

**MYRTLE
ARCHER
McDOUGAL**
1866-1956



**SOCIAL
ACTIVIST
AND
SUFFRAGIST**

When future philanthropist William Warren met Myrtle McDougal of Sapulpa as a teenager when he lived in Nashville, he was impressed with her stories about the boom towns of Oklahoma. Warren soon relocated to Tulsa, where he founded Warren Petroleum in 1922 and built a fortune.

Myrtle Archer was born in August 1866 in Marietta Springs, Mississippi. Her father, a Methodist minister, would regularly ask his children, “What have you done to justify your existence today?” Myrtle would never forget that question throughout her life. She helped the less fortunate and became a better person, socially and politically.

In the 1880s, she traveled throughout the southeast selling hats. In Purdy, Tennessee, she met attorney Archie McDougal, whom she married in 1888. They eventually settled in Savannah, but Arch had eyes for the west. After the Financial Panic of 1893, he traveled to Indian Territory. He was at the opening of the 1893 Cherokee Strip and the 1901 Kiowa and Comanche opening but was disappointed so he returned to Tennessee. After running for – and losing – a circuit judgeship, Arch decided it was time to go west again.

He headed back to Indian Territory, stopping in Sapulpa, Creek Nation. In 1904, Myrtle and the children joined him. She brought a total of twenty-five dollars, provided by their families, to help them get started in the new land. Even though life was difficult there, Myrtle saw that perhaps Sapulpa had possibilities. She organized the Sapulpa Reading Club, Oklahoma Authors Guild, Current Events Club, a local American Red Cross chapter, and Thomas Wills Chapter of Daughters of the American Revolution.

In November 1905, oil was discovered on land owned by Arch. The family immediately bought a large two-story, Queen Anne house complete with tower and turret. Organizations held their meetings there, and, on the weekends, the family gave house parties for artists, musicians, and writers. Prohibition leader Carry Nation and Kate Bernard, Oklahoma’s first Commissioner of Charities and Corrections, were frequent visitors to the McDougal’s home.

Myrtle also became interested in the suffrage movement. By 1913, Myrtle McDougal was a nationally known suffragist. At the 1920 Democratic Convention in San Francisco, she endorsed pro-suffrage candidate US Senator Robert Owen of Muskogee for president. During the convention President Wilson asked the Tennessee governor to call a special legislative session to ratify the suffrage amendment. In August 1920, Tennessee became the 36th – and final – state to ratify it.

After the passage of the 19th Amendment, McDougal became a member of the Democratic National Committee for the next sixteen years. She was the first woman to give an official nominating speech at a national political convention. She was also awarded an honorary doctorate degree for public service by Oklahoma A&M College (now OSU). The McDougals retired to Coral Gables, Florida where she died in July 1956.

In her obituary, she was hailed as a “suffragette and crusading leader and organizer whose work in political, literacy, and women’s groups spanned nearly a century.”