



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

# Brown Oaks

## FAMILY HISTORY

### **Flavius H. Brown, M.D.**

Dr. Flavius Hugh Brown was born September 18, 1878, in Birch River, West Virginia. He was the son of Reverend James Frame Brown and Sallie Scott Brown both of Birch River. Flavius had 4 brothers; Richard, Homer, Patrick and Virgil and 5 sisters: Ella, Agnes, Rose, Zela and Mollie. His wife, eleven years his junior, Elizabeth Huff Brown was born in 1889 in Camden-on-Gauley, West Virginia. She was the daughter of William Dudley Huff and Cleora Alice Morrison Huff.

Flavius and Elizabeth (Huff) were married May 3, 1905, in Craigsville, West Virginia. He was 27 years old and she 16. At the time they were married Flavius had been a teacher in a one-room school at Beaver, a deputy sheriff in Nicholas County and a storekeeper. Elizabeth had completed the McGuffey readers and had taken some piano lessons. She started a family library when she first married and was a prolific reader all of her life. Although Elizabeth was not college educated, she was self-educated and it was often said that her general knowledge far exceeded that of her children. When Flavius was in medical school, she studied and quizzed him for exams. He repeatedly remarked she knew Grey's Anatomy almost as well as he did.

From September 1907 to May 1911, Flavius attended the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Baltimore, Maryland. After graduation, Dr. Brown and his growing family returned to Craigsville where he began his first medical practice. The family moved to Summersville in 1922 and purchased a 25 acre parcel of land in town that was part of the Hamilton farm. They lived in the old Victorian house on the property while the present house was being built. There Flavius and Elizabeth raised their nine children; Eugene Scott, James Dudley, John Morrison, Flavius Hugh, II, Paul Huff, William Herbert, Robert Rhea, Elizabeth Ann and Alice Marie.

Dr. Brown was one of the only two doctors in Nicholas County for many years. Often he visited his patients on horseback and sometimes spent the night during confinement cases (the term then used for child birth). He never refused a patient who was unable to pay cash for medical fees. Often he and his patients made exchanges for payments; country eggs, homemade butter and bread, wild nuts and berries and sometimes home cured hams. This method of payment, while convenient for the patient, led to additional sacrifices to be made by Dr. Brown and his family. During the Great Depression, two of his children had to drop out of college temporarily due to lack of money to pay tuition.

The strong character of Dr. Brown and his family is evidenced in the fact that all nine children attended and graduated from West Virginia University - a significant achievement in itself. Even more impressive is the fact that four sons became medical doctors and three became dentists. It is not surprising then, that Elizabeth Huff Brown was named "West Virginia Mother of the Year" in 1949. The accomplishments of this family are evidence of the hard work, qualities and values that the people of this time period possessed.

Dr. Brown died in their beloved home place on the oak covered knoll in June 1945. When the upkeep on the home and grounds became too much to take care of by herself, Elizabeth sold the home and part of the property to her son Flavius, II, and moved across town into a house on the corner of Lee and Waters Street. She died in December 1978.

## **Flavius H. Brown, II, DDS**

Flavius Hugh Brown, II, was the fourth son of Dr. Flavius H. Brown and Elizabeth Huff Brown and was born on October 2, 1912, in Craigsville, West Virginia. He was one of nine children.(See above for their names.)

His wife Josephine Hill Brown was born on February 27, 1917. She was a daughter of Wallace Hill and Oceola Herold Hill. Josephine graduated from Nicholas County High School, attended Marshall College and was graduated from Charleston School of Commerce. She was employed at the Nicholas County Bank (*now the Community Trust Bank*) until her marriage to Flavius Hugh Brown, II, in 1937.

After graduation from NCHS in 1931, Flavius attended WVU, then was graduated from dental school at the Medical College of Virginia in 1938. At MCV he had the distinction of being the president of his senior class and a member of Psi Omega, a dental honorary. Upon graduation he returned to Summersville and set up his dental practice. In 1954 he and his wife Jo, purchased his old family home and approximately six acres of land from his mother and kept it in the family until 1980. There they raised their three children, Mary Jo, Alice Elizabeth "Betty," and Flavius Hugh Brown III "Hugh."

His days of working the family farm with his father and brothers served him well. He and Jo had upper and lower vegetable gardens, an apple orchard, cherry trees, strawberries and raspberries patches, Leghorn chickens and bee hives. Both wild and cultivated flowers abound on the property. Flavius was also an avid hunter and fisherman who enjoyed nothing more than being in the mountains of West Virginia for an all-day bout with the elements. His love of the outdoors and being a sportsman prompted him to serve as a Boy Scout Master for many years. He helped guide eight of those young men into becoming Eagle Scouts from his troop.

Flavius and Josephine participated in many of civic activities and were members of the St. Martin's-in-the-Fields Episcopal Church. They both had a love of history and spent years collecting antiques. Of particular interest to Flav was the Civil War and he spent considerable time studying it, especially the life of Robert E. Lee. Over the course of several years Flav used a metal detector to gather Civil War relics from the mountain at Carnifax where the soldiers escaped in dark of night. He donated all of his found treasures to the Patterson House Museum located at Carnifax Ferry. Jo was a founding member of the Wilson Cary Nicholas chapter of the DAR and was involved with both Boy Scout and Girl Scout Troops. She also enjoyed studying genealogy. Before Summersville had a historical society, the postmaster, Ruskin Wiseman, would give all mail addressed to the "Historical Society" to Jo. She would do her research at the county courthouse for the information requested and answer the letters.

For a summer home during the late 1960s', Flav and Jo moved and restored the 1817 log house located on Route 129 near the Summersville Dam. The log house was from the Pat Kitchen family farm on Panther Mountain. The house was photographed and the logs numbered before it was dismantled, moved and reconstructed at its present location. The cabin was later purchased from the Browns by the late Robert Campbell and his wife Ann. The Campbells, being devoted historical preservationists, were also quite instrumental in helping to save the old Brown home and property for future generations to enjoy.

Like his father before him, Flavius died in his home place in 1980. The house was sold later that year and Josephine moved across town. She died in 1985.