

## DR. STRATTON BROOKS

When the Linebarger brothers opened the Lake Bella Vista summer resort in 1917, they hoped to appeal to the prosperous residents in nearby states who could afford to have a second home in Bella Vista, where the wives and children of mostly professional men would come to spend the entire summer.

One of their success stories was Stratton D. Brooks, who had become president of the University of Oklahoma at Norman in 1912. Gil Fite, in his 1993 book on the history of Bella Vista, wrote that the “Linebargers...told prospective buyers that they were seeking the...finest quality of citizens to build summer homes at the resort... (and they) ... often referred to Brooks as the kind of people who were buying property in Bella Vista.” Brooks bought two lots in 1919 and 1920, and contracted with the Linebargers to build a cottage on them for his family (his wife Marcia and their four daughters, Marian, Helen, Dorothy and Betty) for \$2258.

Sometime before 1923, the Brooks cottage was built. Brooks moved to the University of Missouri at Columbia that year, and the Bella Vista Breezes of July 24, 1923, reported on a visit by a group of students from that school, saying “The Bella Vista tour was of particular interest...owing to the fact that their new ‘prexy’...has a cottage at the base of Suits-Us mountain facing Lake Bella Vista.”

During the summers, two local farm girls, Lillian Green and her sister Ruth, worked for the Brooks family at the cottage. The Green girls impressed Brooks, who encouraged them to go to college, which they did in Springfield, Missouri. Lillian later returned to Bella Vista where in the late 1920’s she became the personal secretary to C.A. Linebarger, a position she held for over two decades while also starting a very successful career as a professional photographer.

Brooks also had another a tie to the Bella Vista area...he published a number of books that were used in grade schools all over the U.S., including at Dug Hill School. Two of his “Brooks Readers,” one for “Third Year” and one for “Seventh Year,” both published in 1906, and his English Composition Book One, published in 1911, will available for perusal at the Bella Vista Historical Museum when it re-opens March 1.

Brooks left the University of Missouri in 1930 and later became education director of DeMolay, an organization dedicated to helping young men lead successful lives, at their HQs at Kansas City, a job he held until his death following a stroke in 1949. Late in 1941, after the death of his wife, he sold his property in Bella Vista. The cottage was reportedly torn down in the early 1980’s. The two lots where it stood are now the vacant lots behind the Highway Visitors Center across from Lake Bella Vista, just north of the yellow Michael Keys house. Brooks and his wife both loved Oklahoma and were buried close to the campus of OU in the IOOF (Independent Order of Odd Fellows) Cemetery in Norman.

**Picture 1: Dr. Stratton Brooks**

**Picture 2: The Brooks family cottage sat across the road from Lake Bella Vista. The two lots it stood on are now vacant, visible behind the Highway Visitors Center parking lot, just north of the yellow Michael Keys house. One of the Brooks’ summer employees, Lillian Green, is standing on the top of the steps on the right.**

**Picture 3: The two lots behind the Highway Visitors Center across from Lake Bella Vista, where the Brooks cottage stood, have been vacant since the cottage was torn down, reportedly in the early 1980’s.**

