WILLIAM H. MURRAY IN *EL GRAN CHACO*, BOLIVIA: 1919-1929

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ABSTRACT

This paper is drawn from the manuscript of a book whose purpose is to describe and assess Murray's ten years in the "Bolivian wilderness." It was presented virtually at the 72nd Annual Meeting of the Midwestern Association for Latin American Studies (MALAS), hosted by *Universidad Privada Boliviana* in Santa Cruz and Cochabamba, Bolivia. First, it places Murray's colonization project within the historical context of earlier American colonization movements and general American attitudes toward colonization and imperialism. Second, it considers the Bolivian interest in promoting colonization of its frontier areas, and in its final section, it concludes that the experience of Murray's colonies contributed to Bolivian efforts to develop the Bolivian *Oriente* after the country's 1952 Revolution. The middle part describes Murray's fascination with South America and the location, organization, and establishment of his colonies. Also described is how Murray's twentieth-century pioneers were fatally different from those nineteenth-century settlers of the Great Plains of North America. Those differences largely explain the failure of the project. In analyzing these factors, the letters of Murray's daughter-in-law at the time, Marion Draughon Murray Unger Thelde (cited as the Unger Collection) are utilized more extensively than they have been previously. The analysis rejects earlier theories that the colo-

nies failed because of the effects of "Social Darwinism." Rather it concludes that Murray's colonies failed primarily because of bad luck and bad planning, which did not consider the importance of socio-economic infrastructure for modern agricultural development. Finally, the paper ends with an assessment of the influence that Murray's adventure had on Bolivian colonization and development policies.

INTRODUCTION

William H. "Alfalfa Bill" Murray was undoubtedly one of the most "colorful" politicians ever to become Governor of Oklahoma. As Enid attorney Steven Jones summed it up, "Louisiana had Huey Long; Texas had Jim Ferguson; and Mississippi had Theodore K. ("The Man") Bilbo, but only Oklahoma could have produced William H. "Alfalfa Bill" Murray—one of the most controversial figures in the state's history."[1]

Murray was present at the birth of Oklahoma, serving as President of the State Constitutional Convention, first Speaker of the House of Representatives, and United States Congressman for four years. He was two times a candidate for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination before 1930, and once again after leaving office as Governor. He was the second Oklahoman to be a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Having suffered two defeats for the Democratic nomination for Governor in 1910 and 1918 and a narrow defeat in 1916 for renomination to his fourth district congressional seat, Murray felt unappreciated and discouraged. He decided in 1919 to give up politics and explore his lifelong fascination with South America.[2]

Murray spent the next ten years in the organization and promotion of three colonies in the *El Gran Chaco* region of southern Bolivia. While his experiment in agrarian pioneering ultimately failed, it expanded his experience and provided a period for reading and

reflection.[3] When he returned to Oklahoma in August 1929, he found that he had not been forgotten and that there was practically a ready-made organization of old friends and political allies ready to promote him in the 1930 campaign for Governor.

The motivations for Murray's colonies were not political, racial, or religious, but rather economic, and to some degree, philosophical. Murray believed that a period of depression combined with high taxes was coming to the United States, and fifteen to twenty years of "hard sledding" were ahead for the farmer. In 1923, Murray wrote:

> *I tell you, it will be yet at least fifteen years before the world gets over the present depression---I look for an upturn in the next two years, but that will be a mere "spurt" and it will go down again and last ten years—The farmer the world over has many long, lean years of hardships ahead of him—merely history repeating itself---and I say this, having read all political and economic history worth reading.*[4]

Philosophically, Murray was an agrarian (some have said Jeffersonian) who believed the farmer was the core of civilization. In his *Memoirs* he wrote:

> *It is indeed fortunate that there are long stretches of unimproved, unsettled sections of rich land suitable for white men, in South America; because sooner or later, every industrial nation succumbs to the evils growing out of labor troubles that destroy them. Indeed, about every 2,000 or 2,500 years since the morning of history, Civilization has gone down in night; and at the present time, owing to our rapid communication and transportation, we shall travel toward destruction ten times more rapidly… Civilization will then rise again in a remote unsettled section of South America, by hardy pioneers who will adopt Codes of Honor and of Integrity and Morality and Fair Dealing among men; which together constitute the 'stuff' on which Civili-*

zation is built, and upon which law and order and stability of Government are founded.[5]

Murray figured to be in on this rebirth of civilization in South America!

BOLIVIA AND AGRICULTURAL COLONIZATION

The notion of agricultural colonies in Bolivia was not new in 1924. As pointed out by Patricia Kluck, "Bolivian governments had long promoted the notion of colonization, especially in the lowlands. Plans were first put forth in the 1830s, and formal proposals were outlined in legislation in 1886, 1890, and 1905."[6]

The land law of 1905 had made 100,000 square miles in *El Gran Chaco* available to settlers, who could each acquire up to 45,000 acres at a cost of ten cents per acre. The government wanted foreigners in the *Chaco*, particularly British and Germans, for political as well as economic reasons. The boundary between Paraguay and Bolivia had never been firmly established, and in the continuing dispute, Bolivia thought the presence of foreign citizens might encourage their home governments to support Bolivia against Paraguay in order to protect their citizens in case of trouble.[7] The same principle applied as well to Americans and, undoubtedly, was at least one reason the Bolivian government was willing to give Murray such a vast concession of land whether Bill realized it or not.

Political scientist Alexander Edelmann pointed out, "Every one of the [Latin American] nations has had at least one colonization scheme of some sort. Sometimes the plan provide[d] for bringing in skilled farmers from abroad to increase the nation's agricultural output and to set up model farms with modern methods and machinery to serve as examples for the rest of the farming populace. Thus," Edelmann continued, "in Bolivia, a colony of Okinawans, established in the fertile Santa Cruz area, operate[d] in effect model experimental farms which can be of great help to native farm-

ers."[8] Unfortunately, the Murray colonies did not fall into this latter category although they probably did fall into the former group.

Indeed, the U. S. Department of State did monitor Murray's projects in Bolivia, and Murray was careful to inform the American government of his activities. While he was warned of the inherent dangers of colonization in Latin America, the Department also vouched for his honesty and legitimacy. Murray maintained contact with local diplomats in Bolivia and Argentina (particularly the American minister in La Paz, Jesse S. Cottrell), and they sent periodic reports to Washington on developments in the colonies as they understood them.[9] However, the Murrays had returned to Oklahoma by the time the Chaco War between Bolivia and Paraguay finally became violent in 1932.

Apparently, Bolivia's program had some success in attracting colonists from Germany, England, and from America. However, according to Patricia Kluck, significant colonization in Bolivia did not occur until after the 1952 revolution, when the victorious Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (MNR) promoted the "Bolivianization" of the frontier. While small numbers of Italians, Japanese, Okinawans, and North American Mennonites were attracted, the bulk of settlers were native Bolivians, particularly from the over-populated *Altiplano* that lay between the western and eastern ranges (or *cordilleras*) of the Andes.[10] The objective of most of these colonization projects after the revolution was to provide land for small, native farmers by opening new areas, and government-sponsored colonization efforts which located "many poverty-stricken Indians from the *Altiplano* to the eastern regions. Coca (which the local population chews and from which cocaine is extracted) is grown on about 75% of all farmlands and is the nation's leading source of foreign exchange, although its export is illegal."[11]

LOCATION AND ORGANIZATION OF THE MURRAY COLONIES

In 1919, Murray produced a document entitled *Murray Colony of Bolivia: Its Governing Laws and Rules* in which he set out certain obligations and responsibilities for the colonists and for himself as "proprietor." This document established the pattern for the organization of all of Murray's colonization projects, and the most important provisions were duplicated in the contracts which he signed with his colonists. For example, the new pioneers were required to move onto their tracts within a year and to construct a dwelling house and poultry shed, to fence a corral for stock, and to dig a well. Colonists were expected to participate in the construction and maintenance of public roads, schools, and churches; the surveying of their own land; the installation of a telephone system; the building of a common fence and a common pasture; and a system of central purchasing of stock, supplies, and equipment managed by the proprietor. There would be a "Commission on Health" and a "Committee of Safety."[12]

The social rule would be "co-operation and mutual helpfulness," and the morals of the colony would be governed by the Golden Rule and the Ten Commandments.[13] All colonists would pledge "to maintain the virtues of an American citizen, and will not embrace, imbibe, or adopt, even though it be fashionable, the vices and errors of other races or peoples, realizing that should we do so, we must needs fall below the standard, either of Americans or of the race or people, whose faults and errors we had added to our own vices."[14] This document was signed on December 1, 1919, by Murray and 132 prospective colonists. Many of its provisions were made a part of contracts signed later by those who actually decided to immigrate.[15]

One provision was clear: no blacks need apply. Only white Americans would be welcome in the Murray colonies.[16] Like most rural, southern whites of his generation, Murray's attitudes toward African Americans were ambivalent and inconsistent. On the one

hand, he believed in the social separation of blacks from whites, whom he thought superior in most things. On the other hand, he had good friends who were black and respected the race in a left-handed way.

