



Laura Frances Shipe Finch

A Devoted Servant

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Childhood Years

Laura Frances Shipe was born January 10, 1866 in Woodstock, Virginia to William and Elizabeth Shipe. She was the oldest of six children and her family lovingly called her Fanny.



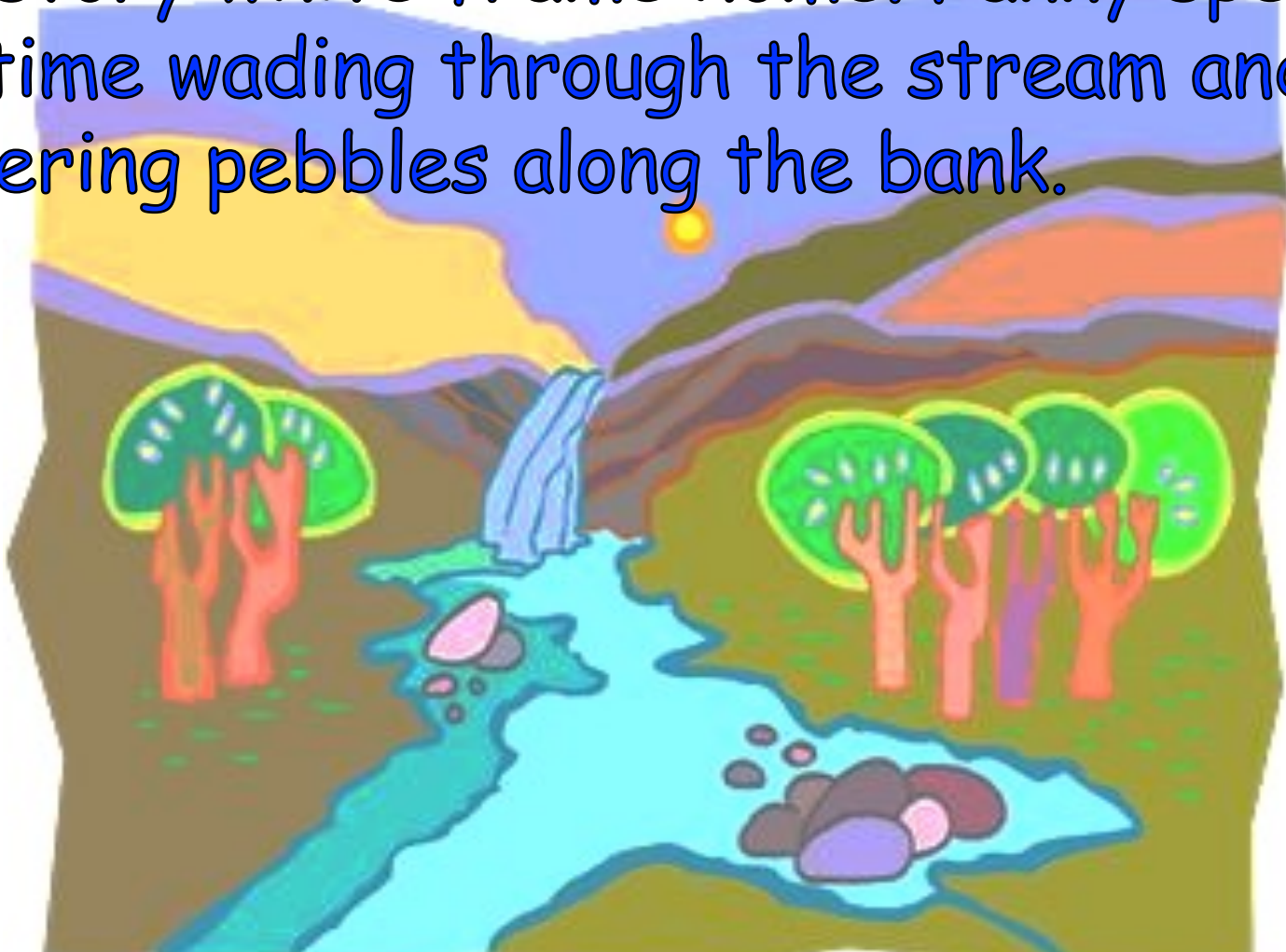
Fanny's father had a job as a cooper. A cooper was a person that made barrels. Fanny enjoyed watching her father make the barrels and she also enjoyed playing with the rings that were used to hold the barrels together.



She would put the hoops around her skirt to make it flare out. When her father missed a hoop, he usually located it around Fanny's skirt.



As a small child, Fanny enjoyed the outdoors. She loved the brook that ran right by their two-story white frame home. Fanny spent her time wading through the stream and gathering pebbles along the bank.



When she was five years old, she moved with her family in a covered wagon from Virginia to Cleburne, Texas. Fanny's father began a new job in the grain business.



When Fanny was eight years old, her mother died. At fourteen her father also passed away. Those were sad years for Fanny.



Early Schooling

Fanny had a strong desire to go to school and receive a good education. She was able to attend Irving School while living in Cleburne. She became good friends with a young girl who was also named Fanny.



