

## Lorine Niedecker: A Short Biography

Lorine Niedecker was born May 12, 1903 and grew up in Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin and nearby Blackhawk Island. She was the only child of Daisy Kunz and Henry Niedecker. They ran the Fountain House Inn, then a place for vacationers, at the end of the island for many years. The family eventually moved to a home on Riverside Drive in Fort Atkinson while Lorine attended the local school. Her mother's hearing failed, and she eventually became deaf. Her father, a fisherman, moved the family from the Riverside Drive home back to Blackhawk Island. Henry and Daisy eventually lived in separate but neighboring homes as their marriage disintegrated and Henry began a relationship with a neighbor. Niedecker later wrote of this separation and her parent's difficult relationship in several poems.

Niedecker finished high school in 1922 and enrolled in Beloit College. She attended the college for two years, showing interest in the debate club and also writing a few pieces for the college literary magazine. At the end of the two years she returned home to care for her mother. She married Frank Hartwig in 1928, and the couple separated in 1930.

At this time there is evidence that Niedecker read Pound, understood Imagism, and wrote poetry within this movement. She read and was struck by Louis Zukofsky's 1931 Objectivist issue of *Poetry* magazine. She immediately wrote to Zukofsky, starting a lifelong friendship and correspondence regarding thoughts on poetry. Zukofsky benefited from this correspondence and was visited by Niedecker in New York during 1933. In 1938 she moved to Madison as part of the Federal Writers' Project, a division of the Work Project Administration (WPA). Although Niedecker did leave Fort Atkinson several times in her life, they were all short visits. When she returned to Fort Atkinson and Blackhawk Island she worked for the publication "Hoard's Dairyman" and eventually as a janitor at Fort Atkinson Hospital. During the many years that she wrote poetry she was influenced by the sounds around her from nature and human speech, reading, and correspondence with peers, nationally and internationally. She wrote through a Surrealist period, one of folk influences, gender differences, and of course secured her place amongst the Objectivist poets.