

NECROLOGY  
MRS. VIRGIL BROWNE  
1881—1963

Maimie Lee Robinson Browne was a dynamic person and her record of accomplishments reads like fiction. She was a leader in the field of education and public welfare in three states in which she lived—Texas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma—establishing many wonderful and practical projects. It is difficult to imagine how one person could have brought to fruition so much for the good of humanity, especially the home and the child. Her energies were endless, and her boundless enthusiasm awakened the interest of others to assist in her love of helping and doing for others. Service was truly her life and though her dreams were often hard tasks they were overcome by her deep faith in God.

Maimie Lee Robinson was born in Pittsburg, Texas on March 3, 1881, daughter of John Edwin and Margaret Rebecca (nee Murrell) Robinson, on April 3, 1901. She married Virgil Browne of Mont Pleasant, Texas. Their six children are Margaret Elizabeth (Mrs. Killie C. Reese), Tulsa; Virgil Browne, Jr., Wichita, Kansas; Kelsey Lee (Mrs. James P. Evans, Jr.) Jackson, Miss.; Henry William Browne, Alice Browne Alspaugh; and John Robinson Browne, Oklahoma City.

After her marriage, her first interests were her home, her church (Presbyterian) and Sunday School class; the Inter-denominational Bible Class, where books of the Bible were dramatized; the Bible-Browsing Class; and the Ladies Music Club, until her growing family of six children attracted her attention to the value of the National Congress of Parent-Teacher Associations in Public Schools. Her outstanding activity at this time was to initiate a program on "Thrift" which grew so in popularity that she was invited to plan an hour program on "Thrift" for the County Teachers Association. Following this the District President of Texas P.T.A., invited her to appear on the District Program where she made her first public address in Gainesville, Texas. Next she was appointed State Chairman of a Special Committee on Thrift at the State P.T.A. Convention in Houston, Texas. She presided over the first "High School Mothers Section" (now known as "Teen Age Problems"). The State Thrift Program developed into establishment of school savings banks in the public schools, and planned ways for children to earn money to start savings accounts, even to the wholesale sales of magazines and papers, requiring the children to put half of their earnings into their own accounts. This was the first public school savings in the South (1914).

The Browns moved to New Orleans in 1916 where Mrs. Browne established school savings in the public schools with the cooperation of the Chamber of Commerce and ten banks that opened accounts for the school students. When Secretary McAdoo held a conference to establish Federal Land Banks, Mrs. Browne was invited to the hearing. Because of her interests in schools and savings, she was appointed a member of the Council of National Defense, and represented Louisiana at three National Defense meetings. When World War I ended, Mrs. Browne interested a leading life insurance company in Louisiana to write the first "College Education Life Insurance Policy," a safe investment for school savers providing paid in advance for college education, a policy that parents or guardians could pay out during the child's attendance in the State's public school thus assuring a college education after high school graduation.



**MRS. VIRGIL BROWNE**

As State Chairman of the Americanization Committee for the Louisiana State Federation of Women's Clubs, Mrs. Browne had the privilege of planning and presiding over a "Citizenship Ceremonial" in the U. S. Court Room in New Orleans in February, 1922, with three Federal Judges on the bench. The Naturalization Examiner presented 150 new American citizens their citizenship papers. All patriotic societies of the City were represented and participated, even the high school senior classes in Government and History had a place on the program. This was the first ceremony of the kind ever held in a U. S. Federal Court Room. Now, after forty years, such ceremonies are held in practically every Court where new citizens receive their naturalization papers, and are welcomed by State officials and representatives of home, church and school.

Mrs. Browne organized the Louisiana Congress of Parents and Teachers, and had the honor of being one of the National founders. Mr. and Mrs. Browne moved their family to Oklahoma City in 1923 where she helped in the organization of the State Congress of P. T. A., serving as First Vice President. She established Parent Education Classes in the Oklahoma City public schools. She was an active member of a number of civic and religious organization boards. She served as General Chairman of the Oklahoma City Beautification Committee for the Chamber of Commerce, and in 1935 through her efforts the Red Bud was made the State Tree of Oklahoma, by action of the State Legislature.

Mrs. Browne was deeply interested and served as an active member or officer in many national patriotic organizations, including the Society of Mayflower Descendants, Daughters of Colonial Wars, First Families of Virginia, Daughters of American Colonists, Magna Carta Dames, United Daughters of the Confederacy, Ancient Artillery, and Robinson, Tupper and Nye genealogical societies. She became a member of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1925, and from that time served successively as a committee chairman or officer including State Regent and National Vice President General. While she was State Librarian of D. A. R. in 1945, her leadership initiated the D. A. R. Memorial Library bookcases which were built on the west wall of the Library Reading Room of the Oklahoma Historical Society. The plan for financing this project and the final erection of these beautiful mahogany, floor-to-ceiling bookcases proved such a success that a surplus of \$1,600 was realized and used to purchase additional books. This fine collection of books on genealogy with volumes added every year by the State D. A. R. and its local chapters in Oklahoma makes this one of the best genealogical libraries west of the Mississippi River. Mrs. Browne was a promoter in organizing the Children of the American Revolution in the National D. A. R.

It was when she was President of the Oklahoma City Federation of Women's Clubs in 1926-1932 (she served again in 1954-55) that Mrs. Virgil Browne will be remembered for her "Week for Education on Colonial America" when she borrowed a colonial type home and planned daily programs for her D. A. R. Chapter in Oklahoma City. The colonial house was filled for a week with the "Handicraft of Women's Work & Quilt Festival."

Mrs. Browne was the recipient of many honors. She was an honoree inducted by the "Oklahoma Hall of Fame" in 1936, this annual ceremonial sponsored by the Oklahoma Memorial Association in Oklahoma City. She was named "Oklahoma Mother of the Year" in 1961, afterward serving on the Board of this national organization.

Members of Oklahoma State Writers to which she belonged will always remember the annual meetings of the group and their friends when special music and the reading of poetry and special talks on writing made up the program, given in Mrs. Virgil Brown's lovely home on North May Avenue and Memorial Road, Cedar Lakes (now Quail Creek). After her death on June 11, 1963, her family published a charming book to her memory: *Red Bud in Poetry*, verse by many writers as well as her own on the red bud, collected by Maimie Lee Robinson Browne.

Vision and the determination and will to carry her dreams to completion marked the personality of Mrs. Virgil Browne. She saw her opportunities, and since enthusiasm engenders enthusiasm in others, many people around her caught the gleam and became active, too, so naturally her visions were realized. She had passed the age of eighty-two years and sixty-two, of marriage at the time of her death. Yet she was still working on projects to help others. A truly great and remarkable Lady was Maimie Lee Robinson Browne.

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

—Alice Browne Allspaugh