



OKLAHOMANS

The Story of Oklahoma and Its People



John J. Dwyer

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Cover photo of the state flag of Oklahoma rising above the devastated Plaza Towers neighborhood of Moore following the May 20, 2013 tornado, as a new storm approaches. Photo by Emmy-winning OETA Deputy Director and news anchor Dick Pryor.

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The Oklahomans

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A note to our readers:



In order to deliver as much helpful information as possible to you on the widest range of subjects in the print version of *The Oklahomans*, we include the first paragraph or so of the biographical and other sidebar features, then continue each piece on a cloud-based web location, hence the cloud icons that accompany them. This allows the most narrative content, illustrations, and biographies by saving the printed space required for full biographical features.

Respectfully yours,

John J. Dwyer



Chapter 9

1900s–Statehood

First, then, if you are a statesman and true to your country, safeguard the child.

—Kate Barnard



The November 17, 1907 edition of *The Daily Oklahoman* announces statehood.

▶ c. 1900–1916	Progressive Era
▶ 1901	Kiowa, Comanche, Apache, Wichita, and Caddo land lotteries
▶ 1905	Sequoyah Convention
▶ 1905	Glenn Pool Field oil strike
▶ 1906	Oklahoma Enabling Act
▶ 1906	Oklahoma Constitutional Convention
▶ 1907	Oklahoma becomes 46th American state
▶ 1908	State Bank Guaranty Law passed
▶ 1908	Indian allotment sales restrictions rolled back
▶ 1908	Charles Haskell elected first governor
▶ 1908	African-American state representative A. C. Hamlin elected
▶ 1909	Columbia Bank & Trust fails
▶ 1909–1910	Crazy Snake Rebellion

The Twin Territories churned into the 20th Century with all the muscle and fire of the locomotives now crosshatching the region. People, industry, and ideas poured in. During the decade of the 1900s, the combined population of Indian Territory (IT) and Oklahoma Territory exploded from 790,391 to 1,657,155, the greatest ten-year gain in history for the land comprising the present Sooner State. Between 1900 and 1910, Oklahoma's Founding Fathers birthed in their own words, "Not just a new state, but a new kind of state." Tens of thousands of pioneers and settlers raised up a vibrant new American state from the sprawling Southern Plains, and the land loved by so many of those people ushered forth one of the greatest oil booms in history.

With an American population mushrooming from both immigration and high domestic birth-rates, the nation's vast frontier mostly secured by the dawn of the new century, and much of the South still stymied by the devastation of the War Between the States and its aftermath, the sweeping tracts of free land, moderate climate, and opportunity to build new families and a new state alike in the Oklahoma country gleamed like a beacon of last chance hope and paradise to whites

and blacks alike across the United States and even into other countries.

These events, meanwhile, seemed more like the final curtain closing on their history and culture to many of the Twin Territories' tribal members. Perceiving the approaching juggernaut of American statehood, but hoping to retain as much autonomy as possible, the leaders of the five republics held a constitutional convention in 1905. They aimed to establish the state of Sequoyah, which they did not intend to include the Oklahoma Territory. Natives—whether full blood,



Old meets new as motor cars line up along dirt road downtown Drumright in early 1900s Indian Territory.



Cheyenne and Arapaho young men branding cattle in 1900 at the Seger Colony (Chapter 7) in Washita County.

mixed blood or intermarried whites—would comprise a high percentage of Sequoyah’s population, even higher among its leadership.

The U.S. Presidential administration of Republican Theodore Roosevelt, however, possessed its own agenda, quite different from the Indians’. It rejected entry into the Union of the strongly-Democratic Sequoyah. Instead, it approved the single statehood of Oklahoma, comprised of both the Oklahoma and Indian Territories. It hoped the higher quotient of Republicans in Oklahoma Territory would swing the single state into the Republican political column.

But Southerners—Democrats nearly all—raised for generations to detest the “Party of Lincoln” that had burned down much

of their Confederate country during the war and oppressed it during Reconstruction, poured into the Oklahoma Territory from Texas and elsewhere during the latter runs, lotteries, and allotments. Now both territories were strongly Democratic, still the conservative party of that generation, at least regarding issues such as social relations, religion, and race. So would be, for a long time, the 46th state of the Union, Oklahoma.

Path from Indian Republics to American State

- 1887—Dawes Allotment Act ends tribal ownership of Native lands except for the Five Civilized Tribes
- 1890—Organic Act creates Oklahoma Territory from the western half of Indian Territory, governed by U.S., not Indian, laws
- 1893—Dawes Allotment Act applied to Five Civilized Tribes
- 1898—Curtis Act abolishes tribal rule and subjects all Indian Territory residents to federal jurisdiction
- 1906—Oklahoma Enabling Act orders Indian Territory and Oklahoma Territory to elect delegates to a Constitutional Convention tasked with creating the American state of Oklahoma; remaining tribal government authority ends
- 1907—Oklahoma becomes the 46th American state, all its land and people—including Natives—subject to United States laws



Glenn Pool—Oklahoma's First Oil Boom

In the spring of 1901 the Federal government sold at auction the town site of Red Fork, a new community on the Frisco line which was then building about three miles west of Tulsa. Robert Galbreath, representing Colcord, Galbreath and C. G. Jones, attended this sale and purchased twenty-five or thirty lots. On a lot near these lots, where he lived, Doctor Bland was drilling for water and struck a small gas well. A number of other parties from Oklahoma City had bought lots...and we all began drilling about the same



Oklahoma's first great oil boom, the Glenn Pool Field near Tulsa in old Indian Territory.



