

WOMAN LEAVES \$500,000 GIFT TO TENNESSEE TECH

SHEILA HAGGARD OFFICER

b. 3 September 1908, Cookeville, TN – d. January 2009
Buried: Cookeville City Cemetery, Cookeville, Putnam Co., TN

d/o **Simpson Little Officer** (1869-1958) & **Mary A. Verble** (1878-1962)

TTU -- Living to be a century old may seem like only a dream to most, but for one Tennessee Tech graduate, it was a dream come true. **Sheila Haggard Officer**, who died in January at age 100 years, four months, and five days, realized her dream. Although she had long set for herself a goal of living to be 100 years old, she knew that as a single lady without children, she would eventually need to leave her legacy to an organization that shared her passion for learning. What better entity could there be than her alma mater, TTU? Now, thanks to a bequest of almost \$500,000, generations of Tennessee Tech students will be able to realize their dreams of a college education.



"Miss Officer's life and work was a true testament to how one person can make a difference in the lives of many by sharing an interest and passion for education," said TTU President Bob Bell. "We are grateful for her lifelong association with our university and for her remarkable gift." **Born in 1908 to Simpson Little Officer and Mary Arminda Verble, Officer** knew from an early age that education was going to be an important aspect of her life. After completing her elementary and high school years in Putnam County,

Officer began her higher education experience at TTU in 1927. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Tennessee Tech was quite different than it is today, with just a smattering of buildings and even fewer automobiles. This explains why Officer walked to school almost every day from her parents' home just northeast of the town square in the custom of proper girls of the time -- in heels and a dress.

While at Tennessee Tech, she discovered her true love -- the English language. After graduating with an English degree in 1931, she set off on a career that would allow her to share this love with many young men and women by teaching. **For 35 years, Officer taught high school English in Putnam County, with a concentration and special fondness for English history.** Officer had two other passions: reading and traveling. She once said that she had been or had at least flown over almost every country in the world. And wherever she went, she always read and gathered books for her collection, which grew to become an expansive home library.

Officer directed the university to establish three scholarships: the S.L. Officer Agricultural Scholarship in honor of her father, the Mary Verble Officer Human Ecology Scholarship in honor of her mother and the Sheila H. Officer English Scholarship. In addition, she bequeathed her expansive home library collection to the university for the benefit of future students. Officer's estate provided more than \$473,000 for the three scholarships. In addition, the university's book collection grew by almost 700. "Miss Officer was a generous woman, and her significant gift will directly benefit students. We appreciate her gift and her dedication to education," said Homer Kemp, TTU English department interim chairperson.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 18 December 2009

Simon Little Officer

b. 23 January 1869, Putnam Co., TN – d. 13 October 1958, Putnam Co., TN, md **Mary Arminda (Verble) Officer**, b. 2 July 1878, TN – d. 2 September 1962, Putnam Co., TN, d/o **William L. & S. M. Verble**. Simon Little Officer, s/o **David Snodgrass Officer (1839-1901) & Mary Jane Little (1845-1935)**. Simon Little Officer and his wife Mary Arminda Verble are buried in Cookeville City Cemetery.

*See William L. Verble buried in Cookeville City Cemetery.

*See Sheila H. Officer

(1900 census 1st Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN: Dwl: 55 - **Simon L. Officer** is head of household, 31 yrs. old, b. January 1869, TN, md 5 yrs. to **Mary A.** , 23 yrs. old. b. July 1876, TN)

(1910 census 1st Civil Dist., Putnam Co., TN: Dwl: 20 - **Simon L. Officer** is head of household, 41 yrs. old, TN, md 15 yrs. to **Marry A.** , 33 yrs. old, 1 child born, 1 child living. Child: **Shely H. Officer**, 1 8/12 yrs. old, TN. Also living in the household: Maggie Brady, servant, 18 yrs. old, TN).

(1920 census 1st Civil Dist., Sparta Pike, Putnam Co., TN: Dwl: 315 - 358 - **Simp L. Officer** is head of household, 50 yrs. old, TN, md to **Mary** , 42 yrs. old, TN. Child: **Shelah Officer**, 11 yrs. old, TN).

*See Cookeville City Cemetery Obts. and Putnam County, TN History at:

<http://www.ajlambert.com>