

**Modena Plantation  
Isle of Hope  
Savannah, Georgia**

Having grown up in a small New Jersey city full of beautiful old homes which surrounded small parks, rather like your squares and equally steeped in historic interest, then later living in a similar nearby town both of which, at the close of World War I, experienced the terrible pressure of the population explosion, the motor-car and the dream of progress at any cost, I was aware of that same relentless bull-dozer bearing down on the beautiful pattern and continuity of ancient Savannah. Serenity, superb architecture and irreplaceable workmanship were apparent here thirty years ago but elsewhere, fast disappearing in one city after another and there seemed to be no chance or even interest in attempts to halt the avalanche.

When the Davenport House was about to be demolished to make room for a parking lot, the time and opportunity presented itself for imperative action if Savannah's heritage was to be saved. The Old Market was already lost and the wreckers were busy all over town. Therefore it was with great enthusiasm that I joined the small group which formed Historic Savannah Foundation and had been personally and increasingly grateful for the beauty we have been able to preserve. It is ironic that one of 'my' New Jersey towns is now re-building from scratch, aided by faded plans and old blueprints, the wonderful houses so brutally destroyed, and the other is beyond all hope of restoration. St. Augustine is going through the same laborious process of building anew its ancient city. The heroic efforts of Historic Savannah have saved us from much of this turmoil, and preserved for the State and County and valuable insight and priceless heritage. To have had a part in this struggle has been a most satisfactory experience for me and I am sure the other Founders feel just as deeply rewarded.

*Dorothy Ripley Roebling*

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Obituary

**Dorothy Ripley Roebling**

April 4, 1904 – May 21, 1977

Mrs. Dorothy Ripley Roebling, a founder of Historic Savannah Foundation and a former board member of the Telfair Academy of Arts and Sciences, died Saturday in Ponte Vedra, Fla. after a short illness.

She was 73 and lived at Modena Plantation.

She was a member of the First Church of Christ Scientist, the Mayflower Society, the Colonial Dames of America and the Georgia Conservancy.

She was a member of the Junior League, was a past board member of the Savannah Association of Retarded Children and was a member of the Trustee's Garden Club. She was a member of the Savannah Art Association.

Surviving are her husband, Robert C. Roebling of Savannah; two daughters, Mars. Ellin Hagan of Sylvania and Miss Clara Roebling of Encinitas, Calif.; three sons, Karl G. Roebling III of Winter Park, Fla, Wainwright Roebling of Athens and Henry D. E. Roebling of Savannah; seven grandchildren and a niece.

Graveside services will be held at 3:30 p.m. Tuesday in Forest Lawn Memory Gardens.

Fox and Weeks Funeral Home is in charge.



## About the Roeblings

Dorothy Ripley Roebling was known as “Dickie” and her husband Robert C. Roebling as “Bob.” He was from the renowned bridge building family. His great-grandfather was John A. Roebling, an engineer, who emigrated from Germany in 1832 to establish the town of Saxonburg in western Pennsylvania. Both John Roebling and his son Col. Washington Roebling managed the building of the Brooklyn Bridge. Their success stemmed from the wire cable business John founded. The Roebling Company was eventually managed by Robert C. Roebling. The firm’s contracts included the George Washington and Golden Gate Bridges.

In 1930 Dickie and Bob moved from Trenton, NJ to Skidaway Island after sailing their 170’ three-masted schooner, the *Black Douglas*, around South America. A friend of the Roeblings, Ralph Isham, owned a hunting preserve, Modena Plantation, on the northern end of Skidaway Island and he invited Bob down for a hunting trip. Bob fell in love with it immediately and bought it. The water was deep enough for the *Black Douglas*. . . by the spring of 1936 the family was living aboard the ship. . . .

Over the years, Modena Plantation was restored to a working farm with barns, buildings, and farm dwellings, all powered by the generators on the ship. As war clouds gathered, however, plans were made to move the family ashore. A white stucco powerhouse/pump building . . . was built in 1940 to take over the generating task of the ship. . . .

The house next to the swimming pool was constructed with high ceilings to be used for a gym but eventually became the Roebling home when the *Black Douglas* was sold in September 1941 to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

In 1948 Bob Roebling built a house on the east side of Skidaway for his mother, Mrs. Arthur O’Brien. Having lived in Washington, DC, and Seattle most of her life, she found the island setting lonely and after a few years decided to move to St. Simons. The Roeblings occupied her house thereafter and its remains in the family today. Dickie passed away in 1977 and Bob in 1983.

Note: The Skidaway Institute of Oceanography was established in 1967 when Robert C. Roebling donated his Black Angus cattle farm on the north end of Skidaway Island to the State of Georgia for the establishment of a marine research facility on the coast.

Carol Megathin,  
[www.skio.peachnet.edu/aboutus/history/roebbling/roeblyn\\_family.php](http://www.skio.peachnet.edu/aboutus/history/roebbling/roeblyn_family.php)

