

Miguel Antonio Otero II

Miguel Antonio Otero II was the 16th Governor of New Mexico Territory from 1897 to 1906 and in later life the author of several books on Western lore.

Miguel Otero II was born on October 17, 1859 in St. Louis. He was the son of Miguel Antonio Otero, a prominent businessman and New Mexico politician. Miguel Antonio Otero had an adventurous boyhood as his father, a businessman and railroad baron, moved the family from town to town across Kansas, Colorado, and New Mexico. The family established a permanent home in Las Vegas, New Mexico about 1879. Miguel attended St. Louis University and the University of Notre Dame with his older brother Page, but preferred socializing to studying.



While working as a banker, land broker, and livestock broker in Las Vegas, Otero began his career in politics. In a few years, he served as city clerk, probate clerk, county clerk, and recorder, and district court clerk. In 1892 he served as a delegate to the Republican National Convention. When McKinley was elected President in 1896, he appointed Otero governor of the Territory of New Mexico.

As New Mexico moved towards statehood, Otero survived struggles against a variety of political factions in his own party. After McKinley's assassination, he survived a particularly brutal battle with Thomas B. Catron to earn reappointment by President Theodore Roosevelt. In 1899, he chartered the first secondary school in Santa Fe, Santa Fe High School. The infighting eventually took its toll, and in 1906, Roosevelt replaced Otero after more than eight years in the governor's mansion.

At 46, Otero was still a young man when he left office. He returned to banking and mining interests for a while, then served as state treasurer from 1909 to 1911. Otero attempted a comeback as governor in 1912, but failing to receive the Republican nomination, bolted for the Progressive Party. In later years he received numerous other commissions, including four years (1917 to 1921) as marshal of the Panama Canal.

On December 19, 1888, Miguel married Caroline V. Emmett, they divorced and he married Maud Paine Frost on October 1, 1913. He had three children: Miguel A. III, who died in infancy, Miguel A. IV, and Elizabeth Emmett. Otero II died August 7, 1944, in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He is buried in Fairview Cemetery, Santa Fe, NM.

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