

## Wanda Gag – Class of 1912

An artist, author, illustrator and translator. Wanda was born in New Ulm in 1893. Her childhood was filled with the influence of art from her talented Bohemian father, Anton Gag. In 1908 when Wanda was 15, her father died leaving her mother and 6 siblings in financial difficulties. Wanda sent drawings, stories and poems to various periodicals to earn payment when published. After graduating from high school in 1912, Wanda taught country school for a year and continued her drawing, while supporting her family. She received honors, prizes, and favorable press coverage. With scholarships from New Ulm sponsors she was able to attend the St. Paul School of Art for a year and then the Minneapolis School of Arts for 3 years.

In 1917 Wanda won a scholarship to the prestigious Art Student's League in New York. There she began to develop her own artistic style doing lithographs and watercolors. She was noticed by the art world and had her first one person show at the Weyhe Gallery in 1926. Her lithographs became artistically and commercially recognized. For ten years her lithographs were selected by the American Institute of Graphic Artists as one of the Fifty Prints of the Year. Her work is now included in national museums worldwide.

In 1928 she wrote and illustrated "Millions of Cats". This groundbreaking children's book was based on her old world culture and was an immediate success for both the story and her artistic illustrations. It received a Newberry Honor Award in 1929. Today, it is the oldest American picture book still in print. Numerous other children's books appeared over the next 10 years followed by her diary titled "Growing Pains".

Wanda died in 1946 at the age of 53. Her artistic and literary legacy continues to grow. Notable collections of Wanda's works are at the University of Minnesota, University of Pennsylvania, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. She has inspired numerous books including the "Catalogue Raisonne of the Prints" published by the Smithsonian Institution Press. Locally the Wanda Gag House Association has restored her childhood home and has promoted the family legacy for 25 years. The Brown County Historical Society collection includes over 2500 pieces of the Gag family and artifacts. The City of New Ulm has a collection of 59 of her original works.

