

PHILIP ASHTON NORRIS

1863-1942

By Robert L. Williams

Philip Ashton Norris, born near Millers Grove, Hopkins County, Texas, on January 19, 1863, was the son of George W. Norris, born in Dallas County, Alabama, and Susan Trigg Norris, born in Estes County, Kentucky.

Susan Curl Crawford Arbery was his maternal grandmother. Her maternal grandfather, Robert Arbery, an English soldier in

General Packenham's Army, was captured at the Battle of New Orleans in 1815.

His father was in the twenty-third Texas Cavalry, Confederate States Army, as recorded in the Confederate Records at Washington, D. C.

Mr. Norris was at the time of his death, a life member of the Oklahoma Historical Society, becoming so in 1939, after having been an annual member for years prior thereto. At the time he filed application for his life membership, he stated that he desired to be on the honor roll of the Historical Society through a life membership, and was a strong supporter of the Historical Society.

His first marriage was to Alice McCormick of Rockbridge Baths, Virginia, in 1890, and from that marriage he is survived by two children, Mrs. Charles Nelson Berry and her two sons, Charles Nelson Berry, Jr. and Robert Norris Berry, of Oklahoma City; and Mrs. J. Kingsley Hall and her son, Lieutenant Philip Ashton Hall of San Marino, California.

Further surviving him are the surviving widow of his second marriage, Mrs. Josephine Sparks Norris, to whom he was married on June 21, 1905 at Shawnee, Oklahoma, and the following children of that marriage: Mrs. William G. Peterson, Frank C. Norris, Philip Ashton Norris, Jr., John C. Norris, Tom Randolph Norris and Mrs. Denver B. Davison of Ada, Oklahoma, and two sisters, Mrs. Lizzie Mitchell and Mrs. B. J. Mitchell of Greenville, Texas.

Two sons are in the military service in World War II, to-wit: First Lieutenant Philip Ashton Norris, Jr., stationed at Wilmington, Delaware in the United States Air Force Ferrying Command, and First Lieutenant Tom Randolph Norris in a troop carrier squadron stationed at Alliance, Nebraska. Another son, Harry Ashton Norris, was killed in a car-train crash December 24, 1933.

Philip Ashton Norris started his business career in a print shop at Daingerfield, Texas, and also clerked in a general store for W. B. Womack & Son, at Daingerfield, Texas, who was afterwards a prominent business man at Whitewright, Texas, as he had been at Daingerfield. For a number of years Philip Ashton Norris was bookkeeper in The First National Bank of Greenville, Texas, and from 1890 to 1904 was Cashier of The First National Bank of Commerce, Texas. He came to Shawnee, Oklahoma Territory in 1904 and became general manager of the Shawnee Cotton Oil Mill from that time until 1912. Before severing his connection in such capacity in 1911 he moved to Ada and from that time until his death his home was there and he had a part in practically everything of a commercial nature relating to said city and the civic enterprises therein. During practically all the time he had been President of the First National Bank of Ada, and after organizing the Choctaw Cotton Oil Company, was its President for many years. It was one of the largest cotton seed oil concerns of the southwest and is still operating with headquarters at Ada. He was also President of the

Lamar Cotton Oil Company of Paris, Texas, The Honey Grove Cotton Oil Company of Honey Grove, Texas; The Mount Pleasant Oil Mill of Mount Pleasant, Texas, the Sulphur Springs Cotton Oil Company of Sulphur Springs, Texas, and the Commerce Oil Mill, Commerce, Texas. For the last few years these concerns have been operated as Norris Mills, with general offices in Dallas. He was associated with Kay Kimbell in a string of oil mills at Lamesa, Big Spring, McKinney and Greenville, Texas.

During World War I he efficiently served as Federal Fuel Administrator of Oklahoma, without financial remuneration, and at the close of his services received commendation from the Federal authorities. On account of his ability, efficiency and character, his presidency of financial institutions inspired confidence. He manifested an active interest generally in farming and in industrial and commercial business.

He numbered many friends among the leaders in the commercial and financial world. He was a member of the Episcopal Church, Ada Lions Club, a 32d degree Mason and was a member of the Council of National Defense during World War I, and the Red Cross, a Democrat, and a member of the Oak Hills Country Club at Ada.

He finished the grade school at Daingerfield, Texas at the age of fourteen. With little formal education, on account of the result of the Civil War, he was self-educated to no mean degree and his proficiency in the English language was superior to that of many college graduates. His knowledge of the Civil War was comprehensive and inexhaustive. He continued to study, learn and lead as long as he lived. He was a remarkable man.
