

GET TO KNOW :

Great Depression

Wild Mary Sudik

Governors William "Alfalfa Bill" Murray, E.W. Marland and Leon "Red" Phillips

Great Red River Bridge War

Dust Bowl

Woody Guthrie

Will Rogers

Wiley Post

OBJECTIVES :

Learn about the causes of the Great Depression and its effects on Oklahoma;

Discuss farming practices and the causes of the Dust Bowl;

Find out how the Dust Bowl affected the lives of Oklahomans; and

Learn about the oil industry in the state.

Would you have supported a third term for President Roosevelt?

What issues were at stake in the Red River Bridge War?

What circumstances prompted FDR's New Deal program?

What were some of the problems in implementing the New Deal in Oklahoma?

1930

1928 Herbert Hoover elected as 31st President of the United States.

Tulsa airport opens.

October 29, 1929, Black Tuesday, Great Crash of Wall Street.

1930 Wild Mary Sudik oil well.

America enters the Great Depression.

1931 William H. "Alfalfa Bill" Murray inaugurated as ninth governor.
Great Red River Bridge War.

1932 Food riots break out in U.S. cities.

Congress creates the Reconstruction Finance Corporation for relief and public works projects.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt elected 32nd President of the United States.

1933 Congress passes the Emergency Banking Act; banks reopen.

President Roosevelt orders the U.S. off the gold standard.

Effects of drought start being felt in the Southwestern states.

Civil Works Administration established.

CHAPTER 13

The Great Depression and the Dust Bowl

The prosperity and optimism after World War I led to wealth and excess in the Roaring Twenties. The industrial East that had geared up to supply the machines of war now turned their production to cars and tractors. With cheap farm equipment to plow, plant, and harvest grain, more land could be farmed, turning the Midwest into the Bread Bowl of America. With better breeds of livestock, the vast grasslands of the Plains could supply the needs of the families who moved to the cities and prospered in the factories. Everyone felt the markets would rise forever, and the future would take care of itself.

THE WALL STREET CRASH OF 1929

brought an end to the speculative boom that had taken hold of the country. In the late 1920s, steel production, building construction, retail turnover, the registration of automobiles, and even railway receipts advanced from record to record. Speculation of better times led hundreds of thousands of Americans to invest heavily in the stock market, with many borrowing money to buy stocks. Good harvests had built up a massive oversupply of wheat. Record crops were also being harvested in Europe. Prices dropped so far that the income of wheat farmers was threatened with extinction.

There was more money out on loan than the entire amount of currency circulating in the United States in 1929. When the boom unraveled, stockholders sold more than they were buying, and the market collapsed. As business became uncertain, the American worker and farmer stopped spending. Businesses closed, workers were fired, banks failed, and the supply of money dried up along with the land. A great drought occurred over much of the continental United States. The country descended into the Great Depression.

1940

1934 Three-day dust storm in the Southwest deposits dust as far east as New York and Boston.

1935 Ernest W. Marland inaugurated as 10th governor. More than 750,000 farms lost to foreclosure; more than 10 million workers unemployed.

Works Projects Administration, established for public projects, puts 8.5 million people back to work.

Social Security Administration signed into law.

Will Rogers and Wiley Post plane crash in Alaska.

1936 Franklin Roosevelt is re-elected President.

1937 Economy starts slow recovery.

1939 Leon Phillips inaugurated as 11th governor.

1940 Roosevelt re-elected for unprecedented third term as President.



“Nothing to do. These fellers,” said one of them, “are goin’ to stay right here till they dry up and die, too.” Farmers in Sallisaw during the Great Depression.

