

Renfrow, William Cary ^[1]

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Renfrow, William Cary

by William S. Powell, 1994

15 Mar. 1845–31 Jan. 1922

William Cary Renfrow, governor of Oklahoma Territory, was born in [Smithfield](#) ^[2], the son of Perry and Lucinda Hawkins Atkinson Rentfrow [*sic*]. After attending local schools young Renfrow volunteered for service in the [Civil War](#) ^[3], joining Company C, Fiftieth North Carolina Regiment in February 1862 and becoming a first sergeant. He afterwards transferred to Company F, Sixteenth Battalion of North Carolina Cavalry, and was paroled at [Goldsboro](#) ^[4] on 13 May 1865. Before the end of 1865 he went with a friend to Russellville, Pope County, Ark., where he entered business.

By the mid-1880s Renfrow was holding office in the local government but moved to Norman, Okla., in 1889, when the Oklahoma Territory was opened to general settlement. After operating a successful livery business he became involved in banking with an associate in Oklahoma City. Renfrow was chosen as a delegate to the first Territorial Convention. On 7 May 1893 he was appointed third governor of the Oklahoma Territory by President Grover Cleveland and remained in office until 24 May 1897. During his administration the Cherokee strip was opened, and he approved and signed the act establishing the Oklahoma Historical Society. After becoming involved in the lead and zinc business in southwestern Missouri and northeastern Oklahoma, he settled at Miami, where he became owner of extensive mining properties under the firm name of Renfrow Mining and Royalty Company, of which he was president for the remainder of his life. Several years prior to his death he also became involved in the gas and oil business and spent considerable time in the Mexia area of Texas because of his investments there in the Mirindo Oil Company.

On 17 Oct. 1875 Renfrow married Jennie B. York of Judsonia, Ark., and they became the parents of W. C., Jr., and a daughter who married Fred Robertson of Houston, Tex. He was buried in the city cemetery, Russellville, Ark. Renfrow's brother, James T., was the great-grandfather of [James B. Hunt, Jr.](#) ^[5], who was governor of North Carolina during the years 1977–85 and again starting in 1993.

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