A Glenn Pool oil field gusher, around 1905.

time. Years later I heard stories of several fellows who drilled the first oil well in Red Fork, but for all these years I have felt that we were the first to strike oil there.

—Charles F. Colcord

Oil!

Indians in the Nations had found oil on their land as early as Lewis Ross in 1859 (Chapter 4), but lack of technology and transportation kept it in the ground until the early 1880s, when drilling began near Atoka on Choctaw land and on the Illinois River in the Cherokee country. Discoveries, on an escalating scale, peppered Indian Territory for more than twenty years. Then in 1901, daredevil wildcatter Robert Galbreath and others struck oil in the new Red Fork field, four miles west of and across the Arkansas River from the Creek-spawned village of Tulsa.

The international publicity triggered by Red Fork far outstripped its actual production, which proved modest. But the sensation spawned a new land run as exciting in its own way as those of 1889 and 1893. Thousands of drillers, speculators, investors, service people, roughnecks, and other business people and workers—including railroad employees—swarmed to the area. Red Fork did not need most of their talents, but another field of inestimably greater magnitude soon would.

Galbreath, evidencing the eye for the deal and the nose for riches inside the earth that was already catapulting him into the front rank of early Oklahoma entrepreneurs, suspected a lot more oil lay to the south of Red Fork. With his partners

Charles Colcord and Frank Chesley, he secured a gaggle of leases in and around the area ten miles south of Tulsa owned by Robert and Ida Glenn and her family. Shrewdly tracking the federal government's evolving policy on land leasing from its Native allottees, Galbreath delayed drilling there until restrictions on drillers softened. Satisfied they had, he drilled nearly 1,500 feet down where he believed oil was and brought in the Ida Glenn Number One in late 1905. He sank well after well, and brought in the famed Glenn Pool field, one of the mightiest on record. It generated more revenue than the California Gold Rush and Colorado Silver Rush combined.

This epic play, which mushroomed from eighty acres in size to eight square miles, launched the careers of Harry Sinclair (Sinclair Oil) and J. Paul Getty (Getty Oil), spurred pioneer stalwart Dennis Flynn's infant Oklahoma Natural Gas to pipe gas to Oklahoma City—which helped build both ONG and OKC—triggered construction of thousands more miles of gas pipeline into the Oklahoma country, secured millions of dollars of investment capital and jobs for the territory/state, birthed such towns as Sapulpa, Jenks, Glenpool, and Mounds, and established Tulsa for half a century as “The Oil Capital of the World.”

Oklahoma was churning out over 40,000,000 barrels of oil a year while not yet in the Union.



Oil boom Cleveland, Pawnee County, in 1905.

By the end of the decade, and for twenty years beyond, it stood as the greatest oil-producing state in America, and ever since as one of the top two or three. For once, here was a country that lived up to the stuff of the Hollywood legends it spawned. As historian and pioneer Angie Debo

The early-20th-century Oklahoma oil boom lives as one of the greatest discoveries of natural resources in history. It made fortunes, helped build a state, and spawned a gallery of larger-than-life legends.

wrote, “The oil industry was a free for all scramble, with the great Mellon and Standard interests, the young oil worker who could scrape together enough money to drill a well of his own, and the gambler who must try one more ‘sure thing,’ all entering into the most unrestricted rivalry.”

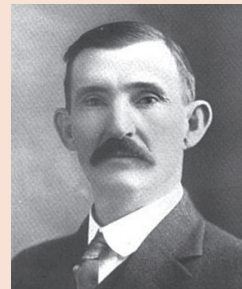
The early-20th-century Oklahoma oil boom lives as one of the greatest discoveries of natural resources in history. It made fortunes, helped build—and sustain—a state, and spawned a gallery of larger-than-life legends, men and women with the cunning derring-do of riverboat gamblers, the leather-tough perseverance of frontier preachers, and the steel-nerved calm of Old West gunfighters. Most of the boom, though, occurred on land owned by the five Indian republics, then their individual members. Historian Debo again speaks through the years in a manner, as often she did, akin to a still, small, penetrating voice of reason and protest against the blindness, folly, and injustice that can taint even the most exciting, revered events in American history:

The Federal administration of the tribal estates had not always been to the best interests of the owners, but there was a genuine desire to protect the individual allottee. As the Federal officials began to realize the vast helplessness and



Robert Galbreath, Patriarch of Oklahoma Oil (1863–1953)

After this bold pioneer sniffed out oil on the Glenn spread, he coolly waited years for federal regulations on the land to relax, then sunk the wells that ignited the historic Glenn Pool Field strike. That catapulted Oklahoma into America's largest oil producer, simultaneous with its statehood; established the nearby city of Tulsa as the Oil Capital of the World; and bequeathed Galbreath his lofty status as the patriarch of the Sooner State energy empire.



