

(1)

GAMMA CHAPTER

Little Rock, Arkansas

Annie Griffey

Annie Griffey, the youngest of five children, was born at Clarksville, Tennessee, on November 21, 1868. At the age of twelve years she came to Little Rock, Arkansas, to live with her sister, Mrs. C. R. Lovell. She attended the Little Rock schools, was graduated from the Little Rock Senior High School, and further studied at Harvard and the University of Chicago. Her teaching career began as a practice teacher in one of the Little Rock elementary schools. Later she had a private school in her home, but soon returned to the Little Rock Public Schools. She was elevated to a supervisory capacity during a steady flow of promotions, which brought her wide recognition as one of the best informed persons on education in the state of Arkansas. In 1929 she became assistant superintendent, which position she held until her death.

Miss Griffey held the post of president of the Arkansas Education Association in 1924 and was one of two women ever to be elevated to that position, the other woman being Dr. Ida Joe Brooks of this city. She also served as recording secretary and treasurer of the Association. She was state director of the National Education

Association for five years and was elected one of its vice-presidents in San Francisco in 1923. Her service in educational fields also included six terms on the National Education Association Legislative Committee of the Little Rock Teachers' Council and the Arkansas Education Association.

On March 30, 1917, Miss Giffey was unanimously elected secretary of the Arkansas Education Association after Dr. Ida Joe Brooks took the floor in behalf of Miss Giffey and made an eloquent speech for woman suffrage and urged that the men give way for women, who, she said, were far superior. Her speech brought laughter from the teachers and resulted in the withdrawal of the names of Mr. Ferguson and Mr. Harrison, and Miss Giffey was declared elected by a unanimous vote.

She was the founder of the Woman Teacher's Association and organized the local branch of American Childhood Education. The Woman Teacher's Association was organized in 1910 at the Little Rock Senior High School with Miss Giffey as its first president. On November 2, 19³⁵, a dinner was given at the Marion Hotel celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Woman Teacher's Association. At this dinner twenty-five silver dollars were given to Miss Giffey by various members of the organization. With this money she purchased an amethyst ring, which she wore from that time on. As part of the program, a character sketch of Miss Giffey was enacted. The impersonator wore a narrow black band of ribbon around her throat, which form of adornment Miss Giffey wore daily even though the fashion had long since passed out of date.

To Miss Giffey also came the honor of being the first woman to be elected to a county board of education.

She served on the Pulaski County Board of Education from 1921 to 1930 and was president of that body from 1926 to 1930.

Among her civic interests Miss Griffey had held the office of vice-chairman of the State Democratic Committee, president of the Woman's Chamber of Commerce, director of the Young Women's Christian Association, and secretary of the Woman's City Club.

Miss Griffey was a state founder of Delta Kappa Gamma, honorary educational sorority, and helped initiate the Gamma Chapter in Little Rock in April, 1938. She was most active on the Membership Committee.

Miss Griffey was a fluent speaker and could always hold her audience regardless of whether that gathering was a school, civic or political group. Her love for speaking began in early childhood when she would gather the children from the neighborhood and preach a sermon from a box, a stump, or some other makeshift pulpit.

Among the many elements that contributed to Miss Griffey's success as an educator was her love for little children and her keen sense of judgment of human nature. Her love for children extended to even the "raggedest" and her ability to see people in their true light enabled her to know dishonest people and to stir them to sincerity and honesty. She made them want to do a good piece of work. Her favorite expression was, "Don't be a ragamuffin".

Courage was perhaps Miss Griffey's chief characteristic. When she felt that right was challenged, she threw

the full strength of her dynamic personality into the conflict. "She wasn't afraid of anything", her friends said. Her courage extended into the physical sphere as well. As an example, she rode a galloping horse when she was quite young. She would ride one that others feared to ride. At an advanced age she learned to drive a car and, until shortly before her death, she drove about her work each day.

Miss Griffey took pleasure in the "wide open spaces" and was a great lover of nature. She knew flowers, birds, and trees, and, as a young girl, she loved to climb trees. Her mother, one of the old school, forbade her to climb because it wasn't ladylike and besides she tore her dresses. When she came to a tree that she wanted to climb she would slip off her dress and drop it at the foot of the tree, climb until she was tired, and then come down and slip into her dress. For a long time her mother was none the wiser.

It is amazing, the many interests enjoyed by Miss Griffey. She liked travel, collect pitchers, loved pets dearly (at one time she had thirteen cats), and found great pleasure in music- both classical and modern.

Miss Griffey was the first woman to receive "an orchid to you" from Tipton & Hurst, florists. She was given this orchid for her years of devoted service to the Little Rock public schools, and for the many fields into which her warm and lively interest had carried her.

Miss Griffey especially rejoiced in training the young inexperienced teachers who came under her supervision, and thus developed some of the best primary teachers now in the Little Rock school system. She campaigned for and secured the appointment of many women as principals. She fought for equal pay for equal work with men and did much to thus equalize the pay status. She went to her eternal rest on March 28, 1944. She was active until the end, being ill only a few days. She is greatly missed, but her spirit lives on in the hearts of all teachers and children who knew her.