

Lawrence Dallas, a Democrat was elected as the first Sheriff of Mayes County in 1907. He served until 1911. He was born in about 1870 in Missouri and settle at Chouteau. He and his family moved to the Taft, California area where he worked in the oil fields. He was a member of the Methodist Church and Oddfellows. He died in 1944 at San Luis Obispo, California and is buried at Taft.

“Uncle George” Mayes, a Democrat, served from 1911 to 1915. He was born in 1848 in Going Snake District, Cherokee Nation and was 5/8 Cherokee. He was the nephew of Chief Sam and Chief Joel Mayes. Served 3 terms on the Cherokee National Council from 1885-87, 1895-97, 1901-03 He was a horse and cattle rancher southeast of Pryor. After retiring from the ranch in 1923, he moved to Oklahoma City where he died in 1940. “Uncle George” is buried in Pryor’s Fairview Cemetery. He was a member of First Baptist Church and Pryor Creek Masonic Lodge. In an interview with Oklahoma historian Harold Keith, Mayes said “If I had a warrant for an Indian, I just sent him word to come in but if I had a warrant for a white man, I had to go get him. He wouldn’t come in unless I brought him in.”

Joe M. Ross of Locust Grove was the first Republican sheriff, serving from 1915 to 1919. Born in the Cherokee Nation in 1880, he was the great nephew of Cherokee Chief John Ross. In later life he lived in Claremore and died in 1971. He is buried in Pryor.

John Birchfield, Democrat from Pryor Creek served from 1919 to 1923. He was born near Locust Grove in 1883. For quite some he delivered mail in a horse&buggy on Pryor’s rural route and also operated a service station. In 1937 he was elected as Chief of Police in Pryor and served until 1943. At that time his health began to fail and he died in 1946. He is buried in Fairview Cemetery at Pryor.

J.A. “Jess” Layton, a Democrat, served one term from 1923 to 1925. He was born in 1882 at Bushong, Kansas; his family moved to Indian Territory about 1893, settling near Locust Grove. He died in 1950 and was buried in the city cemetery at Sperry.

Charles M. Kelley was the second and last Republican sheriff, serving from 1925 to 1931. He was born in 1867 in Kansas. He came here in 1920 to be the farm superintendent at Whitaker State Orphanage. Upon leaving the sheriff’s office he operated a dairy farm until his retirement in 1942. He then developed his dairy farm into a housing addition in north central Pryor. He was an elder and board member of the First Christian Church in Pryor. Prior to moving to Mayes County he was a deputy sheriff in Blaine and Kingfisher Counties. He died in 1951 and is buried in Fairview Cemetery at Pryor.

Don McElroy was the first person to serve non-consecutive terms as sheriff, from 1931 to 1933 and again from 1941-1943. He also elected to the office of County Assessor serving one term from 1929-1931. He came to Mayes County in about 1919 settling at Locust Grove but moved his family to Pryor after his election as assessor. He also was an insurance and car salesman. He was an active member of the Cole Free Will Baptist Church. At the time of his death in 1948 he was a supervisor for the Oklahoma Highway Department. He is buried in Pryor. During his first term in office, he received much praise and credit from the press for the quick response and thorough investigation in solving a high profile murder case in December 1931. George Barcus had been found beaten to death near Adair on what it now Hwy 69. The sheriff had to travel to Muskogee and Siloam Springs in able to solve the crime. Mrs. Barcus and her alleged lover Blue Rigsby were arrested, charged and later convicted. During his second term, Sheriff McElroy was indicted by a grand jury that recommended his ouster and removal from office. Charges of overlooking illegal liquor activity, improper disposal of confiscated slot machines among others were brought to light by the panel. During his ouster trial in the early 1942, he was acquitted of all charges and allowed to main in office. However, the shadows of improper activity cost him the election that year, being defeated by Bit Madison. He died in 1948 and is buried in Fairview Cemetery at Pryor.