Downtown Bartlesville in 1907, already a booming oil center and home to such present and future energy titans as Phillips Petroleum founders Frank Phillips and L. E. Phillips, their brother Waite Phillips, Harry Sinclair, and J. Paul Getty.

inexperience of the average Indian, they began, through a blundering process of experimentation, to try to guard his property. But because of the lack of a definite and constructive policy, and most of all because of the inherent difficulty of the task itself, the general effect of allotment was an orgy of plunder and exploitation probably unparalleled in American history.

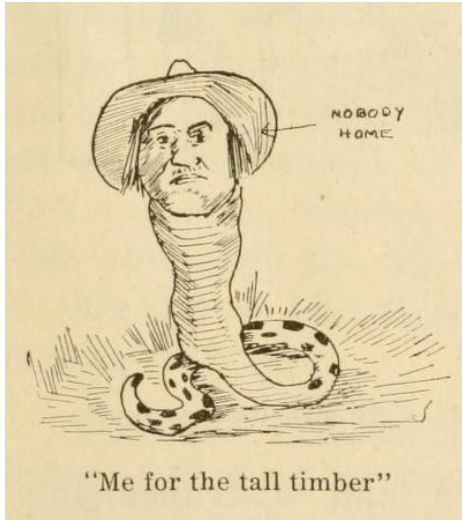
Crazy Snake Rebellion

Now unfolded the sad concluding chapter in the long and bloody tragedy of war between red and white Americans. Following the 1898 Curtis Act

(Chapter 9) that mandated land allotment and the end of tribal rule, Pleasant Porter, the wise, great, and final Principal Chief of the Creeks (1899–1906), feared three possible tribal responses to allotment. These included: 1) armed resistance, leading to certain destruction, 2) abandoning the country, and thus losing their homes and likely not finding new ones, and 3) peaceful non-cooperation, which he reckoned would accomplish nothing but more suffering for the Creeks.

Most members of the five Indian republics followed Porter's counsel to cooperate. Minority factions in each did not. Most famous of these efforts was that of the conservative Creek full-bloods, perhaps as many as 5,000 of them, close to one-third of the tribe. Led by Chitto Harjo, whose name translates in English into Crazy Snake, they formed their own shadow Creek government, including Lighthorsemen. These armed riders carried out punishments, including land and property theft, intimidation of white landowners, and beatings and whippings of fellow Creeks who supported or even grudgingly accepted allotment or who hired or rented land to whites.

In rapid succession, the Creek National Council requested help against Harjo and his followers; a shootout between "Snakes" and white lawmen shed blood; and a troop of U.S. cavalry arrived to deal with the rebellion. Then, Deputy Sheriff Grant Johnson and his Creek interpreter Bernie McIntosh calmly rode out, captured Harjo and two of his confederates, and brought them in.



Merle St. Leon's view of Crazy Snake eluding lawmen.

Sadly, intratribal incidents, frustration and threatening by some of Harjo's followers, as well as a growing white population that grew increasingly alarmed at what the Snakes faction might do, all contributed to a mounting tension in the area through the decade of the 1900s. Thrown into the uneasy mix were African-Americans, many of them unhappy with their prejudiced plight and not above robbery to supply their needs.

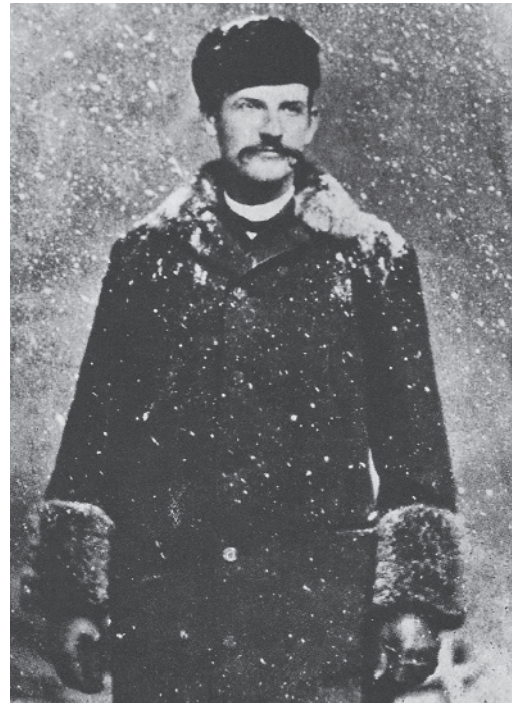
A series of thefts by blacks and Creeks, in fact, triggered a second and final, tragic chain of events in 1909–10, sometimes known as the "Smoked Meat Rebellion." Lawmen and territorial militiamen set out to deal with African-Americans suspected in a number of stolen meat incidents. The long-simmering tensions and the agitation generated among anti-allotment Creeks by Harjo's continued defiance provoked McIntosh County Sheriff William L. Odom to obtain a warrant for his arrest, then pursue him with an armed posse. Over the next several days, several white lawmen including Odom, Snake Creeks, and blacks died in confused ambushes and shootouts.

