

### Pioneer Woman Educator: The Progressive Spirit of Annie Webb Blanton (Centennial Series of the Association of Former Students, Texas A&M University)

Debbie Mauldin Cottrell

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"In 1918 Annie Webb Blanton broke the gender barrier in Texas politics when she was elected to head the state's public school system. This victory came despite the fact that women in Texas could not vote in the general election that elevated her to office." Debbie Mauldin Cottrell thus begins the story of a pioneering woman educator, a story of accomplishments on behalf of education and of women that includes years of teaching in public school and university classrooms, the first female presidency of the Texas State Teachers Association, and the founding of an international sorority for teachers, Delta Kappa Gamma.

In this biography of Texas educator Annie Webb Blanton (1870-1945), author Cottrell traces Blanton's rise from teaching in a rural schoolroom in Pine Springs, Texas, to her service as the state's top administrator of public schools and, subsequently, her tenure as a professor of education at the University of Texas. Drawing on archives and interviews with Blanton's surviving relatives and associates, Cottrell depicts Blanton's devotion to Texas schools and to the professionalism of women and analyzes her success in professional and state politics. She places Blanton's accomplishments within the context of Progressive-era reform and of gender issues as they defined and contributed to her work.

In the several phases of her public career, Cottrell demonstrates, Annie Webb Blanton combined traditional and Progressive values in her own distinctive feminist call to her colleagues. By forging one of the first professional networks and articulating a model for reform that was acceptable within the prescribed limits of her day, Blanton opened the higher ranks of the education profession to women across the nation and made a lasting mark on the quality of education in the state of Texas.



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