

NECROLOGIES

ROBERT ALEXANDER KELLER

1872-1944

Robert Alexander Keller was born July 11, 1872 at Kellers' Bend near Knoxville, Tennessee, the son of William Swan Keller and Ann Matlock Keller. His father was a first cousin of Helen Keller, the famous blind and deaf writer, and was born at the same place. He was a descendent of Casper Keller, who lived in Hagerstown, Maryland, and who received a land grant in Maryland from Charles II after coming to this country from Switzerland. One of Casper Keller's sons married a daughter of Governor Spotswood of Virginia, while another married the gallant Richard Henry Lee of Revolutionary fame. His great-grandfather, Casper Keller's son, became owner of a large tract of land in Alabama and later moved to that state.

His grandmother Keller was a daughter of Alexander Moore, one of Lafayette's aides. He was a descendant of Lord Fairfax and grandson of Alexander Spotswood, an early colonial governor.

His mother, Ann Polixen Matlock, was born on a plantation near Knoxville, Tennessee. Her great-great-grandmother was Isabella Houston, daughter of John Houston, an English gentleman of Norman ancestry who came to America in 1735 accompanied by his wife, six children and two indentured servants.¹

Mr. Keller's father was a Confederate soldier, and had the distinction of being one of the youngest participants in the battle of Chickamauga, where he fought when only sixteen years of age. He was in Company F of the Second Tennessee Cavalry, and during much of the war was under the intrepid leader, General Joe Wheeler. At the close of the war, his father engaged in farming in Knox County, Tennessee, until 1882, when he moved to Texas and settled at Montague, and engaged in the milling and ginning business for about fifteen years. At the end of this period he returned to Knox County, Tennessee, and lived in Knoxville until his death on December 19, 1918, at the age of seventy-one years. Mrs. Keller, his mother, died on June 12, 1895.

Mr. Keller received his education in the public schools of Montague, Texas. He read law under Judge Levi P. Walker of Montague, and was admitted to the Texas Bar in 1895 or 1896. He practiced law in the state for a period of about three years and came to Indian Territory January 1, 1905, locating at Marietta. In 1909 he was appointed County Judge of Love County, and the following year was elected to that office and served with admirable efficiency until 1912. He was elected State Senator in 1914, and served in that position with distinction, being known as the "Firebrand of the Senate".

Robert Alexander Keller, of Senatorial District No. 18, was a member of the 5th and 6th Legislatures of Oklahoma, 1915-1918. The district was composed of Carter, Love and Murray Counties. During the 5th Legislature he served on the following committees: (1) Chairman, Insurance;

¹ Joseph B. Thoburn, *A Standard History of Oklahoma* (Chicago and New York: The American Historical Society, 1916), Vol. IV, Page 1496-7.

(2) Legal Advisory; (3) Judiciary No. 2; (4) School Lands; (5) Prohibition Enforcement; (6) Fees and Salaries; (7) Public Buildings.

During the 6th Legislature he served on the following committees: (1) Chairman, Legal Advisory; (2) Code Revision; (3) Privileges and Elections; (4) Fees and Salaries; (5) Banks and Banking; (6) School Lands; (7) Federal Relations; (8) Public Printing.²

In 1918 he returned to the practice of law in Marietta and became a leader in his profession. In 1919 he was appointed County Judge of Love County to fill a vacancy and was elected for a full term, holding the office for three years. He practiced law in Marietta alone until 1921 when he formed a partnership with Crawford W. Cameron, the firm being known as Keller & Cameron.

In 1925, at the request of the Attorney General of Oklahoma, he became first attorney for the State Highway Department and served in that capacity for ten years. The highway system had its greatest era of expansion during this time and by his ability and integrity, he saved the State millions of dollars.

He was the leading counsel in the successful fight to abolish toll bridges over Red River; and prepared the brief on which Governor Murray based his act of sending troops to hold the bridge near Denison. At the time of his death he was serving his second term as County Attorney of Love County. He died on April 2, 1944, and interment was in the cemetery at Marietta.

On March 8, 1898, he was united in marriage with Miss Lillian Davis, daughter of James H. and Martha (Lemming) Davis, both her father and mother being natives of Greene County, Tennessee, who in 1870 had come to Lamar County, Texas. Her father engaged in the cattle business until his death in March 1895. He was Captain James Harrison Davis, C.S.A., who was born at Greenville, Tennessee, a descendent of George Halworth, who came to America with William Penn, and who was also an ancestor of Herbert Hoover. Her mother, Martha Louise LeMing, was a descendent of William LeMing who was at Quebec with Montcalm. Lillian Davis Keller was born at Tusculum, Tennessee.

