

= Albert A. Murphree =

Albert Alexander Murphree (April 29 , 1870 ? December 20 , 1927) was an American college professor and university president . Murphree was a native of Alabama , and became a mathematics instructor after earning his bachelor 's degree . He later served as the third president of Florida State College (later renamed Florida State University) from 1897 to 1909 , and the second president of the University of Florida from 1909 to 1927 . Murphree is the only person to have been the president of both of Florida 's original state universities , the University of Florida and Florida State University , and he played an important role in the organization , growth and ultimate success of both institutions .

= = Early life and education = =

Murphree was born near Chepultepec , Alabama in 1870 . His father was Jesse Ellis Murphree , a Confederate veteran of the Civil War ; his mother was Emily Helen Cornelius . His parents raised him in a family of ten children in Walnut Grove , Alabama , where he attended community schools and a local two @-@ year college . He graduated from the University of Nashville with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1894 , and taught mathematics at several high schools and small colleges in Alabama , Tennessee and Texas . In 1895 , he became a mathematics instructor at the West Florida Seminary (now known as Florida State University) in Tallahassee , Florida , and two years later , its board of trustees appointed him as the seminary 's third president in 1897 , at the age of 27 . Later , Murphree married Jennie Henderson , the daughter of one of the seminary 's trustees . He subsequently started and completed the academic work for a Master of Arts degree while serving as president of the seminary , renamed Florida State College in 1901 .

= = Professor and university president = =

As President of West Florida Seminary , Murphree worked to create Florida 's first liberal arts college by 1897 , and in 1901 it was reorganized into the Florida State College with four departments : the College , the College Academy , the School for Teachers and the School of Music . Under his leadership , the Florida State College produced the state 's first Rhodes Scholar in 1905 , Frederic " Fritz " Buchholz (1885 @-@ 65) .

In 1905 , several prominent political backers advanced Murphree 's name to be the first president of the new University of the State of Florida located in Gainesville , Florida , which was the newly consolidated men 's university and land @-@ grant college created by the Florida Legislature 's passage of the Buckman Act , which segregated Florida 's schools of higher learning by race and gender . Instead , the Florida Board of Control selected Andrew Sledd , then the president of the University of Florida in Lake City , to be the first president of the new men 's university . Murphree continued to serve as the president of Florida State College , which became the all @-@ female Florida Female College under the Buckman Act . From 1905 to 1909 , Murphree emphasized greater academic expectations for his female students , while upgrading and expanding the college 's curriculum to meet modern university standards . In 1909 , Murphree convinced the legislature to change the name of the college to the Florida State College for Women .

When the first president of the University of Florida , Andrew Sledd , was not re @-@ appointed for the 1909 ? 10 school year because of a conflict over what the new governor and members of the Florida Board of Education believed were Sledd 's inflexible admissions standards that were impeding the growth of the university , Murphree 's name was once again advanced as a replacement . This time , the Board of Control voted unanimously to approve his appointment . Murphree assumed his new duties during the summer of 1909 , and worked diligently with his predecessor to ensure a smooth transition that capitalized on previous successes . In a surprise to some of his previous political supporters , Murphree endorsed Sledd 's admissions standards , and thereafter actually tightened the requirements for entry again in 1912 .

Beginning in 1910 , Murphree reorganized the university 's administration into four academic

colleges : the College of Arts and Sciences , the College of Law , the College of Agriculture , and the College of Engineering , as well as the Graduate School . Murphree took particular interest in the " School of Graduate Studies , " and the university awarded its first master 's degree in 1910 . He later oversaw the addition of the College of Education in 1912 , the School of Pharmacy in 1924 , the School of Architecture in 1925 , and the College of Commerce and Journalism in 1927 . During Murphree 's term , he oversaw the construction of ten new major buildings , including such historical landmarks as Flint Hall (Science Department) , Floyd Hall (College of Agriculture) , Peabody Hall (College of Education) , the University Auditorium , and the new University Library (now known as Smathers Library East) . The University of Florida 's enrollment grew from 186 students in 1909 to over 2 @, @ 000 in 1927 .

