

152 *South Dakota History*



Alice Alt Pickler

Dakota Images

Soon after she arrived in Dakota Territory in 1883, Alice Alt Pickler began to pioneer for temperance and woman suffrage, causes for which she would remain a resolute and energetic worker for the next half century.

Alice Alt, the eldest of Joseph A. and Eliza Kepford Alt's seven children, was born 17 November 1848 near Iowa City, Iowa. At the age of fourteen, she entered the University of Iowa, where she later met Maj. John A. Pickler, a twenty-two-year-old Civil War veteran. The pair married in 1870, after both had graduated from college. They then moved to Ann Arbor, where John Pickler graduated from the University of Michigan Law School. The couple lived briefly in Kirksville, Missouri, before moving to Muscatine, Iowa, where John Pickler practiced law and became active in Republican politics.

In 1883, the Pickler family, along with Alice's two younger sisters, joined a group of fellow Iowans as homesteaders in Faulk County, Dakota Territory. John Pickler helped to establish Faulkton as the county seat, building a successful law practice and real-estate business there. Both Picklers quickly became leaders in territorial and state politics and widely recognized for their commitment to temperance and woman suffrage. While her husband worked for these causes in the territorial legislature and later the United States Congress, Alice Pickler promoted them as a congressman's wife in Washington, D.C., and as a grass-roots organizer in Dakota. She spent several decades as an officeholder on the state and national levels in the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Women's Relief Corps of the Grand Army of the Republic, the American Woman Suffrage Association, the South Dakota Equal Suffrage Association, and the Methodist Episcopal church.

Alice and John Pickler also raised four children in the three-story, twenty-room home they constructed around their original claim shanty in Faulkton. In addition to containing one of the largest libraries in the state, the home served as a social center where Alice Pickler hosted numerous community meetings, programs, weddings, proms, and receptions. Widowed in 1910, Alice Pickler spent many years managing the family's Faulk County farmland as well as remaining active in political and social causes. She died on 31 March 1932 while visiting her youngest daughter in Mission, Texas.

Copyright of South Dakota History is the property of South Dakota State Historical Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.

All illustrations in this issue are property of the State Archives, South Dakota State Historical Society except for those on the following pages: front cover (bottom inset), from George E. Farrell and Ivan L. Hobson, Organization and Results of Boys' and Girls' Club Work, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Circular 152 (Apr. 1921); pp. 82 (top), 86, 92, 94, from Florence E. Ward, Status and Results of Home Demonstration Work, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Circular 141 (Jan. 1921); p. 85, from South Dakota Farmer Semi-Monthly, 22 Dec. 1916; p. 87, from South Dakota Farmer Semi-Monthly, 9 June 1916; p. 89, from Florence E. Ward, The Farm Woman's Problems, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Circular 148 (Nov. 1920); pp. 101, 104, 106, 108, 113, from James Marten, Milwaukee, Wis.