

MRS. HOWARD SEARCY

1877-1945

*By Howard Searcy**

Pearl C. Moyer was born October 7, 1877 in Wichita, Kansas, daughter of Charles E. and Ella Burr Moyer. Her father was a builder of bridges for the Santa Fe Railroad in Kansas and later owned and developed a farm in Harper County, in that state, six miles west of the town of Harper, the county seat.

In the year 1893 the family moved to a ranch in Woods County, Oklahoma Territory, which Mr. Moyer had acquired and where his cattle interests became extensive. In those early days it was a little too rough, and the educational facilities were too limited for his family of growing children, so a home was purchased in the city of Alva, which was the family home until both parents had passed away and the children were widely and permanently separated.

This family, parents and children, were true pioneers of a high type, and Woods County and the cities to which the children have gone, all but one in Oklahoma, are better places in which to live because of their presence.

In the year 1901, Pearl Moyer married Howard Searcy, of Winfield, Kansas, who was employed in an abstract office. In 1903 her pioneering instincts prevailed and they moved to Wagoner, Indian Territory where Mr. Searcy became the builder and manager of the first abstract plant in that part of the old Western Judicial District now known as Wagoner County. Other plants were started from time to time, but with the active support and help of Mrs. Searcy they were gradually absorbed and consolidated, and in 1922 Mr. Searcy became president and Mrs. Searcy, Vice-president and sole owners of Wagoner County Abstract Company, the only plant of its kind in the county to which they had come in 1903.

Mrs. Searcy was one of the outstanding artists of Oklahoma, working in oils and water colors, but her principal art work was in ceramics, and her hand decorated china is in many cabinets in this and surrounding states. She was well known and sought as a judge in the art exhibits of the larger fairs of the state, and her blue ribbons on ceramics exhibited in years when she was not judging make

*The sudden death of Mr. Howard Searcy occurred at Wagoner, on February 10, 1946, coming as a shock to friends of Mr. and Mrs. Searcy throughout Oklahoma. The manuscript of this article on Mrs. Searcy's life—i.e. the brief biography by Mr. Searcy and the tribute in behalf of the Daughters of the American Revolution—was ready at that time for publication in this number of *The Chronicles*.—Ed.

an impressive back-ground for the china in her own cabinet. The walls of her home are an artist's delight, and it is a matter of comment that she was able, with the other things she did, to give so much time and service in promoting art and culture in Oklahoma.

Mrs. Searcy was a life member of the Oklahoma State Historical Society, a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church and several of the more important patriotic societies. The one with which she was most closely identified was the Daughters of the American Revolution. For twenty-two years she had been a member of the Muskogee Indian Territory Chapter, serving in various chapter offices and in 1941 and 1942 as Chapter Regent. She was elected and served as State Regent in 1943 and 1944. In 1944 she was endorsed by the State Society as a candidate for Vice-President General of the National Society, but had passed away before the election could be held in Washington.

The number one war-time project sponsored by the Daughters of the American Revolution was the raising of blood plasma procurement funds, in which the Oklahoma State Society's success was outstanding. On account of war-time travel restrictions, on orders of the National Society, Mrs. Searcy was holding over as State Regent through the year 1945, and on May 4th, on one of her official missions, she was killed instantly in an automobile wreck. Her passing is mourned by her family and by friends over Oklahoma and in other states where she was widely known.

For her intense patriotism and devotion to her country she was regarded by her friends and co-workers as a soldier, and as a soldier she died leaving family and friends sorrowful but proud.

"Individuals die—but the amount of truth they have taught and the sum of good they have done dies not with them."

A TRIBUTE¹

Oklahoma Society and Muskogee Indian Territory Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, unite in tribute to an outstanding member, chapter and state officer, Mrs. Howard Searcy of Wagoner, Oklahoma, whose untimely death occurred on Friday morning, May 4, 1945, at Okmulgee. She was almost instantly killed in an automobile accident while en route to Shawnee to spend a few hours with a niece after which she planned to go to both Oklahoma City and Norman on business in connection with D. A. R. work. Her funeral took place the following Sunday in the First Methodist Church at Wagoner of which she was a member with burial in Elmwood cemetery. Her husband, two sisters and two brothers survive.

¹This tribute to Mrs. Howard Searcy was written by Marguerite Rines Rooney (Mrs. L. Francis) in behalf of the Oklahoma Society, Daughters of the American Revolution. Mrs. Rooney is former Chapter Regent of Muskogee Indian Territory Chapter, D.A.R.—Ed.

Mrs. Searcy became a member of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution on October 31, 1923. Enrolled as Pearl Moyer Searcy, descendant of Isaac Burr, Revolutionary soldier, she was assigned the national number of 192789 and became the 142nd member elected to Muskogee Indian Territory Chapter since its beginning in 1907.