Fanny DeBerry was her desk mate
and they shared the same slate to
complete their school work.



At the Irving School each student was required to sign a pledge after each test. The pledge stated, “I have neither given or received aid.” Fanny always respected that oath and was honest in all of her work.

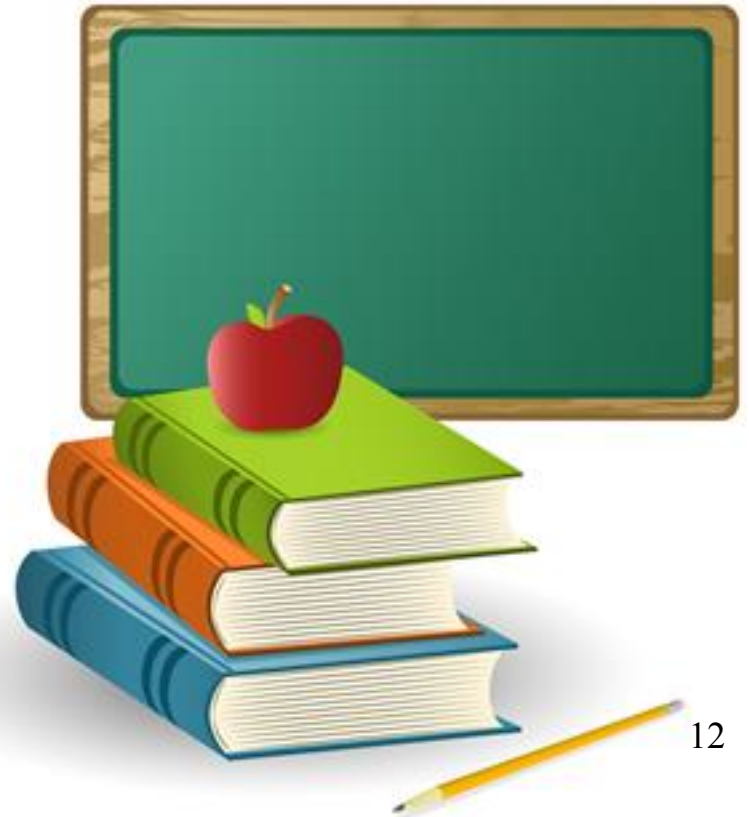


Becoming a Teacher

After graduating from the Irving School, Fanny wanted to attend college. She was able to earn the money for her schooling by teaching at the Cleburne Public Schools.



In 1889, Miss Fanny Shipe moved from Cleburne to McKinney. In McKinney, she became a teacher at the McKinney Collegiate Institute. Miss Shipe also served as the principal for primary education at the school.



While working at the school she met a ambitious young man named Henry Finch. Mr. Henry Finch lived with his parents Dr. and Mrs. William Finch.



Mrs. Henry A. Finch

In 1891, Laura Frances Shipe married Henry A. Finch. Over the following years, they had seven children.



Her husband, Henry Finch, wanted to become a senator for the state of Texas. A senator is someone who helps make laws for their state.



Fanny supported him during his campaign and he was successfully elected to represent Collin County as a senator for several terms for the State of Texas.



In 1917, Mr. Henry A. Finch was elected to serve as the Mayor of McKinney. At that time he was a member of the school board for McKinney. The law stated that you could not serve on the school board and be the Mayor of McKinney at the same time.



He resigned his position on the school board to serve as mayor. Mrs. Fanny Finch was unanimously elected to serve in her husband's place on the board.



First for McKinney and Texas

She was the first woman in Texas to serve on the Board of Education. She served on the school board for eight years, always working to improve the opportunities for learning for the children in McKinney.



She knew that students needed to attend school in order to learn. She helped encourage the students and their parents to follow the law that was passed in 1916 requiring all students to attend school.



She worked to establish libraries, provide restrooms and buy playground equipment for the schools by supporting the Mother's Clubs for each school.

