



Aunt Jane

Her graciousness and genuine hospitality endeared Aunt Jane to all who knew her. Anyone who ever met this lady went away feeling she was their own personal friend. The Osage Indians possibly summed up Aunt Jane best when they gave her the tribal name of "Wa-Ko-Do-He", meaning "highly honored and generous lady."

Aunt Jane was born in Creston, Iowa, on August 8, 1877, to John and Matilda Gibson, the first of three children. Growing up in a socially prominent banking family, Miss Gibson eventually became acquainted with the town barber, Frank Phillips, an enterprising young businessman in this small rural community. A courtship followed and on February 18, 1897, Frank and Jane were married in Creston at the local Methodist Episcopal church.

Soon after the marriage, Phillips sold his string of barber shops and started selling bonds for his father-in-law. By 1903, the banking business drew Phillips south to Indian Territory and the town of Bartlesville. In time, Frank and his brother, L.E., combined banking with oil. After numerous undertakings of promoting drilling ventures plus forming and selling small oil companies, they founded Phillips Petroleum Company. The rest is history.

Enjoying many social and philanthropic interests in their new surroundings, Jane and Frank built the now called "Phillips mansion" in 1908 where they lived for the remainder of their lives. The couple had one son, John, and two foster daughters, Mary Francis and Sara Jane. In 1926, the Phillips lodge was completed at Woolaroc ranch, 14 miles southeast of Bartlesville, a haven for the family and the many friends of the Phillips.

Both Jane and Frank Phillips enjoyed the life and activities of young people, especially those working for the new Phillips company. Woolaroc became a popular retreat for employee picnics where the host and hostess were affectionately known by all as Uncle Frank and Aunt Jane.

When the women of the company organized a society and named it in honor of Aunt Jane, she lost little time in becoming personally involved in the club, calling members "her girls." She lavished entertainment on JPSers at the ranch as well as the town mansion, dispensing hospitality as easily as she did coffee or tea.

Those who knew Aunt Jane say she was warm, generous, and kind. Author John Dimick, who met Aunt Jane in the early 1900s, wrote of her: "... (She) was small although stately, appealing although withdrawn, not quite pretty but bewitching," and added that her words emerged on velvet.

Aunt Jane attended four JPS conventions before her death. With never failing generosity, she often picked up the tab for various events and sent flowers to members in attendance. She warmly received all comers to her hotel suite, and if ever she tired or longed for quiet at these times, no one suspected. Her deep loyalty and active interest in each of the members highlighted those early gatherings.

Aunt Jane died of a heart attack on August 1, 1948, just one week before her 71st birthday. She is buried in the family mausoleum at Woolaroc. But, through the benevolence of the Jane Phillips Society, the generosity of this remarkable lady lives on.