With non-Snake Creeks and whites in the area near panic and ready to commence a shooting war, the mayor of Checotah declared: "Crazy

Snake must go . . . His people are dangerous to the community. . . . It is necessary that (the Snake Indians) be cleaned up or else they will eventually depopulate this part of the country of Whites . . . The situation is critical."

This chaotic sequence electrified newspapers across the world. Frank Canton, who roamed many a trail with Heck Thomas and himself stood as one of the Oklahoma country's most famous lawmen, decried the media's trumping up of the situation. He also said, however: "While a great many sensational reports have been sent out regarding the Snake uprising and correspondents have painted exaggerated pictures of the situation, the fact is not altered that the Snakes are a dangerous lot and should at this time be suppressed once and for all."

A white lawman finally shot Harjo in one blazing gunfight. This ended significant Snake

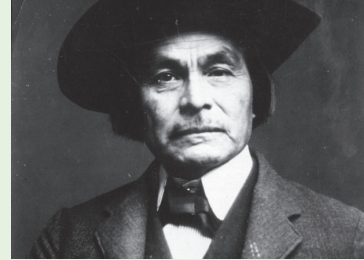


Frank Canton, who overcame an early criminal career in Texas to become one of the West's greatest lawmen. He led the successful pursuit of Chitto Harjo.



Chitto Harjo and the Crazy Snakes (1846–1911)

This full-blood Muscogee Creek devoted his life to carrying out his role as tribal “gatekeeper.” Finally, he gave that life in doing so. He never capitulated to the U.S. government’s assimilation program for the Creeks and other Oklahoma tribes. He refused to accept a land allotment, he helped form a rump Creek government in defiance of the federal takeover of that authority, and he died beyond the reach of the U.S. authorities, from a gunshot wound suffered in a shootout with Oklahoma lawmen.



resistance, though the determined Creek eluded posses large and small, even including legendary Oklahoma lawman Bill Tilghman. He was never found until after dying from his wound in 1911 while hiding out in the Kiamichi Mountains of the Choctaw country. The specter of violent Native opposition to allotment passed into history with the demise of Chitto Harjo.

Debo’s landmark work *And Still the Rivers Run* chronicled the astounding effects of grafting on the Indians of the five (disappearing) republics. The following paragraphs reveal, in Debo’s quoted words, a portion of the many unintended consequences wrought by the forced allotment of tribal lands. They do not represent isolated incidents.

Agricultural leases—“One man secured the appointment as guardian of a large number of (allottee) children; he then leased the land at a very small figure to a real estate dealer with whom he was in collusion; and the real estate dealer subleased it to farmers at an enormous profit . . . The child (often) received nothing for his allotment.”

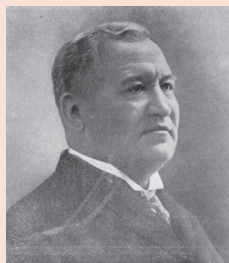
Grafting

Many 21st-century Oklahoma Indians’ lack of enthusiasm for the 2007 Statehood Centennial grows understandable when considering—beyond the Trails of Tears, Reconstruction, and the allotment process—the 20th-Century phenomenon of grafting. In short, grafting involved the gaining possession of Natives’ allotted lands, whether through legal or illegal means, both of which abounded during the decades following allotment.

Oklahoma historian and pioneer Angie



Pleasant Porter—Creek Statesman (1840–1907)



Irish-American John Porter Snodgrass lay dying, full of days, in his home on the Arkansas River near Clarksville in present Wagoner County. He had fought the Creeks with Andrew Jackson, stood up to save the tribe from extermination, was adopted by them but excommunicated by his own family, brought his wife and children with the exiled Indians to Indian Territory, then joined his friend Sam Houston in the Texas Revolution.

Now family members ringed his deathbed. He placed his hand on the head of one of them, his seven-year-old grandson Pleasant, whose dark skin evinced his Native blood. “He will do more than any of you,” the dying man declared with signal prophecy.



Chief Porter: Should Oklahoma Control Allotment?

Few people of any race brought a more circumspect, humble, and balanced perspective to the 1906–07 United States Senate Select Committee to Investigate Matters Connected with Affairs in the Indian Territory and its deliberations over tribal allotments and the governance of that challenging process than Creek Principal Chief Pleasant Porter. He recognized both the many wrongs committed against the Natives, and the advantages, even urgency of statehood for the Oklahoma country, and the land and property laws requisite in the latter. His agonized words pose disturbing challenges through the years to observers on any side of the matter.

Forced marriage—“A state law . . . conferred majority upon married (but underage allottee) minors. An unprincipled man or woman would be employed to win the confidence of the young Negro or Indian; the marriage would take place in the real estate office and the deed would be signed immediately after; and the charmer would walk out of the office, never to be seen again by the allottee.”

