NEW OFFICERS OF THE OKLAHOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

By Elmer L. Fraker

"What manner of man is he?" This question often is asked concerning a man who has distinguished himself in some particular field, or fields, yet has remained modest and unassuming. Such is the case of Colonel George H. Shirk, newly elected President of the Oklahoma Historical Society.

Colonel Shirk is an outstanding member of the bar, and a member of the firm of Withington, Shirk, Nichols, and Work, Oklahoma City. He was born in Oklahoma City on May 1, 1913, and has always maintained his residence in the city of his birth.

The new President of the Oklahoma Historical Society received his early education in the public schools of Oklahoma City, graduating from Central High School in 1930. His college work was done at the University of Oklahoma where he received his A. B. degree in 1935 and his L. L. B. in 1936. While at the University, he was a member of Phi Delta Phi, honorary legal fraternity, and Scabbard and Blade, honorary collegiate military order. His social fraternity is Phi Delta Theta.

Immediately after graduation, he was admitted to the bar and practiced law until called to active duty in the military forces in November of 1940. His initial military assignment, while holding the rank of First Lieutenant, was Adjutant of the R. O. T. C. unit at the University of Oklahoma. In August of 1941, he was promoted to Captain.

May of 1941 found him on duty in London, England at the newly formed headquarters of the United States Army. Here he was assigned to G-1 Section of the General Staff. Later he was detailed for duty with the General Staff Corps, and served in that headquarters throughout World War II. In March of 1945, he was promoted to full Colonel by General Dwight D. Eisenhower. For his distinguished military service, Colonel Shirk received the Legion of Merit, the bronze star medal, and was decorated by General Charles DeGaulle when created Chevalier of Legion of Honor.

Since the war, Colonel Shirk has been actively engaged in the practice of law with the sideline of studying and writing history. His interest in history has led him into active membership in the Oklahoma Historical Society where he has served as a member of the Board of Directors since January
26, 1950. He has particularly distinguished himself as Chairman of the Historic Sites Committee which has done an outstanding piece of work in getting this new program of the Society in working order, as established by the last Legislature. In 1957, he was elected to the treasurership of the Historical Society. He became President when elected to this position by the Board of Directors on April 24, 1958.

Colonel Shirk is actively interested in many organizations and projects. He is a member of the Lutheran Church, a 32nd degree Mason, and member of India Temple, Royal Order of Jesters, life member of the University of Oklahoma Alumni Association, Past President Oklahoma Philatelic Society, and Colonel in the U. S. Army Reserve. His civic activities include service as Vice President of the Oklahoma City Safety Council; former member, Oklahoma City Police Commission; Chairman, Mayor's Citizen Committee on Civic Improvements; member, Mayor's Committee for Police Welfare Study; and member Drafting Committee, Mayor's Charter Commission, which resulted in creation of the present Oklahoma City Charter.

For First Vice President of the Oklahoma Historical Society, the Board of Directors chose H. Milt Phillips, a prominent and widely known native Oklahoman who is a veteran of both World War I and World War II. He is publisher of the Seminole Daily Producer, and has long been active in civic, veterans, and newspaper work.

Mr. Phillips has just completed a year as President of the University of Oklahoma Alumni Association, and is a former President of the Oklahoma Press Association. At present, he is serving as a member of the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority.

A man of unusual energy and decision, Mr. Phillips, down through the years, has served on innumerable boards and commissions of both public and private nature. Among the members of the newspaper profession he is known for his forthrightness, and this characteristic is made manifest in the pointed editorials he writes for his daily newspaper in Seminole.

Mr. Phillips has been a member of the Board of Directors of the Oklahoma Historical Society since January 6, 1950. He was a leader in helping secure the microfilming department for the Oklahoma Historical Society and has been largely instrumental in the development of this agency to one of importance among the Society's activities. He continues to serve as Chairman of the Microfilm Committee.

For Second Vice President, the Board reelected Judge Baxter Taylor, in point of service, Dean of the Board of Directors of the Oklahoma Historical Society. The accomplish-
ments and activities of Judge Taylor, as a member of the Board with the longest term of service, are well known. No man in Oklahoma has been more devoted, nor rendered greater service, to the promotion and welfare of the Oklahoma Historical Society than has Judge Baxter Taylor. He became a member of the Board in January of 1920.

Mrs. Edna Bowman of Kingfisher, was chosen by the Board of Directors to take the place of Colonel Shirk as Treasurer for the Society. Mrs. Bowman is well known as a leader in women's clubs and other similar activities. At the present time she is State Recording Secretary of PEO.

Mrs. Bowman became a member of the Board of Directors of the Oklahoma Historical Society in 1957. She has, however, been closely connected with the Society for a great many years through the fact that her husband, the late Judge George L. Bowman, was a long time and distinguished member of the Board.

She is a native Oklahoman, having been born on a farm southwest of Kingfisher. She graduated from Kingfisher High School in 1924, and received her B. A. degree from the University of Oklahoma in 1928. For a time she was a student at Oklahoma City University and has done graduate work at the University of Colorado and at Columbia University. Among organizations to which Mrs. Bowman belongs are the order of the Eastern Star, Methodist-Congregational Church, Kappa Delta Pi, University of Oklahoma Alumni Association, Oklahoma Memorial Association, and PEO. Her social sorority is Alpha Chi Omega.