

Babcock, Mary Reynolds ^[1]

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Babcock, Mary Reynolds

By Hubert K. Wooten, 1979

8 Aug. 1908–17 July 1953



"Charles Henry Babcock family, 1937." Image courtesy of Digital Forsyth.

^[2]Mary Reynolds Babcock, philanthropist, was born in Winston ^[3] of Scottish ancestry. Her father was R. J. Reynolds, founder of R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company ^[4]; her mother was Katherine Smith Reynolds. As a young girl, she attended a private school at Reynolda, the family estate. She later attended Salem Academy ^[5] and Miss Wright's School in Bryn Mawr, Pa. After her graduation she spent several months in Paris studying art. On 16 Dec. 1929 she married Charles Henry Babcock ^[6], an investment banker from Philadelphia. They lived for a time in Greenwich, Conn., but moved to Winston-Salem ^[3] in 1934 when she acquired Reynolda.

In 1936, when Mrs. Babcock inherited \$30 million from her father, she was described as one of the richest women in the world. Her primary interest was in helping others, and she contributed generously to many worthwhile causes. In 1951 she and her husband gave three hundred acres at Reynolda ^[7] to Wake Forest College ^[8], and the college moved from Wake County ^[9] to Winston-Salem, where a completely new campus was built. Her will provided \$12 million for a charitable trust, and the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation ^[10] was established at Reynolda with her husband as the first chairman of the board. Since 1954, the foundation has contributed generously to Wake Forest University ^[8] and to other organizations, particularly those concerned with private higher education, social welfare, and the arts.

Mary Reynolds Babcock was shy and retiring. She enjoyed a limited circle of friends and delighted in collecting recipes and growing flowers, but her primary interest was philanthropy.

She was the mother of Mary Katherine, Barbara, Betsy Main, and Charles Henry, Jr. One portrait of her hangs in Babcock Dormitory, Salem College ^[11], and another in the offices of the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation at Reynolda. She died in New York City and was buried in Winston-Salem.

References:

Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation Annual Report, 1973

New York Times , 18 and 19 July 1953, 19 Aug. 1953

Winston-Salem Journal , 18 July 1953

Winston-Salem Twin City Sentinel , 18 July 1953

Image Source:

"Charles Henry Babcock family, 1937." Image courtesy of Digital Forsyth."Charles Henry Babcock family, 1937. Mr. Babcock is standing, with Charles Jr. and Mary Katherine in front of him. Mrs. Babcock (Mary Katherine Reynolds) is seated, with Barbara Frances Babcock at her side." Available from <http://www.digitalforsyth.org/photos/11688> ^[2] (accessed April 4, 2012).

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