

Vircenoy (Vircy) Baker Macatee

In the years following the opening in 1969 of the De Cordova Bend Dam on the Brazos River, and the re-opening of the Opera House in Granbury in 1974, a diverse group of people, most of whom had roots in Hood County, arose and through their collective but diverse efforts and through a variety of means played key roles in preserving the early history of Granbury and Hood County. Vircenoy Baker Macatee was one of the key figures in this exclusive group of dedicated individuals.

Vircenoy Baker was born in the Fall Creek area of Hood County on September 17, 1923. She was the daughter of Oran Christopher Baker and Fern Mae Barker. Two other children were born to Oran and Fern: Mary Geneva and Oran Clinton. Vircy was a 5th generation Texan on both of her parents side of the family and a 3rd generation Hood Countian on the Baker side of her family and a 4th generation Hood Countian on the Barker side of her family a heritage of which she was very proud. Vircenoy was named after a distant relative on her mother s side of the family. The relative was not personally known by Vircy or her parents, but her mother had always liked the name and when Vircy came along, she got it. As it turned out, this unusual name fit this very unique lady. Growing up she was always called Vircenoy. She did not acquire the shorthand version of her name until it was given to her by a fellow student during her freshman year at Texas State College for Women (now Texas Women s University). It stuck, and she loved it.

Vircy grew up in the Mitchell Bend area of Hood County, but because the area where she was raised was so remote, she started the first grade in a small school in the George s Creek area of Somervell County. She later was able to attend the Mambrino Schools in Hood County and attended there until she completed the 10th grade. After her 10th grade year, Vircy transferred to Cleburne High School in Johnson County where she graduated in May, 1942. Having always dreamed of being able to acquire a college education after graduating from high school, Vircy worked clerical jobs to pay for her tuition and clothing and enrolled in Texas State College for Women. She graduated on June 3, 1946, with a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in Accounting and later that year, on July 1, 1946, went to work for Humble Oil & Refining Company in Houston. On June 3, 1951, Vircy married Johnnie Marvin Macatee and remained married to Johnnie until his death on December 28, 1998. While working full time at her accounting job with Humble Oil & Refining Corporation, Vircy attended the University of Houston and acquired her Masters in Business Administration in 1964. In 1979, after 33 years with Humble Oil & Refining and later Exxon Corporation, Vircy retired. As Vircy would later say: Not too bad for a girl who grew up in the peanut patch in Mitchell Bend.

Vircy and Johnnie moved to Granbury in 1981, and Vircy began her second career as an expert on Granbury and Hood County history. She was active in the historical preservation of Hood County serving on the Hood County Historical Society and Hood County Historical Commission. Vircy and Georgia Ramay, another lady with deep roots in Hood County, each played a key role in establishing the Bridge Street History Center, a museum whose mission is to collect, preserve and interpret the life stories of the people of Granbury and Hood County. She edited and published a history written by her great-grandfather, Wilson Hopkins Barker in 1911 detailing the living conditions of the first settlers in the Hood and Somervell Counties. She also wrote and published a history of the family of each of her parents, An Expanded Genealogy of the Baker Family and

Related Lines and An Expanded Genealogy of the Barker Family and Related Lines. All of these activities notwithstanding, if you asked Vircy what work in relation to the preservation of Hood County's early history she was most proud of, she would have told you it was her work in restoring the relationship between Hood County and the family of Nelson Cooney Mitchell, who in 1875 was wrongfully found guilty by a Hood County jury and hung for his alleged role in the 1874 ambush and murder of brothers Sam and Isaac Truitt and the wounding of their brother, James Truitt. Vircy reached out to the Mitchell Family and arranged a reunion of the family in Hood County in 1993. The Mitchell-Truitt Feud was detailed by author C. L. Sonnichsen in his 1965 book *Outlaw: Bill Mitchell, alias Baldy Russell, His Life and Times*.

Vircy was a contemporary of another local historian of note, Mary Kate Durham. Between Vircy and Mary Kate, there was not a fact concerning the important events in the early history of Granbury and Hood County that they did not know. While they did not always agree on the facts surrounding a particular event, they both were known to have very strong opinions on the relevant facts, and they both believed that their version of the facts was correct. Accordingly, on those occasions when they did agree on the facts, well that settled the issue. Vircy was very opinionated and not everyone appreciated that aspect of her personality, but those who knew her best knew she had a heart of gold, and no one ever questioned Vircy's absolute commitment to the preservation of the history of Granbury and Hood County.