

**IN MEMORIAM
ANNIE WEBB BLANTON**

The General Faculty of The University of Texas wishes to give expression to its deep regret at the loss of Dr. Annie Webb Blanton, whose death on October 2, 1945, followed shortly upon her resignation as, Professor of Educational Administration.

Annie Webb Blanton was born in Houston, Texas, the daughter of Thomas Lindsay Blanton, a native of Virginia, who with his mother, came to Houston at the age of twelve. Her mother was Eugenia Webb Blanton, of LaGrange, Texas, granddaughter of Asa B. Hill and daughter of General William G. Webb, names well known in Texas history. She received her early schooling in a private school in Houston. Her secondary training began in the Houston High School and ended in the high school of La Grange, where the family made their home after the death of her mother. After teaching one session in a rural school in Fayette County, she moved, with the other members of her family to Austin, where she taught in the public schools, at the same time pursuing courses in The University of Texas. The Bachelor of Literature degree was conferred upon her in 1899.

In 1901 Miss Blanton left her position as teacher of English in the Austin High School, to become a member of the original faculty of the college then called The North Texas State Normal. Throughout her seventeen years of service in this pioneering institution, Miss Blanton's initiative, qualities of leadership, and spirit of service found ample scope through her work on faculty committees, her participation in student activities, and her singularly effective teaching of English; yet she found time for abundant social activities and for participation in community and civic life.

Miss Blanton was always a firm believer in the efficiency of organization as an instrument for progress, and early identified herself with state and national organizations in those fields in which she had a special interest --the improvement of education, the advancement of women as citizens and leaders, and the furtherance of the political ideals of the Democratic Party. Her affiliations with noteworthy organizations were numerous and, in some cases, distinctive. She was

three times elected as one of the vice-presidents of the National Education Association --in 1917, 1919, and 1921 --and for six years she was a member of the National Council of Education. Other organizations in which she held membership were the National Sociological Society, the National Department of Superintendence, and the American Association of University Professors. She became a member of the State Executive Board of the American Association of University Women when the organization was formed in Texas. She had been active in the Daughters of the American Revolution, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, and for many years she served on the Executive Board of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs as chairman of its Department of Education.

Miss Blanton's public career may be said to have had its beginning when in November, 1916, she was elected president of the Texas State Teachers Association, and thereby was given an opportunity to lead in the inauguration of a number of changes of policy and procedure which she regarded as being of paramount importance including the establishment of a permanent fund and a revision of the Constitution in the interest of greater democracy and efficiency. A nucleus of twenty thousand dollars for the permanent fund was raised during her term of office and many other forward steps were taken.

In 1918, at the request of the State Suffrage Association, she became a candidate for the position of State Superintendent of Public Instruction. She was elected to this place in November 1918, taking office on January 11, 1919. In assuming her responsibilities as the first woman to be elected to this or any other office in Texas Miss Blanton won the confidence of all by her comprehensive grasp of the Department of Education in its relation to the educational problems of the state and the federal government. The members of her staff, chosen by her solely on the basis of ability, and loyalty to a common professional purpose, formed a capable working unit, constantly inspired and abetted by her own indefatigable vitality, missionary zeal, and clear vision of what could be accomplished for the best interest of the schools of Texas. As the result of her dynamic leadership, her administration was marked by an advancement, which has not been

surpassed in the history of education in Texas. Among the many accomplishments summarized in the publication, A Handbook of Information on Education in Texas, 1918-1922, the most notable were revision of the certificate laws to establish higher qualifications for teachers, removal of the limit on district taxation for school support, the free textbook amendment, and marked advance in rural schools, in better schoolhouses, consolidation, longer school-terms, free transportation, school libraries, and better trained teachers.

After filling this office for two terms, or four years, Miss Blanton declined to become a candidate for a third term, and the following year, completed the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, conferred upon her, by The University of Texas in 1923. In the fall of this year she was employed by The University of Texas as Adjunct Professor of Education Administration. In the year 1926-27, she was granted a year's leave of absence for study, and, after fifteen months' work at Cornell University, received from that institution, in September 1927, the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. After her return to The University of Texas in 1927, she became Associate Professor of School Administration with the specialty of Rural Education, and, in 1933, was advanced to a full professorship in the same department, only two women having preceded her in the distinction of a full professorship in this institution. As a university professor no less than as a superintendent of the public schools of the state, she continued, as no one else had done, to champion the cause of the children of the forks of the creek, who for two generations had been discriminated against in Texas education. In 1935, under the auspices of the Laura Spellman Rockefeller Fund, she carried out a research study involving extensive personal survey of one-teacher schools in all sections of Texas. The results of the study, published under the title, The Child of the Texas One-Teacher School, gave an added impetus to work for better teachers and better schools. As an adjunct to her regular teaching program in the University, Miss Blanton spent the major part of each summer vacation for sixteen years as visiting teacher of Education at Our Lady of the Lake College in San Antonio. She loved to teach; and to her, these summer interludes

freed from other responsibilities, served as a true vacation. To the staff of the College, her devoted interest and masterly teaching 'were an unforgettable source of inspiration.

Among the many precedents which Miss Blanton has the distinction of having broken was her election to honorary membership in Phi Beta Kappa as the first woman to be thus honored by the chapter at The University of Texas. Other honorary' societies of which she was a member are Kappa Delta Pi, Pi Gamma Mu, and Pi Lambda Theta. Sensing the potential values of organizations of selected groups of capable women for motivating professional interest and leadership in education, and having enlisted the aid of chosen co-founders, she originated the educational fraternity, the Delta Kappa Gamma Society, designed to focus the feminine leadership among the women teachers of the entire nation upon their responsibility for actively furthering educational advancement, thus bringing a higher degree of professional skill and morale into the teaching forces of America, composed chiefly of women. For fifteen years she gave much of her time to the development and promotion of this Society, of which she was the first national president, and, from 1933 to September 1945, the Executive Secretary and Editor of The Bulletin.

The personality of one who is a breaker of so many precedents invites analysis. Miss Blanton was a woman of high intelligence, determined will power, and capacity for leadership, and withal a practical idealist. In any era she would have been outstanding in the search of new forms in which to organize and express life. By a synchronizing Providence she came upon the state of social and political action when women were demanding a place in human affairs commensurate with their higher culture and the dignity of their contributions to humanity. Although the logic of the situation had forced the adoption of woman suffrage, the ancient grudges against womanhood were only slightly relaxed, not abandoned. At that propitious moment Miss Blanton essayed to test the genuineness of the sentiment for the recognition of equality of womanhood. It is worthy of note that as the first woman to be president of the Texas State Teachers. Association, and as the first woman Superintendent of Public Instruction in Texas, she conducted the affairs of her office with masterly efficiency. The personal qualities most impressive in Miss Blanton's character, --

sincerity, candor, courage, and loyalty, - were matched by her remarkable power of concentration. In all of her professional activities, whether teaching, administering, or organizing, Miss Blanton's success was the product of careful studious preparation and of her forceful friendly personality. It was this quality of true friendliness that endeared her to her students, to her co-workers, and to thousands of teachers in Texas and in the nation.

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