Nevertheless, he was racist and anti-Semitic and appreciated blacks only when they performed well when they were "in their place." He provided an example when he was quoted as saying that he would like to see "those fast trains in Argentine managed by Americans, with North American negro porters. It would be a revelation to these people," he said. "A North American negro is the best railroad porter in the world as a North American is the best railway manager."[17]

In July 1923, Murray produced a thirty-two-page pamphlet, entitled *The Prospectus for Murray Colonies of Central South Bolivia, South America,* in which he described in detail his trips to Bolivia and the land he had gained as a concession from the government. On the first page he pointed out that "no appeal will be made to any person to join this enterprise. If you are the right person, I want you if you want to go, otherwise there will be no other invitation to anyone."[18]

Taking six pages to describe a mule trip during which he hired a German "linguist" who could speak both Spanish and English as a translator and companion, he ended that section by declaring "my hat's off to The Argentine Mule: For mountain climbing and endurance, traveling long stretches of road without water and feed, he has no equal."[19] Sometimes using local guides, he and his "tropical tramp" companion spent forty-four consecutive nights sleeping on the ground, while the entire scouting expedition lasted a total of ninety days.[20]

The prospectus described the agricultural potential and climate of Bolivia and the mission lands he had secured and their location, which this time was in Tarija Department in southeastern

Chaco, hundreds of miles from his earlier concession. Located a few miles north of the northwestern Argentine frontier, the new concession was not far above the Tropic of Capricorn (just north of 22 degrees south latitude and near 64 degrees west longitude) and twelve miles north of Yacuiba. Murray's main "home tract" of 45,000 acres was at Aguairenda. About thirty miles west of there was a second "home tract" at Itau, and northeast towards Santa Cruz, were his grazing lands of 147,000 acres which he called the "Big Pasture."[21] Thus, Murray laid out three separate areas of settlement.

At Aguairenda, which was founded around 1840, there was a Catholic mission and a small settlement of native Indians. Murray and his family would live there because of its central location. Colonists would get 80 to 110 acres of level land, depending on the size of the family, at a cost of 60 cents an uncleared acre and one to six dollars an acre for those that might be cleared. Each family was expected to take from 160 to 300 acres of hilly land for timber, building material, and other purposes, at 30 cents an acre, and at least 1,235 acres in the "Big Pasture" at 35 cents an acre. Murray figured that the typical package would cost the farmer $540.40.[22] In 2022 currency, this would equal $8,468.30.[23]

Itau, which was founded in 1790 on the Itau River, was thirty-three miles westward and over a mountain ridge from Aguairenda, which was about twelve miles northwest of Yucuiba, the telephone, telegraph, and wireless station for southeastern Bolivia. Murray believed Itau had the best soil, but it also had the disadvantage of further distance to the railroad. At Itau, colonists could buy up to 617 acres at a cost of 33 to 60 cents per acre, depending on the portion of prairie or river valley each person would get after the survey was finished. Those settling at Itau were not required to buy any "Big Pasture" land. "Every person's land will front on the river," Murray promised, but "contracts will be drawn placing the price uniformly at 40 cents an acre and then, when division is made, rebate made to those where the survey gives them less than

the average and payment of the difference where a colonist gets an extra amount of choicest land."[24]

In the "Big Pasture," which was intended for cattle raising, one might buy from 1,235 to 7,413 acres at a cost of 35 cents an acre. A person who wanted the larger number of acres was required to have a family as well as to take $10,000 to Bolivia. Murray's plan was to fence this area and turn cattle into it proportional to the number of acres each person owned. Then he would place a few Indian families on it for them to salt the cattle and look after the fence. The owners would take turns going to the property to "boss" for a month at a time. These lands were not part of the government concession but were purchased from private owners.[25]

The prospectus also described the Bolivian government as stable for the moment although subject to "political revolution," but not of the "armed waring" kind. "We would call it a change of officers," he wrote. "The present government and congress were elected by the 'Republican party' of Bolivia, while the 'Liberal party' had controlled the government for twenty years prior to the present president... It has been 52 years since they had an armed revolution and 34 years since their last war."[26]

The government made important tax concessions to the colonies and promised to support the establishment of local schools with an annual appropriation. The colonists would be exempted from import and export taxes for ten years, and there would be no income or *ad valorem* taxes. There would be only two dollars a year for a road tax and stamps on official documents. The colonists would have the guarantee of protection by the government and the right to bring in personal firearms.[27]

But the most important parts of the *Prospectus*, as it turned out in hindsight, were those parts which warned of the hardships:

> *I want colonists only, who, with their families can be contented in the country. Persons who love city life and can-*

not become contented under the inconveniences of pioneer conditions should not go. No person should go who does not expect to devote his attention to his new enterprise, nor should any person go who will try to drink up all the liquor.

Only those who desire and know how to farm, [should go]. No colonist would be permitted to become a merchant on the colony lands for 5 years; nor sell liquor or start a saloon on the land. The laws would permit you to make all the wine you wish but under my contract, no saloon will be permitted for 25 years on the land. This is to protect the children of all. Nor should any person go who expects to find 'soft-snaps' where no work is performed. No common laborer should go to South America. Such labor is too cheap for him there. This project means such inconveniences as pioneer life entails but profits at the end---ease and comforts and profits do not run together; but energetic effort and contentment even though surrounded by crude conditions, will surely bring its reward of profit and wealth at the end.[28]

Apparently, many who read his brochure focused more on the promise of wealth than the promise of hard work. Many of the men who returned may have wished that they had had a spouse or fiancé like that of C. A. Hoehman of Washita and, later, Wewoka, Oklahoma, who had signed a contract to go to Peru on February 2, 1922, and to buy 618 acres of land at 40 cents an acre.[29] When the Peru adventure did not work out, Hoehman transferred his contract to go to Bolivia. However, on March 23,1924, he wrote to Murray stating:

Dear Sir & Friend: I am writing you today to let you know that I put the South America proposition up to the girl I am going to marry in the very best shape that I could and she absolutely refuses to go so I guess its [sic] give up one or the other so I am for the present at least going to give up the South America proposition. You will recollect I told you as soon as I could talk the deal over with her I would

> *let you know definitely. I am indeed sorry that I could not persuade her to go. I really want to go. Perhaps at some future time I may get her to go but I seriously doubt it. ...I feel sure after my interview with my future wife that its [sic] futile to hope to convince her that South America is the place to go.*[30]

In this way, through the level-headedness of his fiancé, Hoehman was spared the fate of "one old fellow," who as early as arriving at Havana, "was already moping about, head between trembling hands, mumbling: 'I'm a ruined man! My God, why did I leave Oklahoma!'"[31]

ESTABLISHING THE COLONIES AND THE FIRST YEAR

The voyage from New Orleans to Cuba, through the Panama Canal, and down the coast to Antofogasto, Chile, was a weary one. Then, as described by Gordon Hines, "a long and tedious journey over the high, cold Andes on a poorly equipped railroad, dulled their appetites for adventure and half of them were already disposed to turn back. Only Murray's urging that they continue on to see the country that would be theirs and his encouraging words kept them on the long way to Aguairenda."[32]

Although he was only twenty-one years old, Murray's second son, Johnston, who would eventually become the Fourteenth Governor of Oklahoma (1951-55), was sent ahead of the main group by more than a month. Accompanied by his wife, Marion, and a colonist named Oliver, his assignment was to prepare the way with government officials, meet the freight shipment in Buenos Aries, and arrange for it to be sent to Tartagal, Argentina, where the railroad ended. Most importantly, he was to purchase mules and horses in Cordoba, Argentina, and have them at Tartagal when the main contingent arrived.[33] It was not clear why Murray did not select his oldest son, Massena, for these responsibilities, but in one of her letters home, Marion intimated that Massena was known to be "extravagant" with money.[34]

