

NARRATIVE TEXTS

Annie Webb Blanton, Teacher and Politician, 1870-1945

Annie Webb Blanton was the first woman to win election to statewide office in Texas, at a time when women had newly gained the right to vote in primaries but were still barred from voting in general elections. With a teacher's verve and moral stature, she filled the office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction from 1918 to 1922, instituting free distribution of textbooks, revising certification requirements, raising educators' salaries, and expanding the scope of rural education.¹

Annie had graduated from high school in La Grange and supported herself by teaching in public schools while attending The University of Texas at Austin. She graduated in 1899, then joined the English faculty of North Texas State Normal College in Denton. While in Denton she authored several grammar textbooks, joined women's organizations, and rose to head the Texas State Teachers' Association. When Texas suffragists realized that they had a political friend in Governor William Hobby, they sponsored Annie's candidacy for superintendent. After a hard campaign, she defeated her opponent in the Democratic primary and subsequently sailed to victory in the general election.

Annie served two terms as state superintendent, followed by an unsuccessful run for U.S. Congress. In 1922 she returned to The University of Texas at Austin to enroll in a master's program. A year later, with the degree in hand, she began teaching at this institution. Annie took a year's leave of absence (1926-1927) to complete her Ph.D. at Cornell but afterwards came home to UT Austin, where she taught in the Education Department for the rest of her life. She achieved the title of full professor, only the third female UT Austin faculty member to garner that distinction.²

In 1929 Annie founded Delta Kappa Gamma, an honor society for women teachers. She stressed professionalism to the group, calling for leaders "of strong personality, unimpeachable honor, unselfish nature and fine professional attitude."² Annie is remembered as a warm, caring teacher who inspired her students by example.³



Quotations

The personal qualities most impressive in Miss Blanton's character—sincerity, candor, courage, loyalty—were matched by her remarkable power of concentration. . . . It was this quality of true friendliness that endeared her to her students.—From a commemoration of Annie Webb Blanton the year following her death⁴

Everything that helps wear away age-old prejudices contributes to the advancement of women and of humanity.
—Annie Webb Blanton⁵

Women teachers to the calling

Firmly rally, never falling

Duty ne're upon us palling

Staunch, courageous, we!

Loyalty and trust e'er heeding,

Mindful of our sisters needing

Aid and guidance from those leading,

Helpful we may be!

To Delta Kappa Gamma

Faith we pledge forever!

Hand in hand, our loyal band,

Forward moving ever!

Onward! 'tis our sisters need us,

Courage, Faith and Honor lead us!

Wrongs in truth and justice heed us!

Firmly we shall stand!

—Anthem of Delta Kappa Gamma honor society
Words by Annie Webb Blanton⁶

Photo

University of North Texas, Denton
(formerly North Texas Normal College).

Endnotes

¹ Sources for biographical information in this article are "The Battle Lost—And Won," *Votes for Women: The Women's Suffrage Movement in Texas*, online exhibit, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, <http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/exhibits/suffrage/victory/page2.html> (April 27, 2005); Debbie Mauldin Cottrell, "Blanton, Annie Webb," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/BB/fbl16.html> (April 27, 2005); Lisa Woods, "Scaling Walls," *The North Texan Online*, Summer 2002, University of North Texas, <http://www.unt.edu/northtexan/archives/s02/scaling.htm> (April 27, 2005); "In Memoriam: Annie Webb Blanton," General Faculty of The University of Texas, filed June 11, 1946, www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/2000-2001/memorials/SCANNED/blanton.pdf (April 27, 2005).

² Quote by Annie Webb Blanton found in Dr. Elizabeth Tarner, "Remarks to Second General Session: Revival Within—Professionalism," Virginia Iota State Board Meeting, Sept. 30, 2003, online <http://www.iotastate.org/Professionalism.pdf> (January 9, 2006).

³ Dr. Margaret C. Berry, "Professors Who Made a Difference," *Discovery Magazine* 14:4 (July 16, 1997), online <http://www.utexas.edu/opa/pubs/discovery/disc1997v14n4/disc-profs.html> (January 9, 2006); "Founders," Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, <http://24.221.80.67/www-dkg/founders.htm> (January 9, 2006).

⁴ "In Memoriam: Annie Webb Blanton," General Faculty of The University of Texas, online.

⁵ Quote found in Wood, "Scaling Walls," *The North Texan Online*.

⁶ "The Delta Kappa Gamma Song," Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, pub. 1960, online <http://www.deltakappagamma.org/NJ/song.html> (May 3, 2005).

⁷ "In Memoriam: Annie Webb Blanton," General Faculty of The University of Texas, online.