W.J. “Bill” Walker of Chouteau served in office from 1933-1937. He was born in 1876 in the Cherokee Nation and was a member of a pioneer Cherokee Family. He also served on the Cherokee National Council. He died in 1952 and is buried in the Chouteau City Cemetery.

Walter Panter was the second man to serve non-consecutive terms as sheriff. He served from 1937 to 1941 and again from 1947 to 1951. He was born in 1900 near Stillwell, I.T. He was a longtime Mayes County lawman, serving as sheriff, city policeman in Pryor, deputy sheriff and guard at the Oklahoma Ordinance Works. He was a very devoted democrat and was very active in county party activities. He died in 1955 and is buried in the Pryor Cemetery. While he was sheriff, the county purchased a sub-machine gun, also called a "tommy-gun", with funds donated by Pryor businessmen. This was considered a major crime-fighting tool in the 1930's by law enforcement agencies throughout the country. The machine gun remained county property until it was declared surplus and sold in the mid 1980's.

D. L. "Bit" Madison, a democrat from Pryor Creek served from 1943 to 1947. He was born in 1902 at Big Cabin. He was a farmer and gas station operator. He was also very active in the 4-Way Rodeo Club and served as club President at one time. In 1948 he moved to Colorado where he worked as a carpenter in the uranium mines. He died in 1983 and was buried in Fairview Cemetery in Pryor. It was during his term of office in 1945 that two-way radios were first installed in the cars of deputies.

Warren "Kit" Robinson of Locust Grove served from January 1951 to December 6, 1951. He was born in 1922 at Locust Grove and served with the Navy Seabees during World War II. Kit was only 28 ½ years old when he was elected sheriff in 1950, making him youngest person ever elected to that office in Mayes County. He lost to Fred Grimes in the primary but defeated Grime in the run-off by 677 votes. He then easily defeated the Republican candidate in the general election. He was responsible for tracking the infamous Davenport Brothers during their crime spree throughout the county. By the end of his first year Sheriff Kit Robinson was facing ouster from office charges of habitual drunkenness. He was given a choice by the County Commissioners to face an ouster trial or resign; he chose the latter. He was the only sheriff in county history ever removed from office. After leaving the sheriff's office, he moved his family to the Moses Lake, Washington area. He died there in 1987.

Ralph Willcutt of Adair was serving as undersheriff for Kit Robinson when he was appointed by the county commissioners to fill the remainder of Robinson's term. He served from 1951 to 1953. Willcutt was born in 1900 at Snowball, Arkansas. He came here in about 1944 and worked as a guard at the Oklahoma Ordinance Works. One of Mayes County's most famous unsolved murder case; the shotgun slaying of County Attorney Jack Burris at Locust Grove in the summer of 1952 occurred during Willcutt's term. He worked day and night for the rest of the year following leads in the case. Sheriff Willcutt was defeated by Slim Weaver in the 1952 election. He died in 1972 and was buried in the Ghormley Cemetery at Pensacola, Oklahoma.

Slim Weaver served as sheriff from 1953 to 1965. He had previously worked as a deputy for Kit Robinson and as Salina City Marshal. Weaver was born in Kansas in 1910. Slim was defeated in the 1964 election by political newcomer Joe Faircloth. After leaving office in January 1965, he was elected as Chief of Police in Pryor, serving from 1965 to 1973. He died 1983 and was buried in Graham Memorial Cemetery in Pryor.

Joe Faircloth, a democrat from Pryor served two terms from 1965 to 1969. He came to Pryor about 1946 from Alcorn County, Mississippi. Prior to the sheriff election he worked as a milk distributor. While serving in office he got a calling to the ministry. In the 1968 election he chose not to run and became a full time clergyman. He died in Pryor in 2000 and is buried in Fairview Cemetery.