Her twenty-two years in the society were marked by absolute devotion to the organization and to the high ideals and purposes for which it stands. During that time she served on many committees in her own chapter and in turn was elected historian and regent and at one time was appointed the chapter's parliamentarian. In the state organization she carried on the work of the committees on Americanism, Good Citizenship and National Defense. She was elected State Historian and later State Regent, occupying the latter office at the time of her death.

While State Historian it was through her efforts that the State Genealogical Library and Museum were placed in the Oklahoma Historical Society Building at Oklahoma City. Her other activities were many and her chapter members will long remember an elaborate scrap book she personally compiled. This beautiful book will stand not only for its historical correctness but for the artistic ability and originality shown in its binding.

Had Mrs. Searcy lived, undoubtedly she would have attained national office. In 1945, due to war time restrictions, the Continental Congress scheduled to be held in the spring, along with all other such gatherings, was called off. Had it taken place, Mrs. Searcy's name would have been presented for one of the offices of Vice-President General. Concerning her candidacy her home Chapter had the following to say:

"We of the Muskogee Indian Territory Chapter are proud of Mrs. Searcy's more than two decades of D. A. R. service, in her own chapter, in the state and in the nation. Her ability as a leader, her loyalty to the society, her enthusiasm, her untiring efforts and her splendid achievements justify our belief that her election as Vice-President General will reflect honor upon the State of Oklahoma and further the best interests of the National Society D. A. R."

When Mrs. Searcy was elected State Regent, she said she would go in office as a soldier and from that moment her time was used exclusively for D. A. R. work and business of the society. Her first objective was to gain information on all the society's war work, to know fully what was expected and to carry that message to each member in the state. Since the accumulation of Blood Plasma Funds was the Society's number one project, it was adopted as Oklahoma's. Mrs. Searcy wrote long letters to chapter regents ex-

plaining the plan, and travelled all over the state, visiting chapters, making talks on the Blood Plasma Fund and answering any question raised in connection with the project. She first asked for \$2500.00 but according to her report the total of \$10,389.13 was raised between March 1, 1943 and March 15, 1944. As early as October 1943 enough funds had been turned over to the treasury to purchase Oklahoma's Number Two Mobile Plasma Unit which was delivered in St. Louis on November 30.

In the words of Oklahoma's state regent, "Unprecedented work has been done for this project in all chapters—credit belongs exclusively to these groups—their reports will not be infringed upon, but Oklahoma Society will rank at D. A. R. Congress in Blood Plasma Funds as one of the highest in the national organization." This is but one example of the results of the untiring work of Mrs. Searcy. In her first annual report she speaks of having written 1300 letters on D. A. R. business, including five official letters to chapter regents and state officers, three official letters to state chairmen and ninety-three cards. Over the state, in all kinds of weather, sometimes driving alone in her own car, she travelled 8,144 miles. Never did she cancel or fail to keep an appointment.

That year Oklahoma D. A. R. led all other states in increase of membership and three new chapters were organized. Mrs. Searcy was behind every state officer and state chairman and vice-chairman of the twenty-five active committees of the organization. She was behind each chapter and its officers, ready to serve in an advisory capacity should her help be desired or needed.

On May 3, 1945, Mrs. Searcy was a special guest of Muskogee Indian Territory Chapter, the occasion being a tea sponsored by the Chapter. It turned out to be her last appearance at a D. A. R. function and it seems particularly fitting that her home Chapter should have had this honor. The women of the Muskogee group loved Mrs. Searcy and admired her for her high qualities of leadership and her loyalty and devotion to a great cause. In this they joined all other D. A. R. members who knew her and other friends and acquaintances and found an inspiration in her presence among them. That day the beloved State Regent expressed great satisfaction over the co-operation she was receiving, the good work of the chapters over the state and also the success of the tea that afternoon. Among other things she said she was happy to see many young women among the guests and to know that many of them were joining the society. She pointed out how necessary it was to interest these younger women for as she expressed it "They will carry on the work we have begun." Then she added "There is still much to do." It was only the next day that all realized that the valiant work begun by Mrs. Searcy, State Regent of the Oklahoma Society, D. A. R. would have to be carried on by others, but in this, her Oklahoma daughters will not fail her.

The following poem in the form of an acrostic from the pen of Mrs. Cora Case Porter, a member of Muskogee Indian Territory Chapter, beautifully expresses the regret of all Oklahoma Daughters of the American Revolution at the passing of a valuable and much loved member. It is inserted here with the permission and approval of the author:

THE LOST PEARL

Presently she will come in, this friend of mine,
Eyes flashing with patriotic plan of doughty
Action, inspiration born! No! The backdrop of time
Reflects but the shadow of her personality,
Loving humanity, sharing its load.

Somewhere, from loftier heights, thrilling loyalty,
Each call to serve was heard. Her's the glory road,
As the hour-glass sifts the lees from fame,
Remembered after death's ruthless hand,
Came suddenly to still the vibrant frame,
Young in heart, eternal in the spirit land.