

Biographical Sketch of Eliza S. Broadus



Eliza Somerville Broadus, eldest daughter of John A. and Maria Harrison Broadus, was born in Charlottesville, Virginia in 1851. The year that she was born, her father became pastor of the Charlottesville Baptist Church and assistant professor of Latin and Greek at the University of Virginia. He also served as chaplain of the University for two years.

In 1858, Dr. Broadus left his work in Charlottesville to become a professor in the newly established Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Greenville, South Carolina. Thus at the age of eight, Eliza Broadus moved with her family to Greenville and lived there until she was twenty-six years old.

During the time Miss Broadus was living in Greenville, a missionary society was organized in her church and she became one of the charter members of the society. It was also while she was living in Greenville that South Carolina organized the first State Central Committee for women's societies in 1875.

South Carolina's action was in response to a suggestion by Dr. H.A. Tupper, secretary of the Foreign Mission Board, that Central Committees of women be appointed in each state to promote missionary societies. Both the Foreign and Home Boards (now the International Mission Board and North American Mission Board) felt that the time had come to draw together the undirected women's and young people's societies throughout the South. The objectives of these committees were "to organize mission societies and children's bands; to circulate missionary literature and stimulate the spirit of giving to objects fostered by the convention."

Two years after the organization of South Carolina's Central Committee, Miss Broadus and her family moved with the Seminary to Louisville where her father continued as professor of New Testament Interpretation and Homiletics. Dr. Broadus became president of Southern Seminary in 1889 and served in that position until his death in 1895.

In Louisville, Miss Broadus joined Walnut Street Baptist Church and became a member of the missionary society of that church. The following year, 1878, Kentucky formed a Central Committee and Miss Broadus was elected to serve on that committee as the representative from the Walnut Street society. She continued to serve as an active member of Kentucky's Central Committee, later known as the Executive Committee, until 1928, a period of fifty years. During that time she was chairman of the committee for thirty-two years and vice-chairman for nine years. When she resigned from the committee in 1928 she was made an honorary life member of the committee.

In 1888, when Woman's Missionary Union was organized in Richmond, Virginia, Miss Broadus was not present, but was nevertheless elected vice-president from Kentucky. She made valuable contributions to WMU work through her years of service both in Kentucky and in the work of national WMU.

Every denominational cause found a faithful friend in Miss Broadus, but perhaps no cause was dearer to her heart than the establishment of a training school in Louisville for young women

preparing for Christian work. For some time, Seminary professors and others had been concerned about the young women who were coming to Louisville to get what they could from seminary classes and living anywhere they could find quarters.

In 1904, Miss Broadus learned that four young women were attending classes at Southern Seminary and were living together in one room to reduce expenses. Miss Broadus felt that it was the duty of Baptist women to help their students and others who might come to Louisville for Christian training. She therefore invited representative women from the various churches in Louisville to a meeting at Walnut Street Baptist Church to discuss the situation. As a result of that meeting, the women pledged themselves to maintain a home where young women could live while attending classes at the seminary. To direct the work a committee composed of nineteen members was appointed, one from each Baptist Church in Louisville. Miss Broadus represented Walnut Street's Missionary Society on the committee.

At the urging of Eliza Broadus and others, Woman's Missionary Union, Auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention, took responsibility for the WMU Training School in 1907. Very soon, a Board of Managers, consisting of one member from each state in the south, and a local board, composed of twenty-one Baptist women of Louisville, were appointed to direct the affairs of the WMU Training School. Miss Broadus was a member of the original board and continued to serve for more than twenty years.

In 1913 Miss Broadus led Kentucky WMU to promote the taking of an annual offering for state missions in all the churches. In 1975 Kentucky WMU voted to name the annual state missions offering in her honor starting in 1976.

In appreciation of Miss Broadus' years of devoted service to the WMU Training School, it was decided that there would be a luncheon at the school in her honor on her eightieth birthday. It was a lovely occasion with expressions of love and gratitude from her many friends. Just one week later, on October 1, 1931, she was struck by a truck one block from her home and instantly killed. At her funeral, Dr. J.B. Weatherspoon, a professor at Southern Seminary and friend of many years, said "Eliza S. Broadus went for a walk one evening and was not, for God took her."

Miss Kathleen Mallory's tribute to Miss Broadus in the December 1931 issue of *Royal Service* summarized her varied service in these words:

Few Southern Baptist women have equaled Miss Eliza S. Broadus in the service rendered her "own generation according to the will of God." Four-score years and one week were granted to her and she not only used them to help lovingly in the home, church, community and state, but for more than half of her life she was a most efficient officer of Woman's Missionary Union....In living terms one will ever think of Miss Broadus, for she was always so active, alert and animated that death cannot be associated with her.

Eliza Broadus is buried in the Cave Hill Cemetery in Louisville.

-Prepared by Mrs. O. B. Mylum