Senator and Mrs. Keller were the parents of four children: Helen Polixin, of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; James Spotswood of Dallas, Texas; Robert Alexander, Jr., of Houston, Texas; and Malcolm LeMing, of Galveston, Texas, both of whom served with the armed forces in World War II. Robert Alexander, Jr., served in New Britain and Malcolm LeMing in the Rainbow Division, Field Artillery.

Politically Robert Alexander Keller was all his life a Democrat and a member of the Presbyterian Church. He was a past master of the Masonic Lodge at Marietta and a past high priest of the Royal Arch Chapter. He was Past Chancellor in the Knights of Pythias Lodge No. 137 at Marietta, and a Grand Trustee of the Knights of Pythias Grand Lodge of Oklahoma, and a past Grand Tribune of the Grand Lodge. He was a member of the County and the State Bar associations. For three years he was City Attorney for Marietta and was President of the School Board for one term. During World War I, he was secretary of the local exemption Board, county fuel administrator and a member of the County Council

²*Senate Journal*, 5th State Leg., Reg. Sess., 1915, pp. 49-56; *Senate Journal*, 6th State Leg., Reg. Sess., 1917, pp. 13-15; Roy M. Johnson, *Oklahoma History South of the Canadian* (Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1925), Vol. III, pp. 1255-57; Emmet Starr, *Encyclopaedia of Oklahoma* (Claremore, 1912), p. 77.

of Defense. At the same time his wife was County Chairman of the Red Cross.

Data and brief statements of fact concerning a man never at any time give a true picture of him. Life is never measured by the hands on the dial-plate of any instrument used to measure human deeds. Especially is this true of Robert Alexander Keller. From his ancestral blood coursing through his veins from the finest Revolutionary stock, he met as a boy upon the plains of Texas wild and daring life and moved on to the finest and highest endeavor. He was a jurist of the highest order and clothed his whole life as an attorney with that probity and courage which won for him a respect and admiration among those who knew him, which shall not die. His leadership among men grew out of his brilliant mind, his warm friendships and his sterling ability.

Senator's Keller's work in the legislative halls of Oklahoma was distinct and marked with a fidelity to his constituents and the State that won for him a high place among the State leaders of his day. The writer recalls his presence upon the floor of the House and Senate. He was tall, somewhat frail of frame, but with features clear-cut and eyes full of spirit and somewhat challenging. You knew at once that here was a man who did his duty and feared nothing. Here was a good father, an ardent churchman, a splendid citizen, a genuine Oklahoman and a valiant American.

CHARLES EVANS.

Oklahoma Historical Society

GEORGE ADRIAN SMITH

1868-1946

George Adrian Smith, the son of William G. and his wife, Mary A. Beasley) Smith, was born on February 25, 1868, at Danville, in Vermillion County, Illinois. The father, William G. Smith, was a native of Indiana and served from that state as a volunteer in a United States Regiment in the Civil War and later, after the expiration of his volunteer period, in an Illinois Regiment. He brought his family west, living for a period in Kansas, and came to the Oklahoma country at the time of the run in 1889, stopping at Guthrie. After the opening of the Sac and Fox reservation in 1891, the father settled in what was later named Lincoln County, and served as Deputy Marshal with the late Bill Tilghman in Oklahoma Territory during President Cleveland's second administration.

George Adrian Smith received his education in the common schools in Indiana and Illinois, supplemented by study in the Normal School at Iola, Kansas. Soon after he was eighteen years of age, he began to teach school during a part of the fall and winter months in Kansas and worked at saw-mills in summer months. He came with his father to Guthrie at the opening of Oklahoma country in 1889, and at the opening of the Sac and Fox reservation in 1891, he settled in what is now Lincoln County. He taught school in the county until 1896 when he was elected on the Democratic ticket as Clerk of Lincoln County, serving in that position until 1899.

On March 25, 1902, he was married to Emma Florence Christy who was the daughter of James Lowthan and Mary Elizabeth (Norris) Christy. They were the parents of four children who survive them: Mrs. Logan Boggs, 1332 North Harrison, Shawnee; Mrs. Fred M. Winn, 1315 South Carson, Tulsa; Mrs. Charles J. Zimmerman, 70 Mohawk Drive, West Hart-

ford, Connecticut; and Olin G. Smith, Joliet Arsenal, Joliet, Illinois. A grandson, Minor F. Winn, was an Ensign in the United States Navy in World War II.

