

**MARY ALICE  
HEARRELL  
MURRAY  
1875-1938**



**CHICKASAW  
QUEEN WEDS  
COLORFUL  
GOVERNOR**

Chickasaws placed a high value on the role of women in society. Schools for women were established at a time when the education of women was not always a high priority. Female teachers at Bloomfield Academy were charged with educating and empowering their students to become leaders. Distinguished graduates called “Bloomfield Blossoms” included Alice Hearrell, married to Oklahoma Governor Alfalfa Bill Murray for 39 years.

Mary Alice Hearrell was born in Emet, Indian Territory in January 1875. She carried both Choctaw and Chickasaw elite standing. When her father’s health declined, eight-year-old Alice was sent to live with her uncle Douglas Johnston, superintendent of the prestigious female seminary school Bloomfield Academy.

William Henry David Murray was born in Toadsuck, Texas in November 1869. At twelve, he ran away from home, graduating from College Hill Institute in 1889. He taught school and started in politics in Corsicana where he ran for senate. Unsuccessful, he moved to Fort Worth, where he passed the bar exam and opened a practice.

In 1898, the 29-year-old lawyer arrived in Tishomingo, capital of the Chickasaw Nation. His legal knowledge and colorful personality soon caught the attention of Chickasaw governor Douglas Johnston, who made Murray the tribe’s legal advisor. Bill romanced Alice, but the two were very different in temperament, upbringing, education and background. William was energetic, hardworking and outspoken. Alice was a woman of remarkable intellect and charm.

Married in a Chickasaw ceremony in July 1899 allowed Bill to become a full Chickasaw citizen. The Daily Ardmoreite reported the wedding as “Prominent Young Attorney Secures a Chickasaw Queen”. In addition to practicing law, Murray also became a farmer. In 1902, he acquired his nickname “Alfalfa” on the political trail telling farmers about a large tract of alfalfa he cultivated.

Murray’s political career began in 1903, when he represented the Chickasaw at the new State of Sequoyah convention in Muskogee. In 1913 he was elected a U. S. Congressman for two terms. The family moved to Bolivia in 1924 with others to create an agricultural utopia but difficulties with the Bolivian government doomed the experiment. In 1929 the family returned to Oklahoma broke.

Murray was elected the 9th Governor of Oklahoma in 1931. The next year, Alfalfa Bill declared his candidacy for president of the United States, and his face appeared on the cover of Time Magazine in February 1932. During Murray’s career, his frequent absences depended on Alice’s family connections, steadfast moral encouragement, and sometimes financial support.

Alice was so widely respected that upon her death in August 1938 at age 63 she became the first woman to lie in state at the Oklahoma State Capitol. Bill wrote and delivered a beautiful, emotional eulogy at her funeral in Tishomingo. Historian Keith Bryant marked Alice’s death as the beginning of the rapid decline of Bill’s physical and mental health. His last appearance was when he administered the oath for governor to his son Johnston in 1951. Alfalfa Bill Murray died in October 1956. One of the most influential personalities in Oklahoma history, his controversial policies tarnished his reputation over the years. People wonder how the loss of Alice impacted Alfalfa Bill.