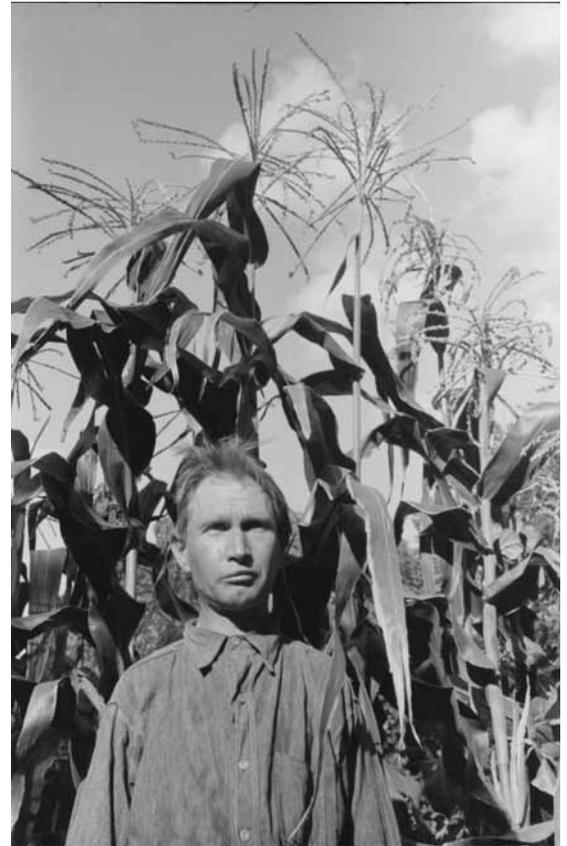
In 1929, the stock market climbed like a roller coaster. It plunged to its bottom on October 29. That day, it sold a record sixteen million shares on the exchange floor, and stock prices fell an average of forty points each. Historians generally consider the market's "crash" the beginning of the Great Depression in the United States. (It had already existed on a global scale previously.)

What was the Great Depression?

Oklahoma, in fact, had been in an agricultural depression since the World War. Farmers then produced more crops to feed the armies and the people of Europe. They continued to produce more after the war, but devastated European countries could not buy much imported produce. When prices fell, farmers could not cover debts they had incurred during the war. Some returned to farming just for themselves. Others moved into the cities to seek industrial jobs.

The Great Depression put an end to many of those jobs. Farmers found their problems getting worse. During the first two years of the Depression, farm prices fell 30 percent, but the taxes farmers paid and the costs for necessities stayed high. A bad situation became impossible for a lot of farmers. Nationwide, between 1930 and 1935, more than 750,000 farms were lost through foreclosures and bankruptcy sales.

The end of the war and the start of the Great Depression gradually hit the petroleum industry, but later. Peacetime armies use far less fuel than wartime armies, and at first, the industry felt only a pinch from that. Soon, automobile sales rose and other mechanical inventions began to raise the market again. The number of registered automobiles increased from nine million in 1920 to twenty-seven million in 1929. Oil exports also increased — from seventy-seven million barrels in 1920 to 153 million barrels in 1929. Oklahoma was producing more than 24 percent of the nation's oil. Companies like Skelly Oil Company (now Getty) and Phillips Petroleum Company gave the credit for their skyrocketing success to Oklahoma in the Roaring Twenties. They never expected the situation to be "too much of a good thing."



Russell Lee photographed this man standing in front of a corn crop he was growing to feed his family at the May Avenue transient camp in Oklahoma City. During the early years of the Great Depression, large numbers of homeless families congregated in squatters' camps. By 1931, nearly six hundred families were living in one of these shanty towns that had sprung up along the North Canadian River in Oklahoma City. City residents feared that these camps bred disease and crime and harbored political agitators. According to a 1934 study, about half the camp residents were former tenant farmers or sharecroppers who came from Oklahoma's rural areas.



What was the Wild Mary Sudik?

During those years, several fields started producing oil in north-central Oklahoma, including the Oklahoma City Pool in 1928. The most productive of the wells in that pool was on the Sudik family's farm. The mother of the family was named "Mary." People soon called the oil well the Wild Mary Sudik. Starting with a roar in March 1930, it **spewed** gas and oil so high that it sprayed houses in Norman, eleven miles south. When the wind shifted, homes some twelve miles away in Nicoma Park got sprayed. The amazing **gusher** threw an estimated 200 million cubic feet of gas and twenty thousand barrels of crude oil into the air daily for eleven days. Oil soaked hundreds of acres of farmland. Ponds and lakes bore a thick film on their surfaces. Meanwhile, the derrick was invisible, hidden by the gushing. The fire marshal announced hazard zones and prohibited any use of fire in the danger area.

The Wild Mary Sudik turned into a national novelty, with radio stations everywhere reporting on her every day. Spectators gathered as closely as they could. Firefighters stood by, ready to put out even the smallest of threatening flames. There were

several attempts to bring the well under control. Workers struggled to fasten the “Shaffer rant” to the well casing. Finally, on April 4, 1930, at 6:15 p.m., workmen battling tons of pressure turned the valve on the “Shaffer rant,” and the rumbling fountain died.

Gushers were not unusual at that time, but this one spewed more gas and oil and endangered more property than any other well in the state’s history. After it was under control, the wind quickly blew away the dangerous pockets of gas, diluting them in the air. Farmers plowed under the oil-covered topsoil. However, the state fire marshal kept a strict **blockade** of the area for several days.