In 1901, George Adrian Smith entered the journalistic field at Chandler in the purchase of newspaper interests which founded the *Chandler Tribune* in 1902, as a Democratic weekly. A daily edition (except Sunday) was started in 1905, and two years later a semi-weekly was issued, with a wide circulation, Mr. Smith's able editorship developing and sustaining the *Tribune* as an influential organ of public opinion for many years. He was a member of the Oklahoma Press Association of which he was elected President for the term of 1912-13.

A leader in civic and in State affairs, he was nominated on the Democratic ticket, and elected and served as Assessor of Lincoln County in 1907. In January, 1915, he was elected Secretary of the Commissioners of the State Land Office, which position he held for over two years, until June 1, 1917, when he was appointed as State Fish and Game Warden of the Commissioner. He held this position until January, 1919, and shortly afterward (February, 1919) he became Assistant State Treasurer, a position he held until January, 1923, when he retired from public office.

He subsequently located on a farm near Fort Gibson where he operated a dairy for a number of years. He and his wife were leaders in community affairs, and, as members of the Christian Church, they aided in organizing and teaching a rural Sunday School near Fort Gibson. He later exchanged his farm and dairy for an apartment house in Muskogee, which he sold, and, after he was seventy years old, removed to Shawnee which was his home to the close of his life. He was a member of the Woodman of the World and of the Elk's Club, and served as Secretary of the '89er Club in Shawnee. At his death on October 18, 1946, his remains were interred in the cemetery at Shawnee, by the side of his wife who died on June 7, 1946.

George Adrian Smith devoted many years of his life in Oklahoma to civic work and to public service, and throughout his career as educator, businessman, agriculturalist, journalist, and public servant, he had demonstrated powers of will, of intelligence and decision, and quickness and accuracy of judgment. He was a good husband and father in all his duties to his wife and children, and a fine citizen.

By ROBERT L. WILLIAMS

Durans, Oklahoma

FLETCHER MARVIN JOHNSON

1891-1946

Marvin Fletcher Johnson, son of C. G. Johnson and his wife, Susan (Cline) Johnson, the fourteenth of a family of sixteen children, was born December 1, 1891, at Milport, Lamar County, Alabama.

He came to Oklahoma and lived with his brother, Dr. G. L. Johnson, at Pauls Valley when he was a boy and went to school at Pauls Valley where he completed the high school course. He attended the State University at Norman and received a degree, and then entered the Cumberland University at Lebanon, Tennessee, where he completed the one-year law course and received an L.L.B. degree in January, 1917. He was admitted to the Bar in Tennessee and, also, in Oklahoma. He served as Second Lieutenant of Field Artillery in World War I, for eighteen months.

In 1921, he located at Bristow where he engaged in the practice of law and was known as one of the best speakers in the Democratic Party. He was elected State Senator from the Senatorial District comprising Creek and Payne counties, in 1926, for the term that would expire in 1930.

He was a Blue Lodge Mason of the Lodge at Bristow, a Scottish Rite Mason (32nd Degree) of the Guthrie Consistory, a member of the Oklahoma City Shrine, and a member of the Knights of Pythias at Bristow. He was a member and an Elder of the Christian Church at Bristow and for many years was an enthusiastic worker of the Laymen's Affairs of the Brotherhood. He was one of the organizers of the First Laymen's League in Oklahoma and had just retired as President of the organization. He was also a member of the Lions' Club and of the Elks' Club, and Legion Commander of the Post at Bristow at the time of his death on August 25, 1946. His funeral services were conducted in the First Christian Church with interment in the Oak Crest Memorial Park under the director of Sullivan Funeral Home.

He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Maxine (Massie) Johnson, of 129 Northwest 19th St., Oklahoma City, whom he married on July 15, 1929, and the following brothers and sisters: J. Andrew Johnson, Vernon, Alabama; Dr. G. L. Johnson, Pauls Valley, Oklahoma; Sardis M. Johnson, Fayette, Alabama; Mrs. H. D. Varnon, Mrs. G. E. Miller, Mrs. M. G. Smith, all of Millport, Lamar County, Alabama, and Mrs. J. Carl Chandler, Birmingham, Alabama. Another brother, Hobart Johnson survived him but died on October 22, 1946.

Marvin Fletcher Johnson was a faithful and devoted husband and son, and a faithful citizen.