African-Americans—“Guardians hastened to unload the land of Negro and mixed-blood children through the county court . . . Seminole freedmen who had been tricked into giving deeds under the impression that they were signing other instruments had helplessly remained in their old homes and had been arrested and placed in jail for trespass. ‘The days of . . . the good-for-nothing lazy criminal nigger, are numbered in Seminole County,’ wrote a local newspaper.”

INDIAN LAND FOR SALE

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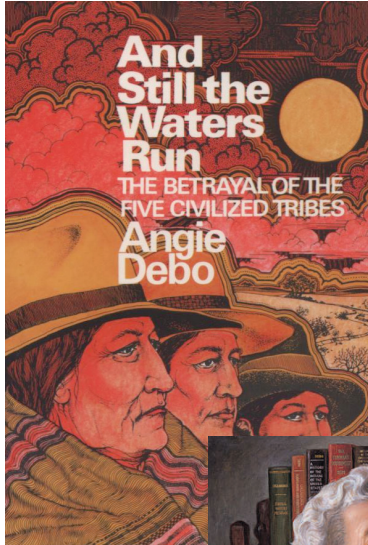
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POSSESSION
WITHIN
THIRTY DAYS

FINE LANDS IN THE WEST

IRRIGATED
IRRIGABLE
GRAZING
AGRICULTURAL
DRY FARMING

IN 1910 THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR SOLD UNDER SEALED BIDS ALLOTTED INDIAN LAND AS FOLLOWS:

Location	Acres	Average Price per Acre	Location	Acres	Average Price per Acre



Author and Oklahoma pioneer Angie Debo, by the renowned Charles Banks Wilson.

Children—"The most revolting phase of the grafter's activities was his plundering of children . . . Every minor possessed an estate varying in value from an average farm to the great and speculative wealth represented by an oil allotment. No other children had ever been so rich or so defenseless . . . (grafters) controlled the children's land through guardianships, and awaited only a legal opportunity to dispossess their wards through purchase."

Orphans—"Orphans received the most generous educational provision by the tribal governments. But when the land was allotted, the average parent was entirely irresponsible in dealing with his children's property; he was ready to sign it away for any bauble or appropriate the entire income for family expenses . . . parents . . . innocently leased their children's land, possibly to several different parties, and spent the money . . . Many

heartbreaking cases were uncovered of wrongs done to orphan children . . . a practice so general as to be almost universal."

Kidnapping—"Many young allottees were virtually kidnapped just before they reached their majority. They were put on the train, spirited from place to place, kept in hotels under constant surveillance, and induced to sign deeds at midnight on the morning they became of age."

Murder—"Murder became very common. Some spectacular crimes occurred, such as the dynamiting of two Negro children as they slept, in order that the conspirators might secure title to their Glenn Pool property by forged deeds; and many sinister stories were told of Indians who died under suspicious circumstances after bequeathing their property to white men.

"An epidemic of deaths broke out among aged Choctaws . . . Federal officials became convinced of an organized plot whereby the Indian made out a will to the land dealers in return for a ten-dollar monthly pension for the remainder of his life. A suspicious fatality followed the making of such wills, and in several cases carbolic acid or ground glass was found on the premises. Several prominent real estate dealers were arrested, but the mystery of the Choctaw murders was never solved."

Even wealthy allottees, such as part-Cherokee Robert Owen—one of Oklahoma's first tandem of U.S. Senators—suffered. They often lost large tracts of land that exceeded the allotment limits on which they had built, cultivated, and improved. This increased the temptation for them to break either the letter or the spirit of the law, or both, to retrieve their valuable holdings.

The Cast Grows

Nor were whites the lone culprits. Numerous Natives and African-Americans threw themselves into grafting enterprises. Many forgery gangs included black or Indian members who impersonated allottees of their own race. Elsewhere, as

*I don't go so far as to think that
the only good Indians are dead Indians,
but I believe nine out of every ten are,
and I shouldn't like to inquire too closely
into the case of the tenth.*

—President Theodore Roosevelt

historian Debo chronicled, one Creek freedman signed away his own oil-rich allotment any time he needed cash, at prices ranging from fifty cents to \$1,000. He apparently sold the allotment forty-three times before he came of legal age. Years of contentious, expensive court battles ensued over the land once he did become an adult; scores of such legal sagas occurred over land allotments.

Though many federal agents labored for a just execution of the allotment process, an “astounding” number of swindlers arose from their former ranks. The Natives received little help from atop the government, either. Despite his “progressive” *bona fides*, Theodore Roosevelt, President from 1901–1909, stood conspicuous for having been repeatedly called upon by the five Indian republics for assistance—and rarely if ever providing it.

Roosevelt's four-volume saga *The Winning of the West* provided abundant clues to his views dealing with the red race:

No other conquering and colonizing nation has ever treated the original savage owners of the soil with such

generosity as has the United States . . . No treaties, whether between civilized nations or not, can ever be regarded as binding in perpetuity . . .