The Wild Mary Sudik helped to glut (overfill) the oil market in the early 1930s. Manufacturers had cut back production. Auto sales had fallen. People and companies simply had less money to spend, and petroleum markets did not need the entire product from Oklahoma. Oil companies refused to cut back on their own production, however, and the market dropped drastically. By July 22, 1931, a barrel of oil was worth twenty-two cents.

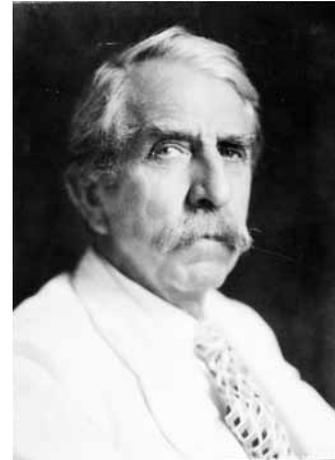
Who was Governor William H. Murray?

Although farmers across the state and nation were suffering in the Great Depression, William H. Murray believed that the only lasting society was an **agrarian** society.

Born in 1869 in the farming community of Toadsuck, Texas, William Henry David “Alfalfa Bill” Murray believed in the family farm, the **yeoman** farmer, the values of Thomas Jefferson, and the greatness of the Democratic Party. He believed in equal distribution of land suitable for raising crops. He also favored laws to keep corporations and foreign owners from accumulating large tracts of land.

Bill Murray had worked as a salesman, a teacher, a news reporter, and an attorney when he moved to Indian Territory. He married Mary Alice Hearrell, becoming an intermarried Chickasaw citizen. An expert in constitutional law, Murray had been active in politics since the Sequoyah convention. He was president of the state’s constitutional convention. He ran for governor in 1918 and lost to J.B.A. Robertson.

In 1924, the Murrays led a group of Americans, mostly Oklahomans, to Bolivia, where they tried to set up an agrarian colony. They returned to Oklahoma in 1929 after their project



GOV. WILLIAM H. “ALFALFA BILL” MURRAY

failed. Without funds, Murray borrowed \$40 from a Tishomingo bank and started another campaign for governor. He drove a used car, eating his lunch from a paper sack and talking politics on street corners. He was often unshaven and *unkempt*, but many unemployed workers and tenant farmers identified with him. The candidate advertised himself as “the common man,” a man of the people, and he won the election. Then he borrowed \$250 to go to his own inaugural ball — a square dance with himself as the caller.

Numerous members of the Oklahoma House of Representatives had won their seats on the party ticket with Murray. They stood behind his policies. The Senate, however, had a number of members who had served under William J. Holloway, who had been involved in the Johnston impeachment, standing against the new governor’s policies.

Tax reform was the foundation of Murray’s campaign. He created the State Tax Commission during his term of office. It succeeded in balancing property values and in lowering **ad valorem** (property) taxes by almost one-fourth. This was a major step for Murray toward keeping his campaign promise of tax relief for farmers and home owners.

What was the Great Red River Bridge War?

During Governor Murray’s term, he called out the National Guard twenty-seven times and declared martial law thirty-four times. His first use of the Guard occurred during the bridge war between Oklahoma and Texas in July 1931.

The two states had cooperatively built three bridges across the Red River — at the Terral-Ringgold crossing, the Marietta-Gainesville crossing, and the Durant-Denison crossing. They were replacing toll bridges with free ones. Two of them had been completed when the owners of a toll bridge at the Durant-Denison crossing obtained a federal court injunction. It barred the use of the new

free bridge at that crossing. Texas Governor Ross Sterling ordered barricades across the entry to the Texas side of all three free bridges. He felt no one should use them until the matter was settled.

Murray believed strongly in states’ rights. He believed the court order infringed on the rights of both states involved. He cited the Eleventh Amendment, stating that a private citizen could not enjoin a sovereign state in a federal lawsuit. On July 16, 1931, Murray defied the federal court injunction and issued a **proclamation** opening all three free bridges to the public. The Highway Department crews removed the barricades and opened the two completed bridges. Then they blocked the approaches to the toll bridges, sending for tractors with which to plow across them.

Sterling responded by sending the Texas Rangers to close the south side of the bridges.