Marion was only a year younger than Johnston and was a bride of less than nine months. They had met as students at Murray State A & M College in Tishomingo. She had grown up in Davis, Oklahoma, the daughter of businessman and one-time State Senator Frank Draughon and his wife. While Marion concentrated on schoolwork and music, domestic servants did the household chores. Precocious for her age, she earned a music degree from the University of Oklahoma when she was only seventeen. She had enrolled at Murray State to complete requirements for a teaching certificate in English and music. She had also vowed to marry the first man who asked her. On the first day of classes, she was so well bundled against the cold that she fainted when she walked into a heated building. When she regained consciousness, she was lying on the floor, peering into the face of Johnston Murray. They were married in June 1923.[35]

Marion Murray carried on a prolific correspondence with her parents and other relatives throughout her time in Bolivia. The Unger Collection in the Western History Collections of the University of Oklahoma contains the correspondence (1924-1928) from Bolivia of Marion Murray as well as miscellaneous items concerning William H. Murray. The letters cover "the experiences of the Murray family in Bolivia, including accounts of their travel to Bolivia, the establishment of Murray's colonies, and of their daily operations. A number of letters contain diagrams of the colony's "layout" as well as other illustrations."[36] The "Unger" designation was due to that being the surname of her second husband and, therefore, Marion's last name when she donated the collection to the University. She later married a man named Thede, which was her name until her death and the one she used when she published her book titled *The Fiddle Book: The Comprehensive Book on American Folk Music Fiddling and Fiddling Styles (1970)*. Some scholars use that name to cite the collection, but in this paper, it is cited as the Unger Collection.

When the colonists reached Tartagal, they were refused permission

to cross the border by customs agents until the Bolivian *Delegado of El Gran Chaco*, who had come to meet the colonists, used his influence to get them across the border to Yacuiba, Bolivia. From Tartagal it was horseback and high-wheeled mule carts until they reached Aguairenda and its historic mission and small Indian village.[37] In a letter on June 20, Marion described Aguairenda as "a little village grouped in a square around a white church and some old buildings which were once a Catholic boarding school. The officials... had moved the Indians out of the old school buildings and had cleaned and whitewashed the old rooms. The buildings are about 75 years old. We are occupying the old dining room... I guess we will stay here until our own houses are constructed."[38]

Having left Oklahoma on May 4, 1924, the rather bedraggled group of twenty-nine adults, forty-nine children, and nine members of the Murray family reached their destination on June 18, 1924. In addition to "Alfalfa Bill" and his wife, Alice, among the family were Massena (23) and his wife, Frankie; Johnston (21) and his wife, Marion; William H. "Billy," Jr. (18); Jean (15); and Burbank (12).[39] They were joined later by Murray's nephew, Clive E. Murray, and his wife.[40]

Having survived their arduous trip, the colonists began to settle in and feel better about their decisions to come. But not for long. Problems began to surface almost immediately. As the settlers surveyed the land and marked it off for homesteads, they discovered that much of the Aguairenda concession was under contract to locals, particularly the choicest lots. Under the terms of Murray's agreement with the government, his concession clearly excluded any land currently under lease to another party. Murray had made the mistake of not checking the current occupants of the concession closely enough. The same condition existed at Itau where it was discovered that the prime land in the Itau River valley belonged to a local Indian.[41] Murray's promise that plots there would front on the river could not be kept.

Faith in Murray's assurances that the Bolivian government would eventually grant land titles to the settlers began to waver. Many grumbled when they found that Murray had paid only ten cents an acre for the lands, he sold to them for thirty to sixty cents an acre. These ownership concerns were compounded by complaints about insects, wild animals, the living quarters, the lack of privacy, and the lack of sufficiently clean water. In hindsight the settlers realized that Murray's prospectus had failed to mention many of these specifics.[42]

In addition, the expected rains which usually came in September, October, and November did not come on schedule, arriving not until December. An unusually dry season caused the crops that were planted to be disappointing. Locust swarms (described by some as four-inch grasshoppers), which usually flew over the area on their way to Argentina, were forced to land until their wings dried from collecting moisture as they had come from the north. Although they did not eat much (at least according to Murray), they brought visions of Old Testament plagues to the colonists and would-be colonists reading the news reports at home.[43]

The short of it was that within a relatively brief time all the colonists who had resources to pay their way back to the United States, except for two families, did so. These two plus Murray's own relatives and two families who had misrepresented their resources and had no money to buy passage home were the only ones left. When the members of the second band of colonists departed soon after arriving, only the two indigent families and the Murrays remained. Eventually, Murray paid the passage of the indigents primarily to get rid of their complaining and to avoid the cost of having to support them.[44]

MARION'S LETTERS, THE COLONISTS, AND THEIR PERSONALITIES

Marion Murray wrote nearly one hundred letters home all addressed to her family and describing her daily activities and what

Johnston and others were doing. The letters are important among available primary sources on the Murray colonies because they, perhaps better than anything else, provide a very human context through which to perceive the project and the people involved. References are made to politics, but there is not a great deal of political analysis. There is some gossip about other colonists, but not an inordinate amount. Long and detailed the first year, they are less so in later years. After the arrival of her baby, there are many stories and descriptions of the child.

The letters are very interestingly written with much detail and commentary on the environment and local customs and music. She does not complain or criticize much, but often her observations are sharp as well as perceptive. She defends the colonies and the family against their critics, but behind her words, one might note some reservations about the viability of the enterprise. All of the letters cited in this paper are addressed to members of her family, and the citation numbers refer to box and file folder in the collection.

In a letter dated July 1, 1924, Marion gave her opinions of three families who left the colony only two weeks after they had arrived. The first couple returned because the wife claimed her heart could not stand the altitude, although Marion was skeptical because it was only 2600 feet above sea level, a fact that was stated in the prospectus. Another family of seven left because he said his land wasn't as good as he had expected, although he hadn't seen it yet since it was at Itau. "I think that he and wife were homesick," she wrote, and predicted that "they will land in the States broke, and the boys will pick cotton the rest of their lives." The father was a typical "Arkansawyer," "who can't be transplanted," as was a third man who had two sons who had "left sweethearts in the States... [and] decided it was too lonely a life." Their father was "just bean-headed and ignorant." In her opinion "the best people stayed," and she thought "it a blessing that such quitters return now rather than stay and be a thorn in the flesh." She then warned

her family that "some of these people may get nasty to the newspapers about us, and if they do, you will know what is true and what is not."[45]

Her predictions of negative newspaper publicity turned out to be very true. One family was particularly critical in their interviews. On October 20, 1924, Marion wrote to her father asking him to calm her mother who was "all stirred up" about two articles in the *Daily Oklahoman*. "I knew," she wrote, "when those dirty ****** left here, that they would put a lie in the Oklahoman, so I made haste to write and tell you all about them. But it seems she was stirred up anyhow." She then proceeded to refute the articles point-by-point concluding with "it beats all how some newspapers can hunt out the lies. And how some people can tell them."[46]

On September 21, 1924, Marion described for her mother the four families who remained in the colony with the proviso that she would say only the good things and leave out the bad, declaring that "we all have our bad points anyway." Her comments gave the flavor of the kind of folks who went to Bolivia and how the Murray's regarded them:

> *Mr. ***** is from near Lawton. His wife used to live at Sulphur. [He] is a man about 38 or 40 years old—talkative, loves to eat, loves to be waited on by his wife, brother, and children. [He] has a bachelor brother who is down here. The "batch" is from the 101 Ranch, (I think he slopped hogs there) and is a good-hearted ignorant old soul. Mrs. ***** married at an early age and . . . has [four children]. She loves fancy work, and is the kind to run in four times a day and "neighbor".*
>
> *Mr. ******* is the fellow who had such a bad name in Tishomingo. He is smart, knows the cattle business, and is a good printer. But drink seems to have an upper hand of him. "******", in his sober moments, is all right. His wife is a German woman who, tho' of common people, is*

as good hearted and uncomplaining as any I ever saw. She has two girls---seven and five years—and a boy of three. The latest is expected in about three months.