All men of sane and wholesome thought must dismiss with impatient contempt the plea that (America) should be reserved for the use of scattered savage tribes, whose life was but a few degrees less meaningless, squalid, and ferocious than that of the wild beasts with whom they held joint ownership . . . I don't go so far as to think that the only good Indians are dead Indians, but I believe nine out of every ten are, and I shouldn't like to inquire too closely into the case of the tenth.

Nor did territorial and state legislators as a whole gain an honorable legacy through the process of allotment and grafting. Still, some Oklahomans shine with unsullied brilliance through the mists of time for their remarkable wisdom in these affairs and their respect for both the law and the dignity of their fellow human beings. Notable among them are reformer Kate Barnard, missionary and pastor Joseph S. Murrow, and the other member of that inaugural tandem of U.S. Senators, Thomas P. Gore. All these, and numerous others, fought with vigor and against a tide of slings and arrows for the powerless and the “least among these.”

Allotment: Missionary vs. Politician

As the United States Senate Select Committee to Investigate Matters Connected with Affairs In the Indian Territory considered the gargantuan issue of Indian allotment in the Twin Territories and whom should control the process, Joseph Murrow, famed Baptist missionary to the Creeks, Choctaws, and Chickasaws, engaged in a memorable exchange with Colorado Senator Henry Teller during Murrow's testimony. Historian Angie Debo wrote, “Dr. Murrow expressed the most solemn warning against turning the problem over to local control—a warning that viewed in the light of subsequent events seems charged with prophetic insight. When Senator Teller urged his favorite thesis that the evils of the system were only temporary and that the proposed state of Oklahoma would soon correct all abuses,” Murrow challenged him and the rumble unfolded as follows for the world to witness.





A youthful Thomas P. Gore, around the time of his 1907 election as one of Oklahoma's first two senators. His stature grew through the years and decades as a defender of Indian rights.

Defending the Grafters

Alas, real history seldom allows its students simple accounts or answers. As Bartlesville oilman William Johnstone, famed driller of the Nellie Johnstone Number One well (Chapter 8), stated regarding allotment restrictions, “There are two sides to that question. There is the Indian side to it and there is the commercial side to it. There is the side that affects the Indians and there is a side that affects the material progress of the country.”

Further toughening the debate was the reality that “the material progress of the country,” though often meaning the opportunity for the very rich to grow even richer, also enfolded the survival of vast hosts of white, black, and red Americans and their families. Even Chief Court Clerk Nelson H. McCoy of Ardmore, who supervised the appointment of guardians, told a U.S. Senate committee in 1906 that, “These men called ‘grafters’ are not such bad fellows . . . They spend a lot of money in getting these allotments made to these ignorant Indians.”

So, numerous factors stood in support of the general practice and culture of grafting. For one, without grafters millions of acres of potentially-productive allotted lands unclaimed by full-bloods and other Indians would have laid useless, perhaps permanently. Also, a few thousand Natives had possession, under compulsion by white Americans, of tens of millions of acres of

land. Amidst a series of Gilded Age financial recessions, panics, and true depression, meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of African-American and white American settlers—many of them willing to work their hearts out to build a life for their families, and in doing so, build a great American state—owned little or nothing.

Too, Indian Territory shouldered the richly-deserved sobriquet of “Robber’s Roost” due to its endemic outlawry and the tribes’ inability to curb that. Even Creek Chief Pleasant Porter—no supporter of allotment—admitted white law enforcement was needed to rein in a lawless element that came in many different skin colors.

Indeed, at least one respected Oklahoma historian declared Debo a “muckraker,” a term denoting a person who attempts to find and expose real or alleged corruption, scandal, or the like, especially in politics. That historian also contrasted her revisionist, anti-establishment perspective as she wrote *And Still the Rivers Run* during the 1930s—amidst that benighted era’s questioning of traditional American free enterprise and capitalism—with her pro-capitalist, pro-Oklahoma “boosterism” of the patriotic, World War II-dominated 1940s.

So were most of Oklahoma’s “Founding Fathers” corrupt, selfish hypocrites, as Debo accuses and other state historians deny? With the

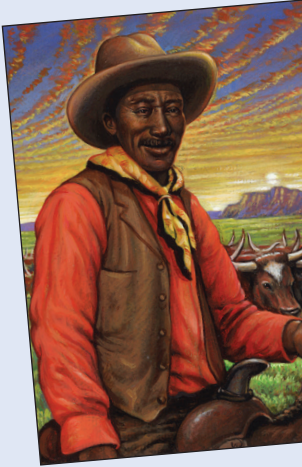
There is the Indian side to it and there is the commercial side to it. There is the side that affects the Indians and there is a side that affects the material progress of the country.

—William Johnstone

passage of a century of time, perhaps these assessments may be reasonably offered: 1) corruption did grip some Oklahoma founders, but certainly not all; 2) the work of Debo and others suggests



Cowboy Bill Pickett and Bulldogging (1870–1932)



Cowboy Bill Pickett in late 1900s bulldogging action, biting the lip of a bull.