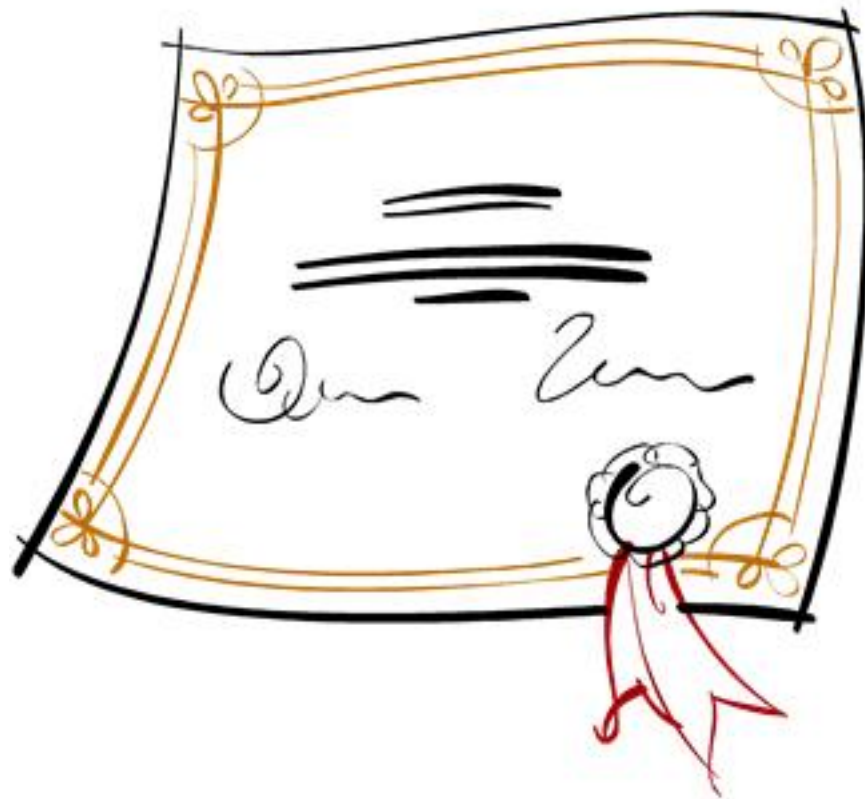
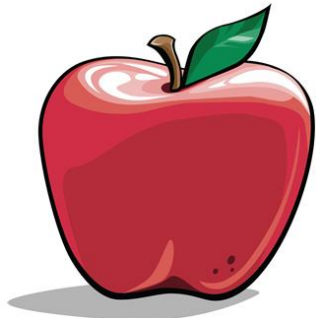


Great Honor

In 1924, in appreciation for all of her support of the schools in McKinney, a petition was presented to the School Board in McKinney. The petition requested that South Ward Elementary School be renamed as Fanny Finch Elementary.



The school board granted the petition
and renamed the school to honor
Mrs. Fanny Finch.



In 1925, she resigned her position on the school board but continued to work to help the children and improve the schools in McKinney.



Mr. and Mrs. Henry A. Finch also supported the citizens of McKinney in other ways. They donated land for a park which was named Finch Park. To this day, many McKinney citizens enjoy visiting Finch Park.



Loss of a Devoted Servant

In 1941, at 76 years of age, Mrs. Frances Finch passed away.

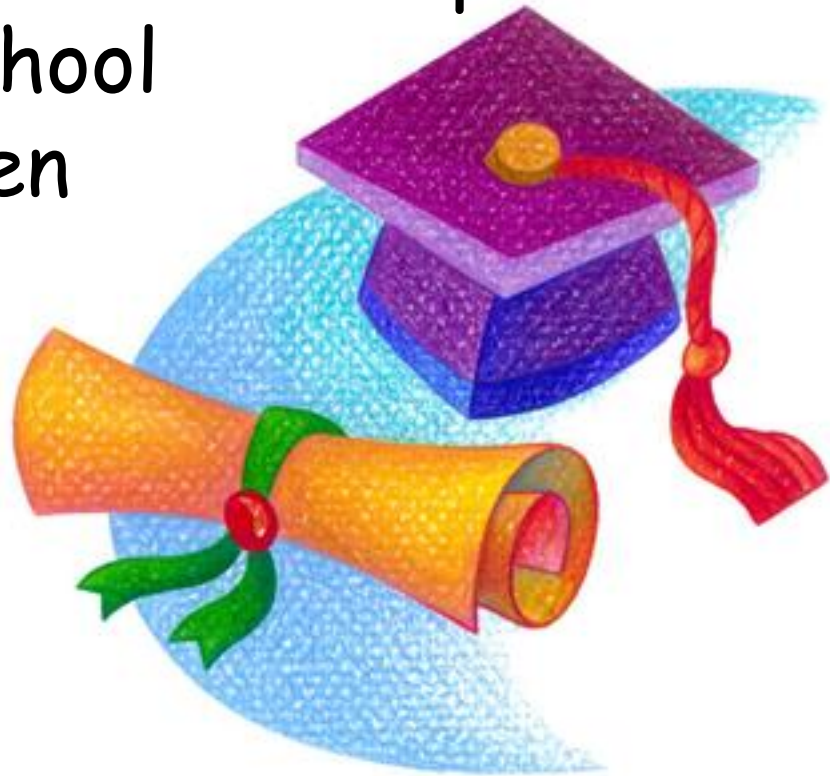
She was buried in historic Pecan Grove Cemetery beside her husband Henry A. Finch.



The people of McKinney were sad to lose a woman who had devoted so many years to serving others.



The legacy that Mrs. Fanny Finch left did not end with her death. In her will, Mrs. Finch left Fanny Finch Elementary a sum of money. The money has been used to purchase things needed at the school and has been given as scholarships to students who attended Fanny Finch Elementary.



Her gift of helping and serving others
will continue to touch
the lives
of students
for many
generations.



Learn More about Fanny Finch

- Finch, Ruth Nelson. *Fanny Finch*. McKinney, Texas, 1942.
- Hall, Captain Roy F. and Helen Gibbard Hall. *Collin County: Pioneering in North Texas*. Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Books, Inc., 1994.
- Williamson, Erma. *One Hundred Years of the Owl Club*. McKinney, Texas: Williamson Printing, 1970.