Pete Weaver, a democrat, was the third and last man to serve non-consecutive terms. He served from 1969 to 1971 and from 1973 to 1981. He was born about 1921 at Salina. It was during his term of office that the Camp Scott Girl Scout Murders occurred near Locust Grove in 1977. The deaths of the three little girls and the subsequent manhunt and trial for their alleged killer was the most famous murder case in

county history and gained national attention in the press. Also during Weaver's administration, a self-ordained holiness priest by the name of Father Jean L' Aquarius was arrested near Eucha on drug charges. The jail inmate sued Sheriff Weaver claiming that the sheriff should provide regularly cleaned and pressed linen for his jail bunk. After his defeat in the 1980 election, Pete retired and looked after his cattle at his farm near Strang. He also ran unsuccessfully for county commissioner and sheriff. He died in 1991 and is buried in Fairview Cemetery at Pryor.

Doyle "Hokie" Foreman, a democrat served from 1971 to 1973. He was born in about 1917 near Locust Grove. He graduated from Locust Grove School in 1935. He later owned a drug store in Pryor. In 1961, President John F. Kennedy appointed him as the United States Marshal for the Northern District of Oklahoma. He served in that capacity until 1969. Foreman who was a staunch and loyal democrat later worked at the Pryor Tag Agency for several years until his death in June of 1991. He was buried in Fairview Cemetery at Pryor.

Paul Smith, a democrat from Locust Grove served from 1981 to 1985. Born in 1923 at Wagoner, he attended school at Locust Grove and in Colorado. He was a former Tulsa Police officer and left that work to enter the orthopedic equipment business. He returned to Locust Grove about 1975 and was a former Locust Grove police officer. He reportedly lives in the Bristow, Ok area.

H.W. "Chief Jordan" served from 1985 to 1989. He was born in Pryor and was a 1959 graduate of Pryor High School where he was a star football player. He also served as Mayor of Pryor from 1975 to 1983 and 1999-2003. He has a college degree and is a former schoolteacher, citizen soldier, and insurance agent. After leaving the sheriff's office he worked for the Cherokee Nation as a tribal marshal. In the summer of 1997, he was appointed as the chief marshal by Cherokee Chief Joe Bird and served during remainder of Bird's term. He worked as Mayes County deputy sheriff for Berry and Cantey. He then served as Chief of Police for the Town of Adair, as well as Adair School resource officer.

Wiley J. Backwater served from 1989 to 1993. A fullblood Cherokee, he was raised in the Salina area and was a 1962 graduate of Salina High School. After a stint in the army, he went to work for the Pryor Police Department in about 1967. By 1973, he was Assistant Chief of Police and in 1975 was elected as Pryor's Chief of Police. He held that office until his retirement in 1987. After a short stint at Phillips Driscopipe, he was elected sheriff. He is retired and living in the Locust Grove area.

Harold Berry of Locust Grove served from 1993-2001. A native of the Tahlequah area, and Marine Corps veteran, he came to Mayes County in 1970 where he was stationed with the Oklahoma Highway Patrol. He retired from the patrol in 1990 and served a stint as under-sheriff for Wiley Backwater. He defeated his former boss in the 1992 election, ran unopposed in 1996, but lost his 2000 re-election bid. During his tenure in office, the new county jail was designed, constructed and funded by a county-wide sales tax proposal. After leaving office was employed by the Oklahoma Corporation Commission as a Motor Carrier Enforcement Officer but is now retired and resides in rural Locust Grove.

Frank Cantey of Pryor served from 2001-2013. A California native, he came to Northeast Oklahoma in the late 1970's. He served as a police officer in Kansas, Oklahoma before coming to Pryor Police Department in 1980. He retired from Pryor P.D. in 2000 as a shift sergeant. He decided not to seek re-election in 2012.

Mike Reed of Locust Grove was elected in 2012 after defeating two other candidates in the primary election by a 57% margin. A 1987 graduate of Locust Grove, Reed was a former police officer in Pryor and former county deputy. Reed was re-elected without opposition in 2016.