*Mr. ********** is a smart, tho' uneducated, man. He has, beside a wife which I will pass up because of lack of adequate words with which to describe her, six of the meanest kids that ever graced my presence.*

*Mr. ****** and family are my choice above all. He is a big man who looks like a picture of 1900—walrus mustache, big hat, and all. He is a typical Westerner. His son, 24, is just like him, excepting the whiskers and the years. *******, the son about 15, is a bright boy who wants to take violin lessons [i. e., from Marion]. He has already taught himself all the notes in the first position. The girl ***** is… neat, and seems to be a sweet girl...*

Mr. Murray's original plan was to put all the "nesters" in Itau over the mountains and have Aguavienda [*sic*] settled by the better class of people; …but the Itau proposition having fallen through, he was forced to settle them here. [They] are typical Itau families—ignorant farmers, no more; no less. Next year Mr. Murray says that he will bring down some better people… eye, ear, nose, and throat specialist …a teacher from the journalism faculty at OU …a trained nurse... People of the class that will interest us. The leaders, not the herd.

Of course, keep this to yourselves—just Gama, Mama, and Papa; see?[47]

If these were only the "good" things that Marion could write in September about the colonists who were left, one can imagine what the bad things might have been. Her comments are indicative of an underlying "Murray attitude" and a class consciousness hardly designed to strengthen communications.

By December, three of the colonists were engaged in a letter-writing campaign to the American minister in La Paz and to the State Department as well as to some newspapers complaining and criticizing the Murrays and seeking help to return home. By April 1925, they had all left Bolivia. Two families had received funds from Murray to do so—a fact that they did not include in their comments to the Oklahoma newspapers, which continued to run negative stories on the colonies.[48]

For her part, in a letter dated July 14, 1924, Marion explained her motivations for coming to Bolivia as being for love and for profit. "I love Johnston "she wrote, "and I didn't see a future for us in the States; besides he wanted to come—and if we had stayed there and failed, he'd have said 'If we'd only have gone to South America'... Even if we fail, there'll be no one to blame, and we won't be any worse off than nine-tenths of the young couples I know. We'll be really better off because we've had this experience." Her second reason was that she hoped to make enough money to send their children comfortably to school and to provide for their retirement when the children had scattered. She hoped that there might be a little to leave to them later. She asked her family, "You don't blame me for coming, do you?"[49]

Still, it was clear that her parents were making arguments to convince her to come back to Oklahoma. However, a year later she was steadfast in her loyalty to Johnston and the family project. In a letter to her father dated May 28, 1925, she wrote:

> *Papa, I suppose you think I was deceiving you by not telling you that the colonists had returned; and I was. I was just not telling you anything about it at all, for I so disliked to talk [about] it. Yes, they have all gone, and I'm not sorry, because they were not our kind of people, and I was ashamed of them. If the state of Oklahoma, and particularly the [Daily] Oklahoman, wants to judge our success or failure by the reports of the ignorant, they may for all I care... I absolutely believe in Johnston's ability to make*

> *good here, and in the soundness of his Father's plans... I would hang my head in shame if I ever left him because things were for worse instead of better; or if I influenced him to return... when he does not want to leave Bolivia.*[50]

The stress of living in one large room with the whole family with only curtains stretched across to provide some degree of privacy sometimes affected Marion. On August 21, 1924, she wrote, "Oh Lord! Father Murray will drive me mad talking about foods—starchy foods—fried foods—why, honestly if he only knew that I've practically lived on fried foods all my life, I guess he'd pronounce me dead! And Mother Murray, too, is always talking against certain kinds of foods. Oh Lord! I'll be glad to get into a house with Johnston."[51]

Despite the difficulties of the first year, "Alfalfa Bill" was not ready to give up on his Bolivian dream. He still had a year to satisfy the terms of his concession agreement to bring in twenty-five American families who would stay two years, so in the summer of 1925 he was back in Tishomingo to recruit a new group of settlers. He issued a two-page letter on June 14 in an attempt to recruit more colonists and to correct "false news reports" which had been spread by some of the disgruntled returnees. He wrote:

> *The newspapers, having printed so much false copy (some over-praising the country; others slandering it, depending upon the bias of the writer) that I ask you to pay no attention to the papers. The following I know to be true from personal experience and observation during my year's residence. I remained that I might give you the truth.*[52]

He denied that locusts were a problem, explaining that during the dry years, as the last two had been, they flew over Bolivia on their way to Argentina. When they met moist south winds, their wings became laden with moisture which forced them to the ground where they lay until their wings dried out. Then they were up and away. They lost their wings four to five hundred miles into Ar-

gentina and that was when they began to crawl and to eat. Murray asserted that they did little harm in Bolivia, eating only young vegetables, while a much worst pest was a leaf-eating ant. These, however, were easily destroyed by piling logs over the ant hill and setting them on fire. There was about one hill to an acre. "The land is better than I thought and now worth more," Murray wrote. The rains had come late which had made the growing season at least six weeks late. "But before rains began most of the Colonists who did not get homesick and leave in the beginning, quit work and left, cursing the country and all of us who remained."[53]

After the rain came in December, Murray planted four patches of cotton, which looked promising enough for the Bolivian government to authorize him to purchase 5,000 pounds of cotton seed for the natives in that section and agreed to install a cotton gin, the first in the country. Murray contended that other crops that he planted also did well.[54]

Basically, Murray believed that the Americans who left had simply lost patience. He compared the situation with what had happened during the opening of Oklahoma:

> *This is but a repetition of the "run" into Oklahoma. Hundreds of men sat weeks at the border awaiting the shot to "make the run" but as soon as it was over they went home. Those who stayed, became independent. Just so this, if you do not intend to stay at least two years, better not go. Or, if one thinks he can improve a new country without work, or money to hire it done, better stay away. I emphasize this here as I tried to make clear in the "Prospectus", yet one man boasted on the ship going down: "I do not intend to work, I'm going to get mine from the Natives."*[55]

Twenty years later in his *Memoirs*, Murray reflected that "the colonists failed me. The country was so strange, everything so reversed, few we met could speak English, with no 'bright lights,' a virgin country without settlement. The colonists began to 'crave

the bright lights of America' before we landed, and every-one of them returned so soon as they could get some conveyance back to the Railroad in Argentina, except my family and my four sons, two of whom were married."[56]

PLAN B: NATIVES AND COTTON

Despite his efforts to refute the bad press that his Bolivian colonies had received, Murray was unsuccessful in convincing a significant number of new colonists to sign up. Although it appeared that the colonies had failed, the Bolivian government was hopeful that the project might eventually succeed. The Minister of War and Colonization, Felipe Segundo Guzman, who became interim President from 1925 to 1926, told the Bolivian Congress that Murray should be given more help. Instead of blaming Murray, the government believed that the problems were the result of trying to transplant families into a primitive area. Always resourceful, Murray turned to the development of a "Plan B" which turned on convincing the Bolivian government to renegotiate the terms of the concession so as to relieve Murray from producing American colonists. Instead, Murray would be allowed to substitute native Bolivians to populate the colonies and to engage in the production and ginning of cotton. Eventually, this was accomplished, and new life was injected into the Murray colonies at least for a time. In his *Memoirs*, Murray claimed that as many as four hundred native Bolivians were settled on the concession.[57] As Buchhofer analyzed it, "Murray hoped to secure title to his lands, first by settling Americans on them, and then, once that failed, by making Aguairenda a cotton-producing kingdom attractive to virtually anyone."[58]

The government was optimistic about the prospects of cotton production, and, according to Keith Bryant, a new cotton gin, which Murray had purchased in New Orleans on his trip home in 1925, was delivered along with a mechanic to run it.[59] The delivery, however, was to Buenos Aires in January 1926, where it remained until July when it turned up in Embarcacion, Argentina. According to Robert Dorman, "There it languished for the rest of the year and

beyond." Dorman revealed the reason for the delay: "The Bolivian government neglected (or refused) to pay the freight charges."[60] The cotton gin was finally installed by late October 1927, and it began to produce some cotton bales. But it was too little and too late to save the colony.[61]

According to Marion, the Murray family made quite a hit with the local Indians, who "grin like a Cheshire cat, and bow and scrape around to salute the Senor or Senora de Murray. They usually call us Senorita even if we are married, for we are young... Mother Murray is the 'Little Mama' of them all. 'Mamita,' they call her... They are very much in awe of Father Murray, for he bawls 'em out in English and they don't understand what he says." She continued:

