

## NECROLOGY

ETHEL BREWER McMILLAN

1879—1954

It is a privilege to meet and know a rare personality who inspires the best in every contact yet often the import of this association is not realized until years later. Countless numbers of students, teachers and patrons were privileged to know "Miss McMillan" during the years that she served in the public school in the Indian Territory and Oklahoma. Many men and women today, from coast to coast, are successful citizens because of the encouragement that she gave them financially and spiritually as boys and girls, for she always inspired youth to develop the best of their potentialities.

Ethel Brewer McMillan was the daughter of J. J. McMillan and Lucy Earnshaw McMillan, who made their home at Dover, Mason County, Kentucky where she was born on October 25, 1879. Her mother was a native of Yorkshire, England. Mr. McMillan owned and operated a coal yard and elevator in the small town of Dover, which was situated on the main line of the C. & O. Railroad and on the Ohio River. He was a successful dealer shipping mostly by boat on the river. Ethel idolized her older brother, Earnshaw, who was the son of her father's first wife. He and her half-sister, Anna Mae, both died in their early twenties, unmarried. Mr. McMillan's second wife, Ethel's mother, passed away at the birth of the second daughter when Ethel was five years old. She adored this little sister, Jennie, and later Jennie's son, Bob, was the joy of her life.

Ethel graduated from the Midway Girls' School in Woodford County, Kentucky, with outstanding honors. Miss Lizzie Corbin, Principal of the Midway School, was the inspiration of Ethel's girlhood, and had a deep influence on her life. Miss McMillan's teaching career began in the country schools around Dover. She also taught one year in a mountain school in Eastern Kentucky.

Her higher education included two summers at Teachers' College, Valparaiso, Indiana; two summers at the University of Colorado; a summer at Chicago University; a B.A. degree from the University of Oklahoma, and a M.E. degree from Columbia University, New York. During the summer of 1930, she travelled in Europe and, when not attending school, she travelled much in the United States, thus broadening her fine educational advantages.

Ethel McMillan came to Purcell, Indian Territory, as a young teacher, in February, 1907, and was still serving as a pioneer teacher when Oklahoma became a state in November of the same year. During her two and one-half years at Purcell, she became vitally interested in Indian women and wrote about them. She also worked with many of the Indian teachers in the Indian schools, and admired them greatly for their sacrificial and missionary spirit.

She came to Oklahoma City in 1910 at the opening of Culbertson School, as the seventh grade teacher. Since the street car on Thirteenth Street turned north at Lincoln, she walked the blocks east to the school through many frightening, dark evenings and mornings. She served as assistant principal of the old Lowell School for two and one-half years, and as principal of Hawthorne School for about one and one-half years.

In 1919, she became principal of Culbertson, and continued as one of Oklahoma City's outstanding, school leaders in this position until she retired in the spring of 1947.

She was a faithful member of St. Luke's Methodist Church in Oklahoma City. As a member of Chapter V of P.E.O., she served on the interviewing committee for recruiting girls to attend Cottey College of Nevada, Missouri. She was also associated in Oklahoma City with the "Friends of the Library," the League of Women Voters, the Y.W.C.A., Women's Dinner Club and Delta Kappa Gamma, a national honorary society for women educators. She was a member of all the local, state and national professional organizations for teachers, contributing not only funds but influence.

Because of her appreciation of the contributions of other lives, she found pleasure in research for historical data for her writings. Among those printed were the "History of the Methodist Church" of Dover, Kentucky, and the "History of the Carnegie Library" of Oklahoma City. As a member of the Oklahoma Historical Society, she contributed to *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* valuable articles including "Pioneer Women Teachers, 1820-60" (Vol. XXVII, No. 1, Spring, 1949); and "The First National Indian Training School: The Choctaw Academy" (Vol. XXVIII, No. 1, Summer, 1950). She collected much of the data and secured many fine photographs of the site of this famous Indian School at Blue Spring on a special trip to Kentucky. In the research for her sketch on "Lucy Gage: Founder of Oklahoma's Kindergartens" that appeared in *The Chronicles* (Vol. XXIX, No. 3, Autumn, 1951), Miss McMillan made a fine addition to the history of education in the State.

Her contributions to the Oklahoma City public schools were inestimable. When she retired, the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce presented her with a Life Membership, and the Oklahoma City Board of Education awarded her a Citation of Merit.

She died on December 31, 1954, in Oklahoma City. The funeral services were conducted at the St. Luke's Methodist Church, by Dr. McFerren W. Stowe; the burial was at Dover, Kentucky. She is survived by her nephew, Robert Lear, and his wife, Sue, of Enid, Oklahoma; by a cousin, Mrs. J. D. Thomas, of Oklahoma City; and by her long time friend, Miss Martha Straight, with whom she had lived at 31 N.W. 14th Street, Oklahoma City, for many years. The Board of Education of the Oklahoma City Public Schools paid tribute to Miss McMillan's memory in a formal document of appreciation and sympathy which was sent to her nephew.

Ethel McMillan was a woman with keen insight, unusual perception and a remarkable gift of expression. Her description of the necessary characteristics for a pioneer teacher gives her own qualifications:

"Patience under trial, judgment under stress, industry under fatigue and cheerful outlook under discouragement—all in such balance as to exemplify attainment which a people eager for a better life would desire, and so blended as to accomplish the acceptance of the teachings of the Master Teacher.

"Yet who shall say she is gone? Does not her spirit still descend from teacher to learner? And those so imbued dare not falter lest that heritage which brings youth into the realization of its best be lost. Thus the mission that is America is preserved."

—Floy Campbell