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Georgia Neese Clark Gray, 95, First Woman as U.S. Treasurer

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Georgia Neese Clark Gray, whose signature -- as Georgia Neese Clark -- appeared on some \$30 billion in paper money while she was the first woman to serve as Treasurer of the United States, died on Thursday at the Brewster Place retirement community in Topeka, Kan. She was 95.

President Harry S. Truman chose Mrs. Gray to be Treasurer in 1949, a year the Democratic Party promised a New Deal for women aspiring to high office. She had been a small-town Kansas banker and a Democratic National Committeewoman since 1936. Her confirmation by the Senate was unanimous.

As the nation's 29th Treasurer, she was in charge of all the bills and coins along with Government securities held in the vaults in Washington. The office is a division of the Treasury Department. When Dwight D. Eisenhower became President in 1953 he selected another woman to succeed her, Ivy Baker Priest, a Utah Republican.

Mrs. Gray was a highly visible figure in Democratic Party affairs, including its national conventions. She was an associate of Eleanor Roosevelt, with whom she often shared the speakers' platform.

After serving as a National Committeewoman for 28 years, Mrs. Gray resigned in 1964 to devote herself full time to banking and other business and farming interests.

Georgia Neese was born in Richland, a rural community of about 200 people 15 miles southeast of Topeka, where her father, Albert, had founded the Richland State Bank in 1892.

She received a bachelor's degree in economics from what is now Washburn University of Topeka in 1921. She then studied acting in New York and toured the country with stock companies for 10 years.

Her stage career ended when her father's health faltered and the arrival of talking pictures diminished the appeal of traveling stage troupes. By then she had married George M. Clark, her manager. They were divorced in the mid-1940's.

At her father's death in 1937 she became president of the bank; in 1964 she moved it to Topeka and renamed it the Capital City State Bank.

Her friend and mentor, Harry Truman, helped to dedicate the new bank. "Mrs. Gray is the only United States Treasurer since the Civil War who really worked at her job," he told the crowd. "She knows money affairs as well as any man, and anyone who brings their money here will know it is in charge of someone who knows how to take care of it."

Mrs. Gray was remarried in 1953 to Andrew J. Gray, a former New York and Washington newspaperman and press agent. He died last year. She is survived by a nephew, Ward Keller of Manhattan.