this part of the state, and was active in the American Red Cross and first president of the local chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma for women educators.

One of her most coveted honors came from Rome in 1951 when she became a "Papal Lady" for her selection as recipient of the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice medal.

UWSP honored her often and made her the special guest at many occasions. A residence hall on campus continues to bear her name. Roach died in April of 1974 at age 88.