This rugged Texas native couldn't even participate in most rodeos due to the color of his skin. Yet he pioneered the practice of bulldogging that led to modern steer wrestling, helped spur the Miller Brothers' 101 Ranch Wild West Show near Bartlesville to world fame, became a silent movie star, and left a lasting testament to the prominence of African-American cowboys in the Old West.

such corruption grew more widespread—including among the founders—than earlier suspected; and 3) a long train of unwise, uncharitable, and immoral actions by the American government and people produced an allotment situation possessed of so many layers of wrongdoing that no plan, regardless how well-intentioned—which this one was—could have produced happy results for both the allottees and the settlers. As abundantly witnessed in more recent American history, after a certain number of foolish decisions, no satisfactory solution remains possible.

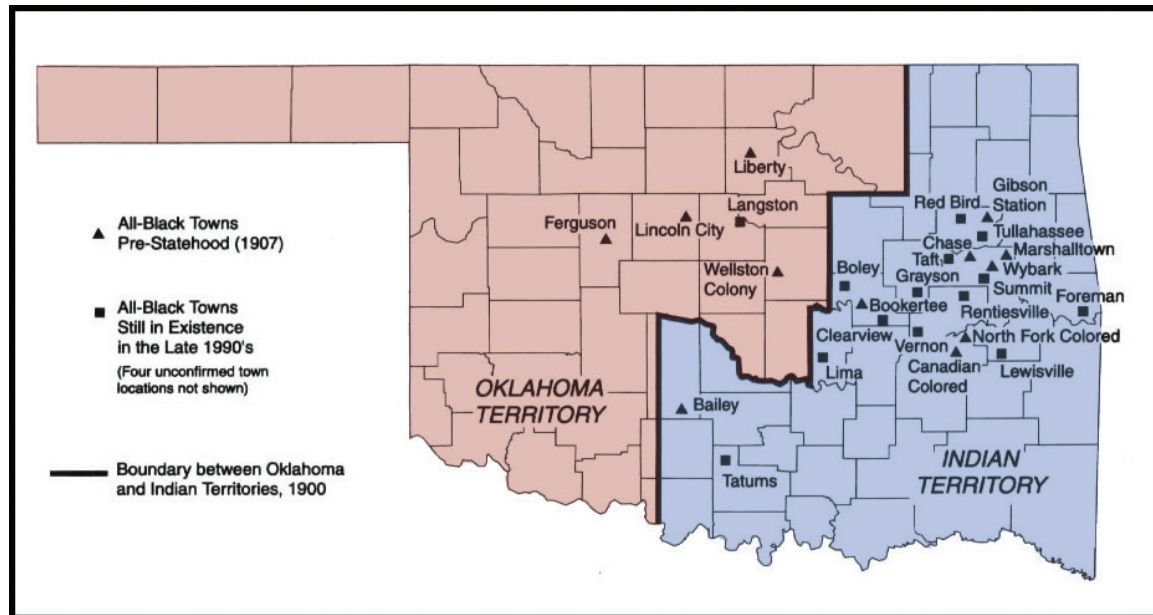
Blacks Seek Rights

Horizons remained bright for African-Americans in the Twin Territory days of the early 1900s. According to historian Jimmie Franklin, sourcing the U.S. Bureau of the Census 1910 Census, blacks

owned more than 1.5 million acres of land in future Oklahoma by 1905. This represented an amount larger, perhaps, than the total of African-American-owned land in the remainder of the United States!

Far from living in cowering servility during this pioneer era, numerous bold, innovative, and courageous black entrepreneurs weathered the enormous obstacles of a developing Jim Crow society and built a galaxy of businesses that served their own communities and sometimes whites and Indians as well. Oklahoma City's Deep Deuce, Boley's downtown business district, sections in other towns such as Muskogee, Wewoka, and Ardmore, and in particular Tulsa's Greenwood area gained national renown as bastions of African-American enterprise, community, and spirit. Such redoubts flourished nowhere else on the North American continent at the time.

In addition, many blacks employed vigorous and comprehensive strategies within the



Oklahoma's all-black towns. Courtesy, Oklahoma State University Cartography Service.

developing American legal system to fight for the interests of themselves and their families. Tribal freedmen exemplified this in a series of momentous legal actions against their tribes. Chickasaw freedmen won Congressional approval for partial (forty acre) land allotments identical to those of their Choctaw peers, despite lacking tribal status. Tribal freedmen then sought enrollment onto tribal rolls so they might gain full (320- acre) land allotments, though the Natives warded off these efforts in court.

