

Mrs. Annie M. Moores, later Mrs. John R. Towler, National Bank President

By Karl Sanford Kabelac

ANNIE MCLEAN WAS BORN IN VICTORIA COUNTY, TEXAS IN 1860, the first of nine children of William Pinckney and Margaret (Batte) McLean. Her father had a distinguished career as a lawyer, judge and civic leader, including serving a term in the United States House of Representatives.

The family moved to Mt. Pleasant, Texas about 1865. Mt. Pleasant, the county seat of Titus County, is located in the northeastern part of the state. It was founded in 1846 and by 1885 had a population of 800. Today its population is slightly over 15,000.

In 1881 she married Charles W. Moores, who in 1883 was one of the founders of a private bank in Mt. Pleasant. Another founder was her sister's husband, Charles C. Carr. At Moores' death in 1888, and at the urging of her father and brother-in-law, she became active in the management of the bank.

In 1892, it became a national bank, The First National Bank of Mt. Pleasant (charter # 4722) with Carr as the president. The next year she became president with Carr becoming the cashier. In 1900, Carr again assumed the presidency, and she became a vice president, but with his death in 1905, she again assumed the presidency and served until her death in 1916.

A 1974 biographical account noted that when vice president and later when reassuming the presidency she served in an "inactive capacity."

Early in her banking career, though, she was very much involved with the bank. A newspaper article about her in September 1893 was headlined, "A Lady Bank President. A Texas Woman Who Proved Equal to the Financial Crisis." The article mentions her "winning way and charming expression," but noted there was nothing weak about her. It recounted how she "has proved herself equal to every emergency in the present financial crisis."





A well-circulated Series 1882 \$20 Brown Back on The First National Bank of Mount Pleasant, Texas signed by Mrs Jno R Towler as President. It appears that she had perfected her signature in such a way (see below) that she did not lift the pen from the note until she had finished signing. (Courtesy Heritage Auctions)

A decade later in a 1904 interview she noted she was now quite used to banking and her the bank was very successful, but that “in the panic of 1893 we all of us were nearly worried to death.”

In May 1912, the woman bankers of Texas met as a group for the first time in conjunction with the Texas Bankers Association meeting in San Antonio. She was one of the speakers at this history-making event, her topic being “The Necessity of Married Women Informing Themselves with Regard to Business Matters.”

She was a member of the Board of Lady Managers of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, know today as the St Louis World’s Fair of 1904. Several years later, in July 1907, she married John R. Towler, a St. Louis dry goods merchant. In her later years she was active in St. Louis social circles.

She died in her St. Louis home on February 19, 1916 after a two years’ bout with cancer. Radium treatments at Johns Hopkins University Hospital in Baltimore were said to have extended her life. She had had no children, but had helped bring up the four Carr children at the death of her sister in 1900.

The bank continued until 1929, when it was voluntarily liquidated and reorganized as the First National Bank in Mt. Pleasant.



Sources

Traylor Russell, *Pioneers and Heroes of Titus County* (1974) has a biographical sketch of her (pp. 216-218), her father (pp. 194-197), and her brother-in-law, Charles C. Carr (p. 40-43). The *Philadelphia Inquirer* of September 10, 1893 (and other papers including ones in New Orleans, Los Angeles, New York City) carried an interview of her. An interview in 1904 was carried in the *Los Angeles Times* of September 25, 1904, and slightly abridged in the *Washington Post* of the same date. The 1912 meeting of the woman bankers of Texas was noted in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegraph* of May 5, 1912. Her obituary appeared in the *St. Louis Daily Globe-Democrat* and one with a picture in the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, both for February 20, 1916. Perhaps because of her relative youth and social standing, she received more national press than other early women national bank presidents. Some articles incorrectly stated she was the first woman national bank president. ❖