> *Father Murray only knows a few words of Spanish, and can't half pronounce them. But he can make these peons understand him in some way. When any of them come from his land in Itau, they always make a long speech when they greet him and when they depart. Now his Spanish vocabulary doesn't embrace the art of politeness, so when they come to their leave-taking, and tell him they were very happy, etc; etc; kiss the feet of the senor, etc; etc; he grins and says "way-nah," which is his mode of pronouncing "bueno," and says in English, "yes, yes, you're glad you came. (way-nah, way-nah) Get on now and leave me alone." They don't know what he's saying to them, but suppose he is making his farewell speech also, and depart blissfully ignorant.*[62]

Alfalfa Bill's intimidating demeanor did not work as well on Marion as it did with the Indians. In a letter written on April 24, 1926, she revealed that he and she did not get along very well. "He thinks he is the only person…who possesses 'horse sense' and," she wrote, "if we differ, he tries to subdue us with his loud voice and his choice of words." However, she vowed to "stand by my opinions till my limbs give out." She reported that "Johnny says

'let him rave, and then do as you would have before he spoke.' I think that is the best way, but I get so hot-headed that I have to derive a little satisfaction in letting him know how very little I value his unasked-for opinion."[63]

By March 1926, the forty-five Indian families who were renting land in the colony had produced a sizeable corn crop and the alfalfa had yielded three cuttings and was sold for a dollar a bale. Conditions had improved to the extent that Murray had hired a farm manager and had moved into one of the towns. But by Fall 1926, the situation had begun to deteriorate, and the Indians had no cash with which to pay their rents. In January 1927, the government was in turmoil, and Hernando Siles Reyes, who had become President in 1926, was attempting to cancel the concession. Murray went to La Paz and prevented the termination of his concession, but by May the country was under a state of siege and the government turned hostile.[64] As Keith Bryant wrote:

> *At this low point Murray characteristically came up with a new plan: a prospectus for the El Gran Chaco Cattle Corporation of Bolivia. He was to be the president, and Sam R. Hawks, a hotel operator from Clinton, Oklahoma, was to serve as secretary and sales agent. The two men proposed to raise $250,000 to launch the venture. The Murray sons and their wives did not favor the proposal and urged Alfalfa Bill to return to Oklahoma and run for the senate or the governorship in 1930.*[65]

Murray, however, had long contended that real monetary success depended on the development of fine herds of cattle in the Chaco. Adhering to his usual pattern, Murray's prospectus called for investors to pay fifty cents per acre for grazing land with Murray using the money to buy the cattle and pay for their upkeep. Murray was to invest little or nothing himself, but he hoped the plan would help him retain his concession and convince the government of its viability.[66]

In a letter written on April 9, 1927, Marion said that it looked good on paper, but it was not a plan for her or Johnston. "The funniest thing in the prospectus," she wrote, "is the letter at the end. Father M. (I know this) wrote the pamphlet and yet at the end is a letter to Mr. Hawks from Father M. saying that he vouches for all the matter relative to this country in the prospectus! He also says he believes he knows the Chaco better than almost anyone. But he is mistaken. He only thinks he does."[67]

Hawks worked diligently to distribute copies of the prospectus and to raise the money they needed for the project. He wrote to Murray on April 11, 1927, that he had "made a hundred promises to let fellows 'in'—small fellows of course who want three or four hundred dollars or more worth of land and stock. I have explained to them all," he continued, "that the success of our venture depended upon my being able to get a few fellows . . . to put up the $80,000… We don't care, you know, who puts up the money just so [we] get plenty of it…; but it's easier to handle a few men with big money, than it is a lot of men with little money."[68]

The cattle company never materialized, but the attitude of the government did change. Local officials stopped pressing the Murrays and began to remove some of the Indian squatters from the lands. The Bolivian President recommended to the Congress that Murray be relieved of his obligation to bring twenty-five American families, that the concession be reduced to 7,500 acres, and that Murray be employed to train Indians to work the land and operate the cotton gin. Not knowing that this change came about because the border dispute with Paraguay was heating up and the government needed Murray's American presence in the Chaco to help validate Bolivian claims to the region, the Murrays rejoiced over the government's new spirit of cooperation.[69]

At the end of 1927, some members of Murray's family, in particular Marion, and her infant son, left Bolivia and returned to Oklahoma. Even Murray himself was tempted to accept an invitation to

become legal advisor to his old ally Henry S. Johnston, who had been elected Governor of the State of Oklahoma in 1926. Again, with his characteristic stubbornness, "Alfalfa Bill" declined the offer.[70] Marion wrote, "I think Father Murray intends to hang on until the cat dies the ninth time."[71]

Still concerned over the boundary dispute, Bolivia used its government-controlled press and diplomatic resources to praise the colony and maintain the myth of its success. Finally, on August 6, 1928, the Bolivian President canceled the concession, but agreed to keep Murray for the operation of the cotton gin.[72]

For his part, Murray became increasingly disturbed by the actions of the government, which was making advance preparations for a possible war with Paraguay over the Chaco. The war would finally come in 1932 and last until 1935. The government wanted to confiscate his mules and stock, which Murray refused to surrender, contending that as an American citizen, he had to be neutral. "Indeed, every male person from 18 to 51 had already been taken," Murray recalled in his *Memoirs*, "leaving no one but nine old men and boys under 18 and women" to run the colony. "Then they began on canceling the Concession," Murray continued. "I left the question with my sons, telling them that I came down there for their benefit. After two or three weeks' discussing the question with their wives, who wanted to return, we agreed to do so."[73]

They sold what they could and had an auction for the rest and "got just enough to pay… debts and return with my family and the wives of my sons, to the United States; but not enough for the sons to return. They remained until they made money enough to return themselves."[74] Landing in New Orleans on August 13, 1929, he bought passage for the family to Oklahoma. "I had $45 left," Murray wrote in his *Memoirs*, "with nothing but our personal wearing material packed in two trunks and 4,000 lbs. of my library; no household goods, no furniture of any kind."[75] Later Murray was to claim that the Bolivian government "could not have taken the

lands away from me under their own law" and that had he remained six months longer, he "could have sold to the Vice Consul of Belgium my holdings for all that it cost, plus $100.000 profit."[76]

However, as Bryant pointed out, "The Bolivian debacle never made Murray bitter. In the 1940's he wrote nostalgically of the years in South America and suggested to friends that he would like to try the colonization project again."[77] In his *Memoirs*, Murray wrote, "I really do not regret the experience. My sons particularly got a broader view of life, a greater experience that will stand them in good stead throughout life; and in order to prevent being lonely, we read nearly all the time, and learned a lot we did not know. That helped me in what I now write and was of great assistance when I was Governor of the State."[78]

Despite the fact that he had been away from the state and out of public life for ten years, Murray was almost immediately encouraged to run for office. He wanted to run for United States Senator, but that would have meant opposing former U. S. Senator Thomas P. Gore, who was thinking of making a come-back after having been defeated in the 1920 Democratic primary by Scott Ferris, who in turn had lost to Republican William P. Pine.[79] Many of Murray's supporters also wanted to support Gore, so Murray decided to encourage Gore for Senator and file for Governor.[80] The two men in some respects ran as a team buying ads together, but association with Murray helped Gore more than vice versa. After what was called by the media "the cheese and crackers campaign," because Murray had declared in a speech that he would carry his message to the people if he "had to walk and live on cheese and crackers," Murray became the ninth Governor of Oklahoma in a landslide Democratic victory in 1930.[81]

LACK OF SUSTAINABILITY IN A CLIMATE OF UNCERTAINTY

Early in his 1996 article for *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Aaron Bachhofer wrote that Murray's Bolivian plan "never stood a

chance of success. Poor transportation, inadequate utilities, misinformation and misunderstanding regarding the land, and bad luck at every turn all combined to catapult the colonists back home."[82]

Whether the project was doomed from the beginning was debatable, but certainly by the end of the first six months it was unsustainable, and the climate of uncertainty that prevailed for any such project in South America conspired against its success. This uncertainty had terminated Murray's earlier projects---the first because of the border conflict between Bolivia and Paraguay, and the second because of the undependability of the Peruvian government. When he finally was able to establish his colonies in southern Bolivia, it was again the uncertainty of the international conflict that eventually terminated the project; however, this time it was not so much the uncertainty on the part of the government as it was the lack of dependability on the part of Murray's own colonists. He had not anticipated that his colonists would fail him.