Murphree is reported to have taken pride in knowing every Florida student by name . Under Murphree , student leaders formed the Florida Blue Key leadership society in 1923 , the university celebrated its first homecoming parade in 1924 , and students organized the first Gator Growl pep rally and variety show in 1925 .

While president of Florida , Murphree became a friend of William Jennings Bryan , the former U.S. Representative from Nebraska and the Democratic Party nominee for President in 1896 , 1900 and 1908 . Bryan established a winter residence in Miami , Florida in 1912 , and became a full @-@ time Florida resident in 1921 . Bryan was a frequent speaker throughout Florida , and first met Murphree at a speech at the university in 1916 . As a result of his friendship with Murphree , Bryan volunteered to be the fund @-@ raising drive chairman for the construction of the university 's new Florida Union building (now known as Dauer Hall) .

Murphree 's name was floated as a possible gubernatorial candidate on several occasions , but he publicly disavowed any personal interest in elected office . Without consulting Murphree in advance , on January 13 , 1924 , William Jennings Bryan announced his candidacy to be a delegate to the 1924 Democratic National Convention , where , if elected , he would nominate Murphree as the party 's candidate for President of the United States in the 1924 election . Bryan campaigned vigorously despite Murphree 's steadfast refusal to do so as a candidate . Murphree stated that he was flattered by Bryan 's effort , but " Nobody expects a Southern man to be nominated President , much less a Florida man . " Florida newspapers urged Murphree to run , but few others took his candidacy seriously . Bryan was elected as a delegate to the Democratic Convention , pledged to support Murphree 's nomination , but Bryan was greeted by boos and jeers at the convention because of his nomination of Murphree . Bryan later told Senator J. Thomas Heflin that his reception by his fellow convention delegates was the most humiliating of his life .

Murphree was elected president of the National Association of State Universities in 1927 .

= = Death and legacy = =

Murphree died unexpectedly in his sleep , at the age of 57 , in Gainesville on December 20 , 1927 . His wife Jennie had died six years earlier in 1921 . They are both buried in St. John 's Episcopal Church cemetery in downtown Tallahassee , only a few blocks from Florida State University . Murphree and his wife were survived by four children ? ? two sons , John A.H. Murphree and Albert A. Murphree , Jr . , and two daughters , Alberta Murphree Worth and Martha Murphree Wallace . Murphree 's daughter Martha graduated from Florida State College for Women with a bachelor 's degree in 1925 . His son and namesake , Albert A. " Waddy " Murphree , Jr . , graduated from the University of Florida with a bachelor 's degree in 1929 , earned a master 's degree from Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar from 1929 to 1933 , and would later serve as a professor of English literature at the university from 1941 to 1974 .

Murphree , who was the second choice to be the first president of the University of Florida , served longer as the second leader of the university than all but one of its other ten presidents . While he was not the founding president , Murphree built upon the solid academic standards , faculty selections and planning of his predecessor , Andrew Sledd , and greatly expanded and improved upon them ; he imposed the university 's modern organizational structure and was responsible for the beginnings of many of its traditions .

After his death , Murphree was widely praised on the editorial pages of newspapers throughout the state and region . He was credited with helping the University of Florida grow from a small state college into a rapidly expanding regional university in his eighteen years as its president .

The two universities that Murphree nurtured in their infancy continued to grow and prosper after his death . In 2010 , Florida State University had a total enrollment of over 41 @,@ 000 undergraduate , graduate and professional students ; the University of Florida enrolled over 50 @,@ 000 total students . In a little over one hundred years , the two national research universities , in whose early expansion and improvement Murphree had played a fundamental role , had grown to take their places among the largest single @-@ campus universities in the United States , the University of Florida among the ten largest .

In honor of its second president , the University of Florida erected a statue of Murphree on its Gainesville campus , adjacent to such landmarks as the Plaza of the Americas , Library East and Peabody Hall ; Murphree is the only Florida president so honored . Florida also named one of its early dormitories , Murphree Hall , in tribute . In remembrance of its third president , Florida State University erected a campus statue adjacent to Jennie Murphree Hall , named for Murphree 's wife .