By July 17, Oklahoma highway crews were blocking traffic on the toll bridges at the Durant-Denison and Terral-Ringgold crossings. Traffic was flowing across the free bridge at Terral-Ringgold, but Texas Rangers were blocking traffic at the Durant-Denison free bridge. The toll bridge was operating at the Marietta-Gainesville crossing. So, two of the crossings were open to traffic on one bridge or another, but the Durant-Denison crossing was cut off to travelers.

The bridge war gained national attention, and Murray’s popularity rose. He became a national figure as a champion of the people. On July 19, the *Daily Oklahoman* reported that the *Houston Press* had said:

Governor Murray of Oklahoma may be ignorant, uncouth and all else you have heard about him, but somehow, you have respect for a man who thinks his state is bigger than private interests. . . . In Texas, we must wait until the lawyers quit wrangling before the people get their rights.

historical
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Oklahoma National Guardsmen ordered by Gov. Murray to guard the Oklahoma entrance to the Denison-Durant Toll Bridge over the Red River. July 25, 1931.

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"They shall not pass" says W. W. Sterling, Adjutant General of Texas, in white trousers and holding a Winchester rifle 30-30. They are keeping watch on the Denison-Durant Free Bridge over the Red River, to see that no Oklahoma motorist runs through the barricade.

Spectators flocked to the Durant-Denison crossing, along with the press. On July 23, expecting further court interference, Murray declared martial law. He called out the Oklahoma National Guard to block the approach to the toll bridge.

On July 25, Federal Judge T.M. Kennerly removed the original injunction that barred Texas

from opening the free bridges. Next, Federal Judge Colin Neblett issued a new injunction barring Texas from opening the free bridges. Then Neblett issued another injunction barring the Oklahoma National Guard from blocking the toll bridge approach.

Traffic was already flowing across the free bridge, however. Neblett's injunction angered Murray, and

he told the Guard to ignore it. He then headed for Durant, where he personally took charge of matters.

The public praised the state's commander-in-chief for what they saw as his defense of the people. But on the morning of July 26, without explanation, Murray ended the war. He went along with the federal order to allow traffic to pass over the toll bridge. He stationed his guardsmen at the free bridge to ensure that it stayed open, and he returned to Oklahoma City.

In his fight to open the bridges, Murray had claimed that the federal courts were protecting the Red River Bridge Company, a group of businessmen, at the expense of citizens. He had also claimed that Oklahoma had the right to open the bridges because Oklahoma held title to both sides of the river. A later court decision examined the boundary question once again. The federal court reaffirmed that Oklahoma's boundary included the south bank of the Red River.

Why did Governor Murray declare martial law in the oil fields?

In 1931, Oklahoma oil producers were producing more and more oil while prices for that oil were steadily falling. The Corporation Commission issued "**proration** orders" to avoid waste of crude oil and disastrously lower prices. These orders set a maximum of production per well and limited production to the amount which could be sold.

Some companies had voluntarily slowed or ceased production. On July 27, 3,000 oilmen assembled in Tulsa to call for a shut-down of all operations. Other companies refused to comply with the proration orders, and the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Corporation Commission did not have the power to limit production.

On August 4, just a few days after the Bridge War, Governor Murray declared martial law in the oil fields, instructing the Oklahoma National Guard to stop production. Guardsmen shut down more

than 3,000 wells. Murray announced that, when they opened again, production would be limited to 77,000 barrels per day. He claimed that he was preventing the "exhaustion and waste" of the state's natural resources. He believed the large oil companies were jeopardizing the state and national economy and using the situation to get total control of the industry. Oklahoma's oil fields did not operate for two months.

Calling a series of meetings with the governors of Texas, Kansas, and New Mexico, Murray encouraged them to take similar steps. He also asked President Herbert Hoover to urge the limitation of oil production around the country. The other officials took action and oil prices rose.

The state legislature passed a petroleum conservation law which granted the Corporation Commission the power to **enforce** its rules and regulations. This was the beginning of the **regulation** of the petroleum industry in Oklahoma.

What else happened during Governor Murray's administration?

Murray asked for a graduated tax beginning with 2 percent on earnings of \$1,800 annually and rising to 10 percent on earnings of \$3,600 and over. His proposal passed the House in record time. But the Senate refused to act on it. Instead, it passed other tax laws which were less effective in bringing in **revenue**.

The Governor sought help from various pressure groups, asking them to support the income tax. The most effective of those groups, the teachers' organization, did not respond, and the governor was finally forced to compromise with the Senate. It passed the income tax law, but at a much lower rate than Murray had originally designed. It placed taxes on corporate income, as Murray had asked, but left out insurance companies and building and loan associations. The Senate also granted depletion allowances to oil companies.