By ROBERT L. WILLIAMS

Durant, Oklahoma

JOHN P. CONNORS

1852-1942

John P. Connors was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on January 25, 1857, and died on September 7, 1942, on his farm near Canadian, Oklahoma, with interment in Oak Hill Cemetery in McAlester. He was the son of John Connors and his wife, Annie (Egen) Connors, who had come from Tipperary, Ireland, and settled in St. Louis. John Connors, the father, was born in Tipperary, Ireland, in 1827, and died in St. Louis in 1895. The children of Mr. and Mrs. John Connors were John P. Connors, the subject of this sketch; Mary who married a man by the name of Donnelly, of St. Louis; Patrick who resided in St. Louis; Annie who was connected with St. John's Hospital in said city; Michael of Fort Collins, Colorado; Alice, a teacher in St. Louis, and Edward of Oakland, California.

John P. Connors attended school in St. Louis and acquired the foundation of a fair education. His experience of twenty-five years and information gained by several years of service as an official in the Choctaw Nation furnished him a wide range of opportunity for a practical education and the coming of statehood for Oklahoma found him equipped for public service.

Before he came to the Choctaw Nation in 1880, he was employed for some months as a contractor with a bridge construction company in Monroe, Louisiana, and later he engaged in the brick business in Fort Worth, Texas. In the Choctaw Nation, he was first an employee of the Teoc Lumber of McAlester, and then engaged in ranching and farming in Gaines

County, Choctaw Nation, and later was a stockman in Tobucksy County. He was also connected with the banking business in Canadian for many years.

In 1882, Mr. Connors married Miss Fannie Anderson, daughter of Daniel Anderson, a prominent farmer and citizen of the Choctaw Nation, whose father was a white man and mother was a Choctaw woman. Mrs. Connors died in 1894. Mr. and Mrs. Connors were the parents of Ed Connors, of Quinton, Oklahoma; Daniel Connors, of Shawnee; and Misses Cora and Fannie Connors. Mr. Connors was married a second time, his second wife being Mrs. Aran Cook, daughter of Benjamin Jones, a Choctaw, whose wife was a Cherokee. To this second marriage were born the following children: William, J. B., Annie, Pat, Mike, Aran (who married C. L. Priddy, Vice President of the National Bank of McAlester), Ruth and Ada Connors.

Through his marriage, Mr. Connors was a citizen of the Choctaw Nation where he soon became prominent for his own judgment and ability and was influential in public affairs. In 1893, he moved to the Canadian Valley in Tobucksy County, adjoining the town of Canadian, where his family took their allotments of land in the Choctaw Nation and where his principal work as a farmer and stockman had been conducted. He learned to speak the Choctaw language fluently and was elected County Clerk and afterward, County Judge of Tobucksy County. He was a member of the Oklahoma Historical Society in later life,¹ and the old Choctaw Indian courthouse in which he held court in early days is still standing near the Jefferson Highway north of McAlester, having been preserved within recent years as a historic shrine through the sponsorship of the Ohoyohoma Club of Indian women, of McAlester.

With the erection of the State of Oklahoma, as a member of the Democratic Party, he was selected as President of the State Board of Agriculture and became one of the commissioners of the Land Office and a member of the Board of Regents of all the State agricultural and mechanical colleges, the Connors State Agricultural College at Warner, Oklahoma, being named in his honor. Also, by legislative enactment, Judge Connors served as member of the Board of Prison Control, of the State Board of Pardons, and of the State Banking Board.²

Later he was elected and served as a County Commissioner of Pittsburg County (which included old Tobucksy County), Oklahoma, and was always active in farmers' organizations. For many years, he was a Contributing Editor of the *Oklahoma Farmer-Stockman* published in Oklahoma City, in which his interesting "Poor Lo" articles, written in the broken English of an Oklahoma Indian, were read regularly by nearly 150,000 farm families.³

Judge Connors was always proud of having been connected with public affairs in the Choctaw Nation and, one time in relating his experiences, he

¹ *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. VI, No. 1 (March, 1929), p. 248.

² *A History of the State of Oklahoma* by Luther B. Hill with the assistance of local authorities (Chicago and New York: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1909), Vol. II, p. 242; *Constitution of Oklahoma*, Article 6, Sections 31 and 32.

³ *No Weak Links*, a pamphlet giving a resume of the accomplishments of the *Oklahoma Farmer-Stockman* under the guidance of Carl Williams, Editor, published by the Oklahoma Publishing Company in 1924; *The Daily Oklahoman*, December 8, 1943; *The Eufaula Republican*, November 29, 1907, p. 7; *The Indian Journal, Eufaula*, December 15, 1905, p. 1 and July 31, 1908, p. 1; *The Oklahoma City Times*, July 1, 1909, p. 10; *The State of Oklahoma, Its Men and Institutions*, published by *The Daily Oklahoman*, 1908.

said: "I have always prided myself on my good standing with the Indians. They are a great race, and I have always loved them for the sterling qualities which I know to be inherent in them."⁴ With his passing, the State of Oklahoma lost a good citizen, one who had had an important and responsible part in the formative period of statehood.