But Murray had failed his colonists as well. He had underestimated the challenges his colonies would face and overestimated his ability to overcome any obstacles. Despite his pointed and frequent efforts to recruit pioneers who fit his image of the steadfast Nineteenth Century pioneer who would endure physical and mental conditions with determination and fortitude, he ended up with colonists who were from the Twentieth Century and who expected certain conveniences such as clean water and transportation and expected their leader to make good on his promises that there would be no insects of consequence and that water was for the having only thirty feet underground. Murray anticipated the environmental problems and knew that hard work would be required, but he had not counted on having pioneers who would be faint-hearted when encountering unforeseen environmental and political problems. He thought he had controlled for that factor but was blind-sided when he discovered that his pioneers were not made of the stuff of those who had earlier opened the American frontier.[83]

He once rationalized that his colonists were like those who had come to Oklahoma to make the runs and after waiting for weeks for the big moment, and running into the new lands, picked up and left while those who stayed and were willing to work, reaped great benefits.[84] He wanted his colonists to be like the latter, but they turned out to be more like the former. He also failed to consider that the Oklahoma pioneers who made the runs in 1889 and the 1890s numbered in the tens of thousands, not the few dozen that he had recruited. Out of the thousands who made the runs only some had the characteristics to fit the model he had in mind; he underestimated his ability to use interviews and questionnaires to identify people of similar character.

In what remains the most detailed study of the Murray colonies, Anna Gwin Pickens argued in 1948 that, on the one hand, the time was not "scientifically" right for a colony in Bolivia. This was based on a Darwinian theory which she explained as a "subtle, more potent, force in human affairs" similar to that in the scientific world which brings about through natural selection the survival of the fittest. "Certain scientists of settlement," she wrote, "can most convincingly argue that the time is not yet [right] for Murray Colonies in the eastern border valleys of the Andes. Such colonies do not survive because there is, as yet no need for them in the larger sense of the needs of the world-community… It would appear that the inexorable law of survival is in full operation in Bolivia."[85]

In this vein, Pickens suggested that Murray's colonization attempt to open the *Chaco* was premature and that Murray "was ahead of his time."[86] The situation in which the world community needed a populated and developed *Chaco* had not evolved to the point where the time was ready for success. On the other hand, Pickens also said that the time for pioneers had passed. No longer had Americans in the Twentieth Century the fortitude to endure the challenges of pioneer life. Having been exposed to modern conveniences and a higher standard of living, they took much for granted, and they saw that the means to leave existed; in Bolivia, oil

field trucks frequently passed by the colony presenting the opportunity to hop aboard and to go back to civilization. In the 1890s, on the last frontier in Oklahoma, it was often a hundred miles by wagon to get back to civilization. During the occupation of the Great Plains, once one was out on a homestead, one did not have the opportunity to just pick up and leave if the insects were pests or the water poor. In short, the celebrated American pioneer spirit of earlier eras no longer existed. Rather than being ahead of his time, Murray was living in the past.

While Pickens' "scientific" analysis was an interesting one, history has generally shown that simple and obvious explanations are usually best. The failure of the colonies was not so much due to the laws of evolution as it was due to bad luck and bad planning in key areas. Intellectually, the project was not well thought through. Murray underestimated the problems and overestimated his capacity to deal with them. He had an expansive ego and an overblown sense of himself. He considered himself an expert on just about everything from how to throw a curved ball to proper diet to economic and political affairs. He had a misplaced faith in Jeffersonian agrarianism and a theory of civilization which was reminiscent of social Darwinism.

Also, Murray's remarkable skills lay more in the persuasive and legislative realms than in the executive or business spheres. This was not unusual in political leaders. Someone who could conduct a great campaign but was less effective at governing, Murray was better at selling the idea of a colony than at actually managing it. Marion observed that Murray "gets up some of the most gorgeous schemes on paper I ever saw. I wish he would concentrate on what he has… If we do hang on to this land, it won't make a cent until he does go somewhere. He's a politician—that means he is ruined for business."[87]

While a masterful campaigner, as Governor of Oklahoma, he often governed through intimidation and "good-old-boy," partisan

politics. His nicknames pretty well told the story: he was "Alfalfa Bill" because he was an expert on growing alfalfa, simply because he was the first to plant it in the Chickasaw Nation, and if an expert on alfalfa, why not everything else. He was "Cocklebur Bill" because of his irascibility and perceived arrogance, tending to charge ahead not considering less aggressive approaches. During his time as Governor, while his honesty or devotion to the public welfare was never seriously questioned, he became infamous for calling out the national guard thirty-four times and losing the accreditation of the state's higher education system.[88] Finally, as the "Sage of Tishomingo" he promoted his social, political, economic, and racial ideas and his general philosophy of life. These all made him the colorful and controversial figure that he was. A bundle of prejudices from racial to political and economic, he seldom stopped to consider that he might be wrong. Alfalfa Bill Murray was smart, but not smart enough to know that he was on a fool's mission in Bolivia. In his *Memoirs*, he wrote that his time in *El Gran Chaco* was "five years of the most peaceable, satisfactory life, to be followed by five years of the most turbulent, hotly contested of all my life, that of the campaign of 1930 to the end of my term as Governor."[89]

CONSEQUENCES FOR BOLIVIA

From the Bolivian standpoint, there was evidence that the Murray project served to increase the government's understanding of its colonization problem. It became clear that the government would have to do more than simply plant settlers, particularly foreign ones, on the frontier and let them bring civilization to the wilderness. The failure of the Murray colonies illustrated for the government that civilization had to be brought to the frontier fully grown. It would not grow by planting human seeds who resented their inability to bring civilization with them. They must bring more than pioneer spirit and the willingness to work; there must be infrastructure that would support the work and spirit of Twentieth Century pioneers, who were not like those of the Nineteenth Century. Jeffersonian agrarianism would not substitute for modern infrastructure and socio-economic support in bringing sustainable

development to the frontier. As Pickens pointed out, "Whatever the Ministry [of Colonization]'s hope, the failure of the Murray Colony had served to underline Bolivia's inability to break the vicious circle of no-people-no-roads---no-roads-no-people."[90]

Apparently, the failure of Murray's colonies figured into the change in Bolivia's colonization policy when President Hernando Siles' Government, just before its fall in 1930, repudiated the policy of undertaking colonization ventures east of the Andes in favor of maximizing production in the lands already occupied. "Evidently," Pickens wrote, "the failure of the Murray Colony was just what the Republic of Bolivia needed to see the light" that in modern times successful colonization in the *Oriente* was "a thing of the future when railroads and highways will have brought… [this] area in touch with navigable rivers flowing to the Atlantic, and with the railroads to the Argentine and of the Bolivian plateau."[91]

In more recent years, since the 1952 Bolivian Revolution, land policy was marked by lowland colonization. While the government had encouraged colonization in the 1940s, it was not until the 1950s, when a major highway connected Santa Cruz with Cochabamba and a rail system linked Santa Cruz with Sao Paulo, Brazil, that the colonization process began to accelerate. Among the settlers were former rulers, who had lost land in the reform, and native residents of the *Altiplano*, who came as laborers or who were able to buy land. The government facilitated the process by creating the National Colonization Institute (INC) to help highland families move to newly established government colonies, which were sometimes completely isolated from other towns. Between 1952 and the mid-1970s, with government help, 190,000 people colonized the lowlands. However, these government-sponsored colonies accounted for only fifteen percent of all the pioneers. Moreover, there was a high dropout rate, and many complained that the INC provided too few roads and inadequate support services. There were also settlers from Japanese groups and North American Mennonite communities who established

colonies in neighboring Paraguay as well.[92] Colonization, along with improvements in infrastructure and land reform, helped to account for the Department of Santa Cruz's rise to prominence as one of the country's most productive farming areas.[93]

The construction of the all-weather road from Cochabamba in the highlands to Santa Cruz in the lowlands was accomplished in 1954 by the revolutionary government of Victor Paz Estensoro, leader of the *Movimiento Nacional Revolutionario (MNR)* party. The importance of this development was summarized by anthropology professor Allyn Maclean Stearman as follows:

