

WOMEN OF WINSLOW



Florence Beck Olmstead

(born 1894, died 1986)

“When you think of what the Red Cross gown means to a little child, or of the suffering allayed by the bandages you wrap, you will not waste one moment.”

Florence on her goals for the Arizona BPW Federation during World War II.

Florence Beck Olmstead practiced medicine in Winslow for thirty years, taught school before and after her medical career, and had an active community life.

Florence Elizabeth Henderson was born on November 1, 1894, in White Rock, South Dakota, and grew up on a farm homesteaded by her mother’s family. After graduating from high school, Florence attended Minnesota Teacher’s College in Moorhead, Minnesota, and taught in that state as well as in Montana and South Dakota.

Florence married fellow teacher Alma Beck in 1921. They both left teaching to attend Palmer School of Chiropractic in Davenport, Iowa. In 1926, they established Beck and Beck in Winslow after earning the two highest scores on the state licensing exam.

The Becks practiced medicine together for the next thirty years, becoming well known throughout Northern Arizona. Florence was an early practitioner of alternative medicine, believing in the mind-body connection and encouraging her patients to visualize healthy bodies.

Florence was the charter president of the Winslow Business and Professional Women’s Club in 1939 and named their Woman of the Year in 1962. She also served as state president of the Arizona Federation of Business and Professional Women in 1942 and 1943, during World War II. She wrote of her presidential goals, “...the world situations become more pressing each day, and we will have to give more and more of our time and money.” She also served as Navajo County chairwoman of the World War II bond drive.

Florence was very active in civic and service organizations. She was chairwoman of the Arizona Democratic Committee and president of the Winslow Women’s Democratic Club. She served on the Arizona Board of Chiropractors and the Arizona Board of Regents, the governing board for the state’s public universities. She was a longtime member of the Order of the Eastern Star (Worthy Matron 1943) and the Rebekah Lodge. Florence was listed in *Who’s Who of Arizona* in 1958.

After Alma died in 1956, Florence closed their practice and continued her education. In 1961, she earned a Master’s Degree of Science in Education from Arizona State College at Flagstaff (now Northern Arizona University) at age 66 (she had received her bachelor’s in education there in 1949). She moved back to Winslow and taught at Winslow High School until she retired at age 72. In 1968, she married Glen Olmstead, a teacher and coach at the high school for forty-two years.

Florence remained very active even after Glen died in 1977, traveling the world, painting, and writing poetry and short stories. She went to live with family in Boise, Idaho, and died there on June 18, 1986, at age 91.



Top: Florence with her second husband, Glen Olmstead

Middle: Florence in front of the Beck and Beck office in 1941

Bottom: Florence, standing third from right, with other 1964-65 officers of the Winslow Business and Professional Women’s Club