By ROBERT L. WILLIAMS

Durant, Oklahoma

BLANCHE BOWMAN LITTLE

1858-1943

Blanche Bowman Little was born on August 17, 1858, at Edgington, Rock Island County, Illinois, the daughter of Major Edward Hale Bowman, M.D., and his wife, Elizabeth Ann (Byles) Bowman who was born at Ashford, Connecticut. Major Bowman (1816-1893) was a surgeon in the 27th Illinois Volunteer Infantry in the Union Army during the War between the States, and participated in eighteen engagements, receiving the surrender of Island No. 10 from the Confederate forces. After the War, Major Bowman was agent for the Pawnee Indians at the Pawnee Indian Agency, Indian Territory. An advocate of allotment of tribal lands to individual Indians, he was authorized by the U.S. Indian Office to carry out such a program among the Pawnees and subsequently completed fifty-two allotments in the tribe, the first allotments of Indian lands in the Indian Territory. Major Bowman's father was Andrew Bowman, Ensign under the command of Captain Oliver Hazard Perry in the Battle of Lake Erie during the War of 1812.

Blanche Bowman Little was the wife of William Rea Little whom she married on January 1, 1883. They were the parents of two children: Andrew W. Little who is an attorney at Cushing, Oklahoma; and Mrs. Alice T. Johnson whose residence is 1030 N.E. Emerson St., Portland, 11, Oregon. A grandson, Richard William Johnson, son of Alice T. and John I. Johnson, of Portland, Oregon, served as Staff Sergeant, 6th Traffic Regulating Group, T.C., U. S. Army, in the European Theatre of Operations during World War II.

Mrs. Little was a graduate of Cook County Normal School (now Chicago) and did further study and training work in the Illinois State University, in the Chicago Art Institute, and in the Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York. After her graduation, Mrs. Little taught in the Pawnee Indian School at the Pawnee Agency and later was head clerk at the Agency. It was here that she met her future husband, William Rea Little.

He was a native of Illinois and had been first employed at the Pawnee Indian Agency in charge of the government herd of cattle on the Pawnee Reservation and afterward was chief clerk of the commissary at the Agency. He resigned this position in 1882 and secured a government, trading license in the Sac and Fox Indian Reservation, Indian Territory, now a part of Payne County, Oklahoma. Mr. and Mrs. Little made their home at the Sac and Fox Agency until 1887 when they moved to Kansas. Two years later, they made their home at Guthrie where Mr. Little had gone into business after making the run at the time of the opening of the Oklahoma Country on April 22, 1889. On September 22, 1891, Mr. Little made the run at the opening of the Sac and Fox Reservation and settled on his homestead claim, the north eighty acres of which is now known as the original town of Cushing, Oklahoma. Soon after moving to this lo-

⁴ *The Tulsa Daily World* for Sunday, September 14, 1930.

cation, lumber was hauled from Guthrie and Mr. and Mrs. Little built their home just across from where the City Hall of Cushing now stands. Mr. Little was founder of Cushing and his son, Andrew W. Little, has recently served as mayor of that city.

Mrs. Little was the first Oklahoma woman active for suffrage for women when the First Territorial Legislative Assembly met in Guthrie, Oklahoma Territory, in 1890-91. She served as a state delegate to the International Suffrage Alliance at Paris, France, in 1926. She was a member of the Episcopal Church. She was a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution, of the United States Daughters of the War of 1812, of the National Society of Daughters of American Colonists, and was eligible to the Daughters of Colonial Governors through her ancestor Governor Byles of Maryland. She was a member of the White Shrine of Jerusalem and honorary member of the Oklahoma Pioneer Club, Eastern Star. Interested in preserving the history of Oklahoma, she was a member of the 89'ers of Oklahoma and a life member of the Oklahoma Historical Society. In public life, Mrs. Little was best known as "Blanche E. Little," her middle name "Elizabeth" having been given for her grandmother, Elizabeth Ann Bowman.

She had specialized in art and drawing as a teacher and, in later life, was known as a journalist and writer until her death at Portland, Oregon, on July 29, 1943. She wrote for the *New York School Journal* for a number of years, did book review work for several publishers, and was best known in Oklahoma as the author of "Mistletoe," "The Miracle Tree," and other works.

By MURIEL H. WRIGHT.

Oklahoma Historical Society.