Dorothea Lange photograph of an Oklahoma roadside encounter with day laborers. "After three years, dry years, not a thing a fellow like me can do. I'd get out and go to California like the rest of them if I could get ahold (sic) of some money and get shed of my cows. Ain't done a day's work in four months."

Voters approved a **referendum** legalizing the sale of 3.2 beer (not in excess of 3.2 percent alcohol). The state earmarked \$369,000 for building a prison at Atoka to relieve the crowding at the McAlester prison.

Governor Murray had all sorts of conflicts while in office. Several times he tried and failed to reorganize the Highway Department. He succeeded in creating jobs through that department, however, when he ordered the building of farm-to-market roads and set a minimum wage of \$2 per day for their employees.

Murray could be combative toward higher education, insisting that the "frills" be removed. He believed university professors should teach "eight hours a day, six days a week, twelve months a year," and that "attendance at professional meetings was a waste of time." He referred to the University of Oklahoma's new student union building as a "country club for students." He got involved in replacing teachers and college presidents. In 1931, he even sent the National Guard to collect tickets at the Oklahoma-Nebraska football game, claiming mismanagement of ticket money at the University of Oklahoma.

How was the Depression affecting Oklahoma?

Depression conditions were growing worse. Cotton prices dropped from sixteen cents to six cents per pound, and eastern Oklahoma depended on the cotton crop. Wheat prices dropped from one dollar per bushel to thirty-eight cents per bushel. Western Oklahoma depended on the wheat crop. Soon the roads filled with farmers and their families looking for agricultural work. The governor asked for legislative funding to give free seed and emergency food rations to the needy. He was instrumental in forming the National Council for Relief, which met for the first time at Memphis, Tennessee, in the summer of 1931.

Murray encouraged farmers to increase production. Then, he sent truckloads of men without jobs into the rural areas to work for the farmers in exchange for produce. He gave ten unemployed men permission to grow vegetables on the land between the governor's mansion and the Capitol building. He insisted that all state officials practice **stringent** economic measures, and he saw funding markedly reduced to state institutions.

Americans elected Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) president in November 1932. President Roosevelt took office in early 1933. He focused on shaping his New Deal program — putting citizens back to work and paying them with government funds until the economy recovered.



FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT was elected to office in 1932 and again in 1936. He was reelected for an unprecedented third term in 1940 and yet a fourth term in 1944. However, he died in office and could not finish the last term. He was succeeded by his vice president, Harry S. Truman.

By 1933, the banking situation was severe. That year, after hundreds of banks across the country had failed, several eastern states declared a temporary general bank closing. This meant Oklahoma banks could not use funds they held in those eastern banks, and depositors grew restless. To avoid runs (people withdrawing too much money) on the state's major banks, Murray declared a moratorium: All banks in the state were to close, beginning March 2, 1933. Two days later President Roosevelt ordered a national bank closing for more than a week. When he lifted the moratorium, the Treasury Department had new standards. Only banks meeting those standards could reopen. Some were allowed to issue limited amounts of cash. Still others never opened for business again.

Despite his concern for the poor, Murray opposed FDR's New Deal policy. He tried hard to keep it out of the state. He personally disliked the President and allowed those feelings to interfere with carrying out national policies.

William H. "Alfalfa Bill" Murray was the most colorful, controversial figure in state government. Many loved him. Many hated him. Few were indifferent. He was nominated for President of the United States at the National Democratic Convention in 1932. He believed in the benefits of an agrarian society to the extent that he rejected any build-up of industry or cities. He opposed centralizing governmental power. Yet he used the power of his office more fiercely than any preceding governor of Oklahoma.

Although he failed in some areas, he succeeded in making the state government financially sound during the worst economic crisis in national history.

What was the Dust Bowl?

By 1933, a drought had hit western Oklahoma. Year by year, the high winds of the Great Plains had turned that part of the state and parts of Texas and Kansas into the "Dust Bowl." Extreme heat, clouds of sand and dirt, and swarms of grasshoppers and locusts plagued the Panhandle. The wind



carried off tons of topsoil and scattered them across the country. Seeds got buried under sand dunes or, if they sprouted, died in the hot sun.

Because the dust got into food, kitchen cupboards, and bed sheets, people in the Midwest and Plains called this time the Dirty Thirties. Families could not make ends meet. Just as their parents or grandparents had migrated for a better life, they migrated, too.