The social Revolution of 1952 led by Paz and the MNR brought radical changes to the old social order. Land was expropriated from the *patrones* and given to the peasants, the mines were nationalized, and debt peonage was abolished. There were also plans to begin to exploit the mineral, timber, and land resources of the Oriente. The road to the lowlands not only would open this territory for use but also would serve to link Santa Cruz with the rest of the nation and thus bring about a greater sense of national integration. Much of this integration, it was felt, could be achieved by encouraging highland people to take up farming in the lowlands.[94]

Thus, colonization of these new lands was expected to expand agricultural production, alleviate highland population pressures, and diminish isolationist tendencies among the lowland natives. Over the thirty years following the social reforms, according to Stearman, these goals were slowly realized but not due primarily to colonization; rather, "other factors such as the discovery of oil, the growth of commercial agriculture, increased industrialization, economic opportunities in service sectors, and, in recent years, the cocaine trade have all contributed to the growing importance of the department in the national scene. Nonetheless," Spearman continued, "for many years the colonization effort was a major fact in the development plan for Bolivia, involving considerable expenditures in monetary and human resources."[95]

Another factor in the colonization efforts after 1953 involved the engagement of the Bolivian Army, which was reorganized after the revolution. The army was not only used in the planning and construction of highways, but it also played a key role in the colonization program. A "Colonization Division" composed of four battalions was created, and as many as 1,800 men were recruited. The majority of the volunteers came from the Altiplano and the valleys, with only a few coming from the east. The soldiers did their work on individual plots of land from 170 to 200 acres in size, which would then be transferred to a peasant family. In addition to the land, a house, some implements, domestic facilities, seeds, technical instruction, medical assistance, and medicine were provided. The Bolivian Development Corporation paid half of the cost while half was paid by the peasants; the Ministry of Defense paid the salaries of the soldiers, who also planted fields to grow a portion of their food.[96]

In addition to the projects of the Army's Colonization Division, the Bolivian Development Corporation organized and supported five other colonies. Two of these had foreign colonists, and by July 1957, there were 1,885 people in all of these colonies, and 36 miles of roads and 344 houses had been built. At the end of its first two years the Development Corporation concluded that the results of the program were promising, but that the army resources should be used more efficiently, and that there was the need for a commission of participant agencies to draw up a national colonization plan that would expand the program to other areas of the country.[97] Eventually, the *Corporacion Boliviana de Fomento (CBF*) superseded the military's Colonial Division and provided civil administrative authority. Still, the military continued to provide manpower and equipment for land clearing, and many of those appointed by CBF as administrators were military or ex-military.[98]

The Bolivian government continued to be interested in foreign colonists in the years after the revolution. Spearman described it as follows:

> *During the initial years of government efforts at resettlement, foreign groups as well as Bolivian highlanders were encouraged to colonize the lowlands. In 1954, fifty Volga-German Mennonites arrived in Santa Cruz. They were followed in 1958 by another fifty Dutch-German Mennonite families and, in 1964, an additional fifty-four families from this same European religious group settled in the department. The Mennonites were guaranteed religious freedom, exemption from military service, the right to establish their own schools, and duty-free access for farm equipment.*[99]

More than 3,000 Old Colony Mennonites arrived in the late 1950s from a parent colony in Mexico and settled in the arid zone south of the Santa Cruz Department and closer to the area where the Murray colonies had been located. They were able to establish productive farms despite the environmental challenges. All of the Mennonite colonies resisted assimilation into Bolivian society with marriage outside of the religious order being prohibited. Spanish was taught only to the men for the purpose of marketing.[100]

The Mennonites were not the only foreign immigrants to settle in the Bolivian *Oriente.* There were Japanese and Okinawans as well. In 1956, an agreement was signed by the governments of Japan and Bolivia that established the colony of San Juan. By 1965, San Juan had some 262 households and 1,546 individuals, and by 1979, road improvements and the arrival of rural electrification illustrated the importance of infrastructure to the expectation of success. Likewise, three Okinawan colonies were founded east of Montero, Bolivia, and with the paving of a road through the Okinawan lands from Montero, the colonies were able to achieve permanence. Unlike the Mennonites, the Japanese and Okinawans intermarried with local Bolivians, learned Spanish, and enculturated their children as Bolivians in addition to teaching them Japanese or Okinawan values.[101]

"By the beginning of the 1960s," according to Spearman, "efforts by the Bolivian government to establish viable agricultural colonies of highlanders began to falter. In most instances, colonies had been opened for settlement before adequate market routes were made available, leaving the settler cut off not only from the marketplace but also from medical, educational, and social support. The colonies," Spearman continued, "became known as options only for the desperate and destitute and were avoided by scores of prospective migrants searching for land. Colonists frequently used the settlements as temporary stopping places until they could acquire farmland with better market access."[102]

CONCLUSION

In 1950, the city of Santa Cruz had a population of 43,000 people spread over an area of about 14,079 acres. Within fifty years, the population had increased to more than a million people extending over 61,750 acres. The Santa Cruz area in 2001 produced 42% of the nation's marketed agricultural output and 34% of its industrial gross national product. The state sponsored migration programs to the Santa Cruz region during the 1960s and 1970s were supplemented by "spontaneous settlement," intensified by "push factors," such as economic crises and severe *altiplano* droughts in the 1980s.[103] By 2021, Santa Cruz was Bolivia's largest city, the area's population was 2.4 million, and it produced 35% of the gross domestic product.

The colonization policies established in the 1950s indicated that Bolivia had learned and acted upon the lessons of the 1920s that taught the need for supporting infrastructure if colonization on the frontier was to be successful. In addition, for a dozen years, the Army was politically neutralized, and its role was redefined primarily in the direction of "civic-action projects, particularly in helping to colonize frontier areas."[104]

Undoubtedly, "Alfalfa Bill" Murray's South American dream,

which caused the intersection of Oklahoma history with the history of Bolivia, contributed to the sustainability of agricultural reform and development in Bolivia significant enough for it to deserve at least a footnote in the histories of both places.

ENDNOTES

[1] Stephen Jones, *Oklahoma Politics in State and Nation: Volume I, 1907 to 1962* (Enid, Oklahoma: Haymaker Press, Inc., 1974), 43.

[2] Gordon Hines, *Alfalfa Bill: An Intimate Biography* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Press, 1932), 249-50.

[3] William H. Murray, *Memoirs of Governor Murray and True History of Oklahoma*, Vol. 2 (Boston: Meador Publishing Company, 1945), 263.

[4] William H. Murray, *The Prospectus for Murray Colonies of Central South Bolivia, South America* (Tishomingo, OK: W. H. Murray, July 21,1923), in Murray Collection, Carl Albert Center, University of Oklahoma, Box 4, Folder 26.

[5] Murray, *Memoirs*, 2:322.

[6] Patricia Kluck, "Chapter 2: The Society and Its Environment," in *Bolivia: A Country Study*, Third Edition, ed. Rex A. Hudson and Dennis M. Hanratty (Washington, D. C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, December 1989, 1991), 83.

[7] Keith L. Bryant, Jr., *Alfalfa Bill Murray* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), 152-53.

[8] Alexander T. Edelmann, *Latin American Government and Politics: The Dynamics of a Revolutionary Society*, (Homewood, IL: The Dorsey Press,1965), 228.

[9] National Archives and Records Administration, *The Murray Colonization Project* (Washington, D. C.: NARA Diplomatic, Legal, and Fiscal Branch, File 824.52). This file includes all U. S. State Department correspondence relating to the Murray colony.

[10] Kluck, 83-85.

[11] Ray Hinkel, "Bolivia," in *Grolier International Encyclopedia,* Vol. 3 (Danbury, CT: Grolier Incorporated, 1993), 369.

[12] William H. Murray, *Murray Colony of Bolivia: Its Governing Laws and Rules* (Tishomingo, OK: W. H. Murray, 1919), 1-8 in Murray Collection, Carl Albert Center, University of Oklahoma, Box 4, Folder 26.

[13] Ibid., 6, 8.

[14] [14]Ibid., 7.

[15] Carl Albert Center, *The Collection of the Hon. William H. Murray* (Norman, OK.: The University of Oklahoma Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center (CAC), Box 4 Folder 22. Hereafter cited as *Murray Collection.*

[16] W. H. Murray and C. A. Hoehman, *Murray colony of Peru No. 1: Colonization Contract*, February 2, 1922, in *Murray Collection*, Carl Albert Center, University of Oklahoma, Box 4, Folder 21.

