

**MARTHA HELEN  
“MATTIE” BEAL  
PAYNE  
1879-1931**



**FIRST  
LADY  
OF  
LAWTON**

Mattie Beal became the second person to claim property in the 1901 Kiowa and Comanche land lottery. Her subdivided-land would become Beal Addition and her home would become a landmark in the city.

Martha Helen “Mattie” Beal was born in September 1879 in Ash Grove, Missouri. The family staked a claim near Ingalls, Oklahoma Territory during the 1891 Land Run. Mattie graduated from high school in Stillwater but the family eventually settled in Wichita, Kansas.

While working as a telephone operator in 1901, Mattie became interested in the allotment of 13,000 160-acre tracts in the Kiowa and Comanche lands being offered through a land lottery. More than 160,000 people registered for the lottery, which under the Homestead Act would give 160 acres of land to citizens 21 and over. Settlers had to live on the claim for five years, and make certain improvements to the property.

Mattie and her friend Florence Allen boarded a train and traveled to El Reno to register for the land lottery. After filing, the two returned to Wichita and had virtually forgotten about the filings. Then suddenly one morning, while she was on her way to work, a photographer snapped Mattie’s picture. When she asked what was the occasion of the photograph, he explained she had drawn second choice in the land lottery.

The first name drawn for the Lawton Land District was James Woods of Weatherford. He chose a long strip of land and hogged the entire southern boundary of the planned town site. Public disgust was so rampant, he became known as “Hog Woods”. No one wanted to have anything to do with him. His land was tied up in the courts because so many people challenged him. They wanted to make as much trouble for him as possible. As fate would have it, he took ill and died shortly thereafter friendless.

Mattie traveled with her brother to the land office on August 6<sup>th</sup> to file her claim. Mattie chose a 160-acre tract near the southern edge of the Lawton town site. Actually, Woods did Mattie a favor. The Frisco Railroad ran through his property so he wasn’t able to get as many residential lots on his land. A creek that ran along their adjacent border caused more flooding on the Woods’ land.

Mattie suddenly became wealthy and was known as the First Lady of Lawton. News of the young woman’s newfound wealth gained the attention of hundreds of eligible bachelors. Charles Warren Payne was working as a manager for the Stephenson-Browne Lumber Company when Mattie and Frank came in to buy lumber to build a house to meet homestead requirements on her land. Mattie and Charles were married on July 16, 1902. He would eventually become the head of the Payne-McGee Wholesale Grocery company.

Mattie subdivided the land, selling many of her lots. Her offer of lots at auction on August 10, 1902 brought new hope to the people still camping on the perimeter of Lawton. The south side Beal Addition became Lawton’s first subdivision, and the city was further enhanced by Mattie when she gave land for Lincoln Elementary School, Beal Heights Presbyterian Church and the Mattie Beal Park in Beal Addition.

In 1907, the couple began constructing a fourteen-room, two-story Italian and Greek Revival–style mansion for a cost of \$25,000. In 1923 they simplified the exterior elements and renovated the home to its current Art Deco style. They hosted many dinner parties, and lived there for nearly thirty years. Mattie tragically died following surgery for a ruptured appendix in July 1931 at age 51. Her death, coupled with the Great Depression, forced Charles to sell the home in 1939. He died of pneumonia in November 1947.

The home had fallen into disrepair before it was acquired by the Lawton Heritage Association in 1974 for \$21,300. The home was listed in the National Register of Historic Places the following year and is primarily used for weddings, dinners, and other special events. Mattie’s unselfishness in turning her farm into residential properties stabilized Lawton’s economy when the city needed it most.