

Stories in Stone: Sara Elizabeth “Sally” (Shallenberger) Brown

14 Apr 1911 – 30 Apr 2011
Section 28 Lot 190



Mrs. Sara Shallenberger Brown

Sara Shallenberger Brown was a “force of nature.” She was a renowned philanthropist and activist, committed to historic preservation and environmental conservation efforts impacting Louisville, Kentucky, and beyond. Her life-long interest in the arts and preservation of natural space and historic sites was accompanied by a generous spirit that is still palpable today.

Sara “Sally” Shallenberger was born April 14, 1911 in Valdez, AK, where her parents, Ina Dowdy Shallenberger and Brigadier General Martin C. Shallenberger, were stationed. The daughter of an Army officer and military attache’ to various US embassies, she was raised on various U. S. Army posts in Serbia, Greece, Hungary, and Austria. Her paternal grandfather, Ashton C. Shallenberger, served as governor of Nebraska, a multi-term US Congressman, and noted breeder of shorthorn cattle on his Nebraska farm; he served his constituency by representing the agricultural interests of Nebraskan

farmers. Her upbringing instilled in her a world view and sense of civic responsibility. She graduated from Sweet Briar College in Virginia in 1932 with a degree in English, and went on to study painting at art schools in the United States and abroad.

In 1933, she met William Lee (W. L.) Lyons Brown while visiting the family of a college friend, Mary Chenault Van Winkle, in Louisville. They were attracted to each other by a shared intellectual acumen and commitment of stewardship to community and nature. After their marriage in August, 1935 at the chapel of the American Embassy in Vienna, Austria, they returned to Louisville where they lived briefly with her widowed father-in-law, Owsley Brown in Harrods Creek, KY. In 1937, they moved to the farm next door which they named “Ashbourne Farm” after her grandfather’s cattle farm in Nebraska. A wedding gift of several Scottish shorthorn cattle and a bull from her grandfather, Aston Shallenberger, began a 75-year active farming legacy for the couple.

Following the death of her husband in 1973, Sally Brown pursued her interests in civic philanthropy. She served on the boards of the Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy, National Parks and Conservation Association, and the Woods Hole Research Center. Locally, she was a director of Locust Grove, Shaker Village at Pleasant Hill, Transylvania University, and The Louisville & Jefferson County Planning Commission. She supported the Louisville Arts through generous

support of Louisville's Actors Theater, The Speed Museum, and many other organizations. She instilled the values of environmental sustainability in her children and their descendants, who carry forward her profound legacy today.

In 2006, KET produced a documentary, *[Sally Brown: A Force of Nature](#)*, which was narrated by Joanne Woodward.

<https://www.arch.virginia.edu/ccl/projects/sara-shallenberger-brown-events-and-programs>

<https://www.ket.org/program/sally-brown-force-of-nature/>

<https://issuu.com/sweetbriarcollege/docs/sbcmagsummer2011/62>