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**BLANTON, ANNIE WEBB** (1870-1945). Annie Webb Blanton, teacher, suffragist, and the first woman in Texas elected to statewide office, was born on August 19, 1870, in Houston, one of seven children of Thomas Lindsay and Eugenia (Webb) Blanton. Her twin sister, Fannie, died as a girl. A brother, Thomas Lindsay Blanton,<sup>qv</sup> represented central West Texas in the United States Congress from 1917 to 1936. Annie Blanton attended school in Houston and La Grange. After graduating from La Grange High School in 1886, she taught in a rural school in Fayette County. After her father's death in 1888, she moved to Austin, where she taught in both elementary and secondary schools. She supported herself by teaching while studying at the University of Texas, where she graduated in 1899.

From 1901 to 1918 Blanton served on the English faculty of North Texas State Normal College (now the University of North Texas) in Denton, where she became active in the Texas State Teachers Association.<sup>qv</sup> Because she established herself as a strong believer in equal rights for women and also was known for having written a series of grammar textbooks, she was elected president of the association in 1916. She was the first woman to hold this position.

In 1917 Texas suffragists found a sympathetic leader in Gov. William P. Hobby,<sup>qv</sup> after the impeachment of Gov. James Ferguson.<sup>qv</sup> In Hobby's first called legislative session in February 1918 women obtained the right to vote in Texas primaries. The suffragists offered their support to Hobby in his 1918 bid for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination and asked Annie Blanton to run for state superintendent of public instruction. In a bitter campaign, she was accused of being an atheist and of running as a tool for others, but she fought back and charged the incumbent with close associations with the impeached former governor and the breweries. In the July 1918 primary, when Texas women exercised their voting rights for the first time, Blanton defeated incumbent Walter F. Doughty<sup>qv</sup> and Brandon Trussell by a large margin. Her victory in the general election in November made her the first woman in Texas elected to statewide office.

During her tenure as state superintendent a system of free textbooks was established, teacher certification laws were revised, teachers' salaries were raised, and efforts were made to improve rural education. Blanton was reelected in November 1920, when voters also passed the Better Schools Amendment, which she had proposed as a means of removing constitutional limitations on tax rates for local school districts. She served as state superintendent through 1922, when she did not seek a third term but ran unsuccessfully for the United States Congress from Denton County. She subsequently returned to the University of Texas, where she received her master's

degree in 1923. She taught in the UT education department until 1926, then took a leave of absence to earn her Ph.D. from Cornell University. After returning to the University of Texas in 1927, she remained a professor of education there for the rest of her life.

Blanton published several books during her career, including *Review Outline and Exercises in English Grammar* (1903), *A Handbook of Information as to Education in Texas* (1922), *Advanced English Grammar* (1928), and *The Child of the Texas One-Teacher School* (1936). In 1929 she founded the Delta Kappa Gamma Society,<sup>qv</sup> an honorary society for women teachers, which in 1988 had an international membership of 162,000. She also was active in national educational groups and served as a vice president in the National Education Association in 1917, 1919, and 1921. Throughout her career she was especially interested in the needs of rural schools.

Blanton, who never married, was a Methodist. She died in Austin on October 2, 1945, and was buried in Oakwood Cemetery. Public schools are named for her in Austin, Dallas, and Odessa, and a women's dormitory at the University of Texas at Austin bears her name.

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