[17] *Johnston County Capital-Democrat*, "'Alfalfa Bill' Back in U. S. from South of Equator," Tishomingo, OK: Thursday, September 4, 1919, in *Murray Collection*, Carl Albert Center, University of Oklahoma, Box 5, Folder 50.

[18] Murray, *Prospectus for Murray Colonies of Central South Bolivia*, 1.

[19] Ibid., 3-8.

[20] Franklin Bickford, "'Alfalfa Bill' Murray Will Lead 200 U. S. Farmers to Bolivian Wilds: Picturesque Oklahoma Politician Plans Permanent Colony in South America," *The [Tulsa] World*, Sunday, July 20, 1923, in *Murray Collection,* Carl Albert Center, University of Oklahoma, Box 5, Folder 50.

[21] Ibid.; and Murray, *Prospectus for Murray Colonies of Central South Bolivia*, 1.

[22] Murray, *Prospectus for Murray Colonies of Central South Bolivia*, 10, 15-16.

[23] Alan Eliasen, "Historical Currency Conversions," *Fink Server Pages* (Online resource: https://futureboy.us/fsp/dollar.fsp), accessed September 14, 2022. Cited hereafter as "Currency Conversions."

[24] Murray, *Prospectus for Murray Colonies of Central South Bolivia*, 9-10, 16.
[25] Ibid., 15, 12, 17.
[26] Ibid., 18-19.
[27] Ibid., 3, 26.
[28] Ibid., 22-3.
[29] Murray, W. H. and C. A. Hoehman, *Murray Colony of Peru No. 1: Colonization Contract,* February 2, 1922. In *Murray Collection*, Carl Albert Center, University of Oklahoma, Box 4, Folder 21.
[30] *C. A. Hoehman to William H. Murray*, March 23, 1924 (personal letter). In *Murray Collection*, Carl Albert Center, University of Oklahoma, Box 4, Folder 23.
[31] Hines, 252.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Unger Collection, *The Marion Draughon Murray Unger Papers, 1924-1936* (Norman, OK.: The University of Oklahoma Western History Collections, 1924-1936), April 12, 1924, U-4:1. Cited hereafter as Unger Collection.
[34] Unger Collection, January 13, 1927, U-5:6.
[35] John Perry, "Focus: Bolivian Adventure Remembered," *The Daily Oklahoman/Oklahoma City Times* (Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma Publishing Co., February 2, 1996), 1, 4 in Unger Collection, Box U-7, Folder 11.
[36] Kristina L. Southwell, Compiler, *Guide to Manuscripts in the Western History Collections of the University of Oklahoma* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), 346.
[37] Hines, 252-3.
[38] Unger Collection, U-4: 2.
[39] United States Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920* (Washington, D. C.: National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), 1920), Roll T625_1464; Page 18B; ED 99; Image 1110.
[40] Unger Collection, June 23, 1924, U-4:2.

[41] Aaron Bachhofer, II, "Oklahoma's Exiles: William H. Murray and Friends in the Bolivian Chaco, 1924-1929," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 74 (Winter 1996): 406, 408-09.
[42] Ibid., 409.
[43] W. H. Murray, *Murray Colony of Bolivia: To All Interested Therein*, Tishomingo, OK: W. H. Murray, June 14, 1925, 1. In *Murray Collection*, Oklahoma Historical Society, Box 21, Folder 20.
[44] Bryant, 161-65; Hines, 253-54.
[45] Unger Collection, U-4:2.
[46] Ibid., U-4:4.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Bryant, 163-65; NARA, *Murray Colonization Project*.
[49] Unger Collection, U-4:3.
[50] Ibid., U-5:1.
[51] Ibid., U-4:3.
[52] Murray, *Murray Colony of Bolivia: To All Interested Therein*, 1.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., 2.
[56] Murray, *Memoirs*, 2:263.
[57] Murray, *Memoirs*, 2:264.
[58] Bachhofer, 419.
[59] Bryant, 166-67; Unger Collection, September 10 and September 23, 1925, U-5:3.
[60] Robert L. Dorman, *Alfalfa Bill: A Life in Politics* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2018), 231.
[61] Ibid., 235.
[62] Unger Collection, October 4, 1925, U-5:3.
[63] Unger Collection, U-5:4.
[64] Bryant, 167-68.
[65] Ibid., 169.
[66] Bachhofer, 419-20.
[67] Unger Collection, U-5:6.

[68] Sam Hawks to Bill [Murray], April 11, 1927 (personal letter) in *Murray Collection*, Carl Albert Center, University of Oklahoma, Box 4, Folder 23.

[69] Bryant, 169-70; Dorman, 236.

[70] Unger Collection, January 13, 1927, U-7:2; and Bryant, 170.

[71] Unger Collection, February 15, 1927, U-5:6.

[72] Bryant, 170-71.

[73] Murray, *Memoirs*, 2:264.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid., 2:265.

[76] Ibid., 2:263.

[77] Bryant, 172.

[78] Murray, *Memoirs*, 2:265.

[79] Gore was grandfather to author Gore Vidal and a distant relative to Tennessee Congressman and Senator Albert Gore, Sr. and his son, Vice President Al Gore, Jr.

[80] Keith Bryant also told the story that when senatorial candidate Charles Wrightsman, a Tulsa oil millionaire, rebuffed Murray's attempt to get him to buy an ad in his *Blue Valley Farmer* campaign newspaper, Murray wired Gore and encouraged him to file. Gore returned to Oklahoma and filed against Wrightsman in the Democratic primary. Bryant 185. In his *Memoirs*, Murray told the story slightly differently, assigning the credit for the contact to his campaign managers. Murray, *Memoirs*, 2:365, 372.

[81] Bryant, 185; Murray, *Memoirs*, 2:365, 372. See also, W. Edward Rolison and Carol Duncan, "Sam Hawks and the Oklahoma Gubernatorial Campaign of 1930," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 100 (Winter 2022-23): 410-43.

[82] Bachhofer, 399.

[83] Anna Gwin Pickins, "The Murray Colonies of Bolivia," (Chicago, IL: Master's thesis, University of Chicago, 1948), 203. In Oklahoma Historical Society Research Library.

[84] Murray, *Murray Colony of Bolivia: To All Interested Therein*, 2.

[85] Pickens, 207.

[86] Ibid., 208.

[87] Unger Collection, April 9, 1927, U-5:6.

[88] Edda L. Bilger, "William Henry Murray: Governor of Oklahoma, 1931-1935," *in Oklahoma's Governors, 1929-1955: Depression to Prosperity*, ed. LeRoy H. Fischer (Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1983), 54. Also, LeRoy Fischer, "Oklahoma's Chief Executives, 1929-1955," in *Oklahoma's Governors, 1929-1955: Depression to Prosperity*, ed. LeRoy H. Fischer (Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1983), 6.

[89] Murray, *Memoirs,* 2:350.

[90] Pickens, 205, 206.

[91] Ibid., 206, 295.

[92] Daniel J. Seyler, "Chapter 3: The Economy," *Bolivia: A Country Study*, Third Edition, ed. Rex A. Hudson and Dennis M. Hanratty (Washington, D. C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, December 1989, 1991), 116.

[93] Ibid., 118-19.

[94] Allyn Maclean Stearman, "Colonization in Santa Cruz, Bolivia: A Comparative Study of the Yapacani and San Julian Projects," in *Frontier Expansion in Amazonia*, ed. Marianne Schmink and Charles H. Wood (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1984), 232-33.

[95] Ibid., 233.

[96] Robert J. Alexander, *The Bolivian National Revolution* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1958), 174-77.

[97] Ibid., 177-78.

[98] Stearman, 234.

[99] Ibid., 235.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Ibid., 236.

[102] Ibid., 236-37.

[103] Joshua Kirshner, "Migrant's Voices: Negotiating Autonomy in Santa Cruz," in *Latin American Perspectives,* 37 (July 2010): 109-10.

[104] Rex A. Hudson, "Chapter 5: National Security," *Bolivia: A Country Study*, Third Edition, ed. Rex A. Hudson and Dennis M. Hanratty (Washington, D. C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, December 1989, 1991), 226.