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Estelle Blake

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Estelle McMillan Blake



Estelle was born in Columbia County, Arkansas on May 16, 1861. Her parents were Henry William and Francis Williams McMillan. Her father studied law while holding the position of superintendent at Columbia Institute, earning his family \$1,000 a year. Estelle's family moved to Arkadelphia in 1865 when she was only 4 years old. Estelle was the first born of 6 children, which is probably one of the reasons why she cared so much for her students' characters and work ethic while she was an educator. Estelle's mother taught her to read and write and is the person that urged Estelle to work with her first pupil when she was only 7 years old.

Estelle received the best available training for her education. She started out by attending Miss Mary Connelly's school for girls in Arkadelphia. At age 16, Estelle was sent to Little Rock and enrolled at the Methodist Female College. After receiving education from the Methodist Female College, she came back to Arkadelphia and attended the Baptist Academy, which was in the same location of the first states supported school for the blind. She spent 1 year at the Academy to complete her teaching assignment there. While Estelle was teaching at the Academy, she met and fell in love with her husband Theodore Blake of Nevada. Estelle and Theodore got married in 1880 and had their first and only child in 1883, Theodora Leila Blake.

Unfortunately, Theodore passed away in 1885, leaving Estelle with a struggle to support their family financially.

Later on, Estelle took a teaching course at the Sam Houston Normal School in Houston, Texas, and graduated from there in time to accept a position at Ouachita in the primary department in 1886. Through Estelle's teachings, she focused on character building, correct living, and open-mindedness in her classroom. She expected hard work from her students, but she truly loved and cared for her students as individuals. Estelle remained at Ouachita until the age of 84 when she retired, earning the record of the longest period of service at 51 years full-time teaching at Ouachita.

At the end of Estelle's life, she suffered from a serious illness that affected her heart. She always claimed that she would live to be 100, but she unfortunately passed away in 1950 at the age of 88. She is buried at Rose Hill cemetery here in Arkadelphia next to her daughter, one of her sisters, and her parents. She leaves behind a legacy at Ouachita for being a remarkable educator and dedicated hard-worker.