Desperate and courageous, they loaded their belongings onto cars. They drove west to look for jobs in the fruitful fields of Arizona, New Mexico, and California. By 1935, hundreds of thousands had left their homes. From 1936 to 1940, in the second stage of the “Okie” **migration**, about 309,000 Oklahomans moved to other parts of the country.

Large numbers of migrants were from Arkansas, Kansas, Texas, Colorado, and Missouri, but all were called Okies. *The Grapes of Wrath*, a novel by John Steinbeck, was a best-seller about the Joad family, migrants from Oklahoma. Published in 1939, it won the Pulitzer Prize in literature. Through its popularity, the name Okie is now a permanent part of the American vocabulary. Many Oklahomans felt the book was

With little to no usable soil, many farmers were helpless to prevent their equipment from being absorbed by the very earth that had taken everything else. Original photo undated. Published 5/19/1976 in The Oklahoma City Times.



When people traveled during the Depression, they often set up tents beside the road rather than spend money on lodging.

Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Library.

demeaning and resented its author. Nevertheless, the name stuck. Nowadays, many people in Oklahoma are proud to call themselves Okies.

Who was Woody Guthrie?

During the second half of the Depression, about 100,000 Oklahomans settled in California. Ninety percent of them blamed the drought or unemployment for their move. The average male was thirty-three years old, married to a woman of similar age, and the father of two children.

One of the migrants of the thirties was a singer named Woody Guthrie. Born in Okemah in 1912, he was named for President Wilson. Woody was seventeen when the stock market crashed, and he later went to California to eke out a living. Over time, he became a social troubadour (poet or musical spokesman) for working people — even when they lost their jobs. Suspected of being a communist, Woody never had the popularity in Oklahoma that he reached in other parts of the nation, but for generations, his folk songs gave a voice to the ordinary people. He composed songs such as *This Land Is Your Land*, *Riding in My Car*, *California Blues*, *Pretty Boy Floyd*, *Tom Joad*, and others. In 1940, The Library of Congress asked Woody to record his Dust Bowl ballads.



WOODY GUTHRIE plays a guitar that has a sticker attached reading: “This Machine Kills Fascists.”

Who were Will Rogers and Wiley Post?

In the mid-1930s, Will Rogers was an internationally known humorist, actor, and journalist. His father had been a representative during the writing of the state constitution. A member of the Cherokee tribe and a native of Oologah, Rogers was a natural entertainer. He eased the pain of the Depression with his jokes about social and political situations. He performed on stage, in film, and on radio. He also wrote a daily newspaper column that was syndicated in more newspapers than any other column of that time.

His friend, Wiley Post, was also internationally famous. In 1933, he was the first man to fly solo around the world. His spirit of adventure had put pride into the hearts of Oklahomans during difficult times. In August 1935, the two were in a plane crash near Point Barrow, Alaska. Oklahoma mourned its two favorite sons and looked for ways to honor them. For many, it seemed that the only bright spots of the decade were gone.

What was the Marland administration?

Ernest W. Marland succeeded Alfalfa Bill Murray in the governor's mansion. Born in Pennsylvania, Marland had come to Oklahoma and had founded an oil empire at one time worth \$85 million. The 1930s decreased his wealth considerably, though he was able to pay his debts. He was inaugurated as an **avid** New Deal governor in 1934.

By then, the state had 150,000 people out of work and 700,000 people drawing relief (government financial aid). Marland had devised a relief plan nicknamed the Little New Deal. A hostile legislature, however, refused to pass Marland's major bills, and legislators greatly altered the rest, claiming that they were too expensive. At the same time, they launched a spending spree that was so large and so **notorious** that the sixteenth legislature became known as the "Spending Sixteenth."

State relief boards were set up to cooperate with federal agencies, however, and the state gave \$7.6 million to match federal relief funds. County boards distributed the money. Unfortunately, the membership of county boards had been filled through the **patronage** system (hiring friends and relatives of public officials). Great abuses occurred under their supervision. For instance, the number of retired people



WILL ROGERS and **WILEY POST** were killed in Point Barrow, Alaska, on August 15, 1935. OHS

**GOV. E. W. MARLAND**

In the early 1920s while riding high with his wealth, Marland was asked, “E. W., why don’t you have sculptor Jo Davidson make a statue to the vanishing American, a Ponca, Otoe, or an Osage — a monument of great size?” Marland answered, “The Indian is not the vanishing American. It’s the pioneer woman.”



