

Ellen Margaret Rowan
Nominated by Iris Linder

Ellen Margaret Rowan was one of the first businesswomen to establish in Marshfield. Born February 25, 1846 in the Town of Yorkville in Racine County, Rowan was the second oldest of ten children. She initially moved to Marshfield in hopes that a change in climate would improve the poor health of her younger sister, Frances. Encouraged by Racine area relatives of the Upham and Wheeler families to head north, the sisters arrived in Marshfield in 1880.

A dressmaker and practitioner of the millinery arts (hat making) from a young age, Rowan was educated in these disciplines in Chicago. Shortly after arriving in Marshfield she established a business catering to these interests. Frances returned to Racine, dying not long after. But another sister, Catherine, moved to Marshfield to help run and maintain the business in 1884.

One of many business owners to lose their property in the 1887 fire, Rowan was one of the first to arrange for the erection of a two story brick building. Her shop was located on the first floor while the office of Dr. J.C. Hayward, who had married Catherine, operated on the second. The back room of her shop would become the first social club, full of young people out for a good time almost nightly. This building would house her dressmaking and millinery business until 1918 when she would sell the business and building to the Marshfield State Bank.

Both Ellen and Catherine were charter members of the Travel Class, a predecessor to the Marshfield Women's Club as well as other early social and education organizations in the city. Ellen lived to the age of 91, nearly unheard of at the time, passing away on April 11, 1937 after a brief illness. Services were held at St. John's Catholic Church. She was buried at Hillside Cemetery.