

**MARION
D.
BROWN
1894-1918**



**STARTING
GIRL
SCOUT
TRADITION**

In 1917 Muskogee's first Girl Scouts – used ingenuity – and their mothers' sugar cookie recipes – to raise money. They met in the Central High School home economics room to bake the cookies and sell them around town. Little did members know that their cookie sales would decades later become a yearly tradition enjoyed by those who love Thin Mints and Samoas.

Marion Brown came to Muskogee in 1914 at age twenty, after graduating from the New Haven School of Gymnastics. She became head of the Physical Culture Department at Central High School. Along with fellow gym teacher Aileen Stroud, they formed the Mistletoe Troop in October 1917 with eighty girls.

At Christmas, they made packages for Oklahoma soldiers who were serving at Camp Bowie in Texas. Later in the year, they held a circus in the high school gymnasium. With their profit, they purchased two large tents. At the mallard duck farm where the leaders lived outside of town, they planted a war-garden. From the sale of the vegetables, they bought farm implements and later scout uniforms. Every weekend at least twelve girls were working at the farm, staying in the two large tents.

Both Brown and Stroud became ill in December 1918 during the second wave of the Spanish flu epidemic, which hit Muskogee hard. Brown did not survive. The entire school mourned her loss as she was popular with both faculty and students. The Girl Scouts continued under Stroud's direction.

In July 1922, the American Girl magazine, published by Girl Scouts USA, provided the cookie recipe. Soon Girl Scouts all over the country picked up on the fundraiser. They began to bake cookies with their mothers, packaging them in wax paper bags, sealing them with a sticker and selling them door-to-door for 25-35 cents a dozen. In 1923, a five-foot bag baked by Girl Scouts were presented to First Lady Grace Coolidge.

Throughout the 1930s, cookie drives became so successful that troops in cities like New York City and Philadelphia started selling commercially-baked cookies. Due to sugar, butter and flour shortages during World War II, Girl Scouts sold calendars instead of cookies. But by 1948, they were back in business.

To commemorate the Mistletoe Troop, Muskogee unveiled a sculpture in May 2008. The bronze statue of a life-size Junior Girl Scout wearing a 1960s-1970s dress, her sash covered with merit badges, her three fingers raised in the Girl Scout Promise, and four boxes of cookies at her feet was designed by Canadian-born Oklahoma sculptor Phyllis Mantik deQuevedo.

Annual Cookie Sales is now an \$800 million business for over five million Girl Scouts who sell each year. It is estimated that 50 million American households buy at least one box of Girl Scout Cookies, with 25% of the customers buying Thin Mints.

Scouting has been credited with helping to prepare generations of girls for success in later life. Famous women who were once Girl Scouts include Helen Hayes, Lucille Ball, Bette Davis, Marlo Thomas, Jane Pauley, Barbara Walters, Sally Ride, Gloria Steinem, Laura Bush, Hillary Clinton, Michelle Obama, Sandra Day O'Connor, Sheryl Crow, Dionne Warwick, Martha Stewart, and Girl Guide Queen Elizabeth II.