The Pioneer Woman by sculptor Bryant Baker was unveiled on April 22, 1930. Forty thousand guests came to hear Will Rogers pay tribute to Oklahoma’s pioneers.

receiving aid earmarked for the needy exceeded the total number of seniors in all income brackets. Investigators found this happened in at least three counties.

Despite the problems between the governor and the legislature and despite the abuses of those programs, many relief programs were successful. Almost ninety thousand people worked on 1,300 Works Projects Administration jobs in the state. The WPA built public buildings, laid sidewalks, and performed other jobs in the public’s interest.

Marland succeeded in developing the Interstate Oil Compact. It was an agreement among several state governors to organize a council to advise oil companies. The council was to help regulate the industry and keep it stable. Marland served as the first president of the group.

During Marland’s term, the state formed the Planning and Resources Board, and laid groundwork for starting the Oklahoma Highway Patrol. Josh Lee, the great orator of Norman, won an election to the United States Senate in 1936. While he was serving as governor, Marland himself ran for senator in both 1936 and 1938. He lost those races.

Who was Governor Leon Phillips?

Nine candidates ran for governor in 1938, including two former governors, Jack Walton and William H. Murray. (The law did not prevent a person serving multiple terms in the governor’s office as long as those terms were not back-to-back terms.) Voters elected Leon Phillips, whose main priorities were the economy and solvency.

Born in 1890 in Worth County, Missouri, Phillips came to Oklahoma Territory as a child with his family. He attended Epworth University (now Oklahoma City University) and later the University of Oklahoma, where he played football and studied law. He had studied for the ministry at Epworth and taught school for a year before entering law school.

Leon “Red” Phillips served three terms in the State House of Representatives, and he was Speaker of the House during Marland’s term of office. He led the fight against Marland’s New Deal policy. When he took office as governor, he was fully aware of the state’s \$26 million debt. His first step to remedy the situation was to persuade the legislature to issue \$35 million in bonds. This brought the debt under control and provided a small

surplus for the operations of government. Phillips signed laws to raise taxes on gasoline, automobiles, tobacco, and other items. Legislators adopted an amendment to stop the state from spending more money than it received in tax revenues. It also cut funding for education and public institutions by one-fifth.

Most political limitations against women holding office were removed during Phillips's term. This made women eligible for all offices in the state, including that of governor. The proposal was defeated in 1940 but was re-submitted and passed in 1942.



What Was the Indian Reorganization Act?

The Indian Reorganization Act, also called Wheeler–Howard Act, (June 18, 1934), measure enacted by the U.S. Congress, aimed at decreasing federal control of American Indian affairs and increasing Indian self-government and responsibility. In gratitude for the Indians' services to the country in World War I, Congress in 1924 authorized the Meriam Survey of the state of life on the reservations. The shocking conditions under the regimen established by the Dawes General Allotment Act (1887), as detailed in the Meriam report of 1928, spurred demands for reform.

Many of the Meriam report's recommendations for reform were incorporated in the Indian Reorganization Act. The act curtailed the future allotment of tribal communal lands to individuals and provided for the return of surplus lands to the tribes rather than to homesteaders. It also encouraged written constitutions and charters giving Indians the power to manage their internal affairs. Finally, funds were authorized for the establishment of a revolving credit program for tribal land purchases, for educational assistance, and for aiding tribal organization.

About 160 tribes or villages adopted written constitutions under the act's provisions. Through the revolving credit fund, many Indians improved their economic position. With the funds for purchase of land, millions of additional acres were

GOV. LEON "RED" CHASE PHILLIPS signs legislation into law.

added to the reservations. Greatly improved staffs and services were provided in health and education, with more than half of all Indian children in public school by 1950. The act awakened a wider interest in civic affairs, and Indians began asking for the franchise, which they had been technically granted in 1924.

The Reorganization Act remains the basis of federal legislation concerning Indian affairs. The act's basic aims were reinforced in the 1960s and '70s by the further transfer of administrative responsibility for reservation services to the Indians themselves, who continued to depend on the federal government to finance those services.

Chapter Summary

The stock market crash of 1929 sent the United States into the Great Depression. Oklahoma, had already been in an agricultural depression since the end of World War I. Farm prices fell further, and the industrial jobs found in the cities also ended. Meanwhile, the oil industry in the state had been booming with rising automobile sales and other mechanical inventions.