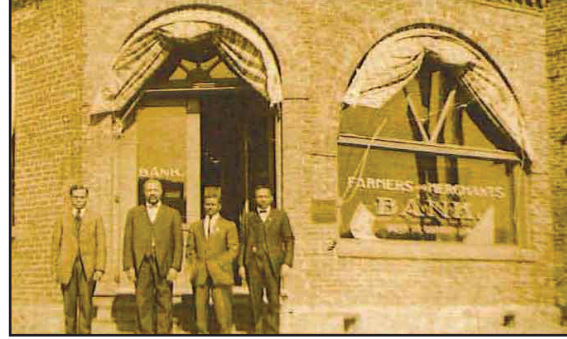
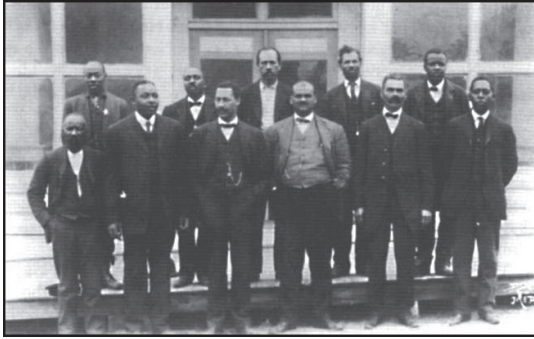
Other African-Americans secured the full Creek land allotments (160 acres) granted Creek freedmen by claiming, through the courts, the same identity. Principal Chief Porter wryly commented on the dubious nature of many of these claims to Creek freedmen status: “Our freedmen have increased wonderfully . . . They come from the four

quarters of the earth and employ a lawyer here to assist them, and they and the lawyer will get up the proof that slides them through.”

The Inter-Territorial Negro Protective League, meanwhile, labored to protect the restrictions on the five Indian republics’ allotments in order to protect the holders—which included African-Americans, Natives, and various red, white, and black mixed-blood combinations—best as possible from wheeling and dealing land speculators and outright land swindlers that might, and ultimately did, maneuver much of the land away from the allottees.

*You kin talk about your cities with their steeples in the skies,
Their nice paved streets and their business enterprise;
We ain't got no sidewalks, and there's nothing here to see,
But the little town of Boley is plenty big enough for me.*

—Samuel Robert Cassius



Bootstrapping it in Boley. African-Americans build their own town in the 1900s, without white or government help. The 1907 Town Council (L) and Farmers and Merchants Bank executives (R).

Historian Franklin determined following painstaking research that by the early 1900s,

African-Americans vied for leadership in the white-dominated territorial governments, they founded newspapers across the state, and bold entrepreneurs began amassing financial fortunes.

as many as twenty-seven all-black towns grew across the Twin Territories, then the new state. Rather than escaping from or surrendering to the American society around it, “the Negro in the all-black community,” wrote William B. Bittle and Gilbert Geis in *The Longest Way Home*, “was in no sense a retreat from the American standards and values which (blacks) had learned to cherish, nor was it an anachronistic revival of Africanism,



but rather it constituted an attempt to develop fully and to exploit completely the American culture.” Franklin went further, suggesting the opportunities and responsibilities gained in such enclaves fired up many African-Americans to apply their skills and experience in the full society.

Meanwhile, just as white pioneers across the future Sooner State ventured all they had to pursue their dreams—whether the devout family staking, clearing, planting, harvesting, living, birthing, and dying on their earthly “Promised Land,” or Marlow town father John O’Quinn helping found the State National Bank with the proceeds from a winning poker hand—blacks risked, labored, and bled for the vision of a free and prosperous future few of their race had experienced.

W. H. Twine — “The Black Tiger” (1864–1933)

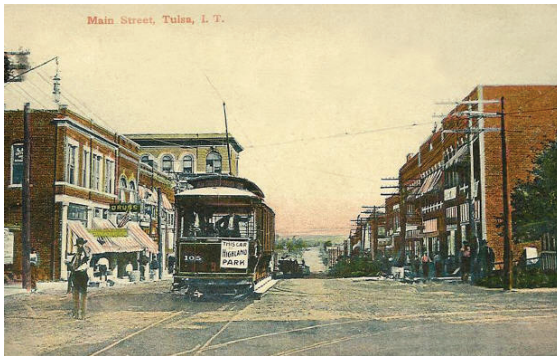
If any man could live up to the larger-than-life moniker of “The Black Tiger,” it was this bold, brave African-American pioneer who claimed land in the 1891 Sac and Fox Land Run, founded the first black law firm in the Twin Territories, built his own brick office building in Muskogee, crusaded against the Ku Klux Klan and others with his *Cimiter* newspaper, and even appealed in person to President Theodore Roosevelt against the statehood he believed founded upon an unjust constitution.



Elderly Choctaw Fullblood Speaks Against Allotment

Surely a race of people, desiring to preserve the integrity of that race, who love it by reason of its traditions and their common ancestors and blood, who are proud of the fact that they belong to it may be permitted to protect themselves, if in no other way by emigration. Our educated people inform us that the white man came to this country to avoid conditions which to him were not as bad as the present conditions are to us; that he went across the great ocean and sought new homes in order to avoid things which to him were distasteful and wrong. All we ask is that we may be permitted to exercise the same privilege. We do not ask any aid from the Government of the United States in so doing. We do ask that we may be permitted, in a proper way, by protecting our own, to dispose of that which the Government says is ours, and which has been given us over our protest against the distribution, to the end that another home may be furnished, and another nation established.

—Jacob Jackson



Streetcar-laden Main Street, