

Miguel Antonio Otero (1829 – 1882)

Miguel Antonio Otero was a major contributor to the economic development of New Mexico. Miguel Antonio Otero was born in Valencia, Nuevo México on June 21, 1829 to Don Vicente Otero and Doña Gertrudis Aragón de Otero, natives of Spain who had come to New Mexico as colonists. Don Vicente had held prominent civic positions as judge and mayor in Valencia County, under both Spanish and Mexican Governments. Miguel A. Otero as well as other members of his family continued the tradition of civic service, as did his son Miguel A. Otero, Jr., whom President McKinley appointed Territorial Governor of New Mexico.



Otero received his early education in Valencia. In 1841 he enrolled at St. Louis University in Missouri and subsequently graduated from Pingree College in Fishkill, New York, where he taught while he began his study of law. In 1851 he returned to Missouri, where he studied law and was admitted to the bar.

In 1852 Otero became the private secretary to the Governor of New Mexico, William C. Lane, and was elected to the second Legislative Assembly of the territory of New Mexico. In 1854 he was appointed attorney general for the territory, and served for two years. On March 4, 1856 he was seated as a Delegate to the U.S. House of Representatives, after successfully contesting the election of José Manuel Gallegos. With the support of the Bishop of New Mexico, Jean Baptiste Lamy, Otero was reelected to the next two Congresses, but was not a candidate for renomination in 1860.

An outspoken Congressman and a strong supporter of the railroad, Otero devoted much of his efforts to the construction of the transcontinental railroad through New Mexico.

After Otero had completed his term in Congress, President Lincoln nominated him to be minister to Spain in 1861. Otero declined that office to accept an appointment as secretary of the territory, but the Senate did not confirm him because of his pro-Confederate inclinations.

Otero failed in a subsequent bid for reelection to Congress. His business endeavors, however, in merchandizing, banking, and farming, were highly successful. In addition, he was a strong supporter of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad. He became one of the founders and later president of the San Miguel National Bank in Las Vegas, New Mexico until his death on May 30, 1882. He is buried in Riverside Cemetery Denver, Colorado.

Source: <https://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/congress/oteromig.html>

Submitted by Deb Goodrich