William “Alfalfa Bill” Murray was elected governor in 1929 by advertising himself as “the common man,” a man of the people. He promoted an agrarian society and succeeded in bringing tax relief for farmers and home owners. Murray believed strongly in states’ rights. He called out the National Guard twenty-seven times and declared martial law thirty-four times to protect the interests of the state and its citizens.

Conditions were growing worse in the state from the Depression. Banks were closing from lack of funds, and a drought had started in western Oklahoma. Sand and dust swirled over Oklahoma and across the nation. Dust got into food, kitchen cupboards, and bed sheets, and when families felt they could no longer survive, they decided to find a better life somewhere else. Many moved to look for work in the fruitful fields of California. This action became known as the “Okie” migration.

Governor Murray rejected help from the federal government offered by President Roosevelt’s New Deal public works programs. The next governor, W.E. Marland accepted them. While bringing much needed relief to many, the programs also caused a deficit in the state budget. Leon “Red” Phillips was elected as the next governor whose main priorities were economy and solvency. Phillips signed laws to raise taxes on gasoline, automobiles, tobacco, and other items. Legislators adopted an amendment to stop the state from spending more money than it received in tax revenues.

FINDING THE DETAILS

1. Identify “Wild Mary Sudik” and tell why “wild” was attached to the name.
2. Explain how William H. Murray’s personality, beliefs, and actions affected his administration as governor.
3. What was the Great Depression? What does “Dirty Thirties” mean?
4. What were the causes of the Depression?
5. Name three famous Oklahomans (not politicians) from this era. Explain why they were famous.
6. Which state industries were hit hard by the Great Depression?
7. What were the state’s two most important crops in 1931?
8. Try to locate the CCC camp nearest to you.
9. What is a bank run, and how was it prevented in the 1930s?
10. What does “relief” mean in relation to the Great Depression?

TRUE OR FALSE

Which of the following statements is true and which is false?

1. The Depression arrived in Oklahoma after it did in the rest of the nation.
2. Thousands of farms went bankrupt and were foreclosed during the first half of the 1930s.
3. Except for the oil industry, all major industries were hit hard by the Depression.
4. By opening the free bridge between Durant and Denison, Governor Murray defied a Federal Court order.
5. Murray succeeded in making the state government financially sound during the worst economic crisis in American history up until that time.

DEFINE

Write a *short* definition for each word below. Use it the same way as the textbook.

- spewed
- ad valorem
- revenue
- gusher
- yeoman
- stringent
- unkempt
- relief

COMPLETE THE THOUGHT

Fill in the blanks with the correct word or words.

We think of the crash of the 1.) _____ in 1929 as the start of the Great Depression.

During the first two years of the Depression, farm prices fell 2.) _____ percent.

The oil well that spewed more gas and oil into the air than any other well in the state's history was called 3.) _____.

William H. Murray believed that the only lasting society was a/an 4.) _____ society.

5.) _____ reform was the foundation of Murray's campaign for governor.

The State 6.) _____ Commission was created during Murray's term as governor.

Migrants from the Dust Bowl of Arkansas, Kansas, Texas, and Oklahoma were called 7.) _____.

8.) _____ was a musical spokesperson for the working people.

The constitutional amendment prohibiting the state from spending more money than it takes in was passed during the administration of Governor 9.) _____.

Most limitations against women holding political office were removed during the 10.) _____ administration.

TIMELINE

Draw a horizontal timeline showing 1929–1940. Mark the following events on it by using the letters. Some years should have more than one event.

1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935
1936	1937	1938	1939	1940		

- A. The year the stock market crashed.
- B. The year of the Great Red River Bridge War
- C. The year Governor Murray ordered the National Guard to stop oil production.
- D. The year President Roosevelt ordered a national bank closing for more than two weeks.
- E. The year the Governor closed all Oklahoma banks.
- F. The year severe drought hit Western Oklahoma.
- G. The year Will Rogers and Wiley Post were killed.
- H. The year William H. Murray became Governor.
- I. The year Wiley Post became the first man to fly solo around the world.
- J. The year John Steinbeck published *The Grapes of Wrath*.

NAME THE LEADERS IN ORDER

1. The President during most of the Great Depression
2. The Governor during the start of the Great Depression
3. The Governor inaugurated in 1934
4. The Governor elected four years later

WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Write a short report on how the rest of the country sees (perceives) Oklahoma, based on *The Grapes of Wrath* and other literature or art. You may begin your research on perceptions with your textbook. Then gather information from print and digital sources (as many as your teacher requires). Organize your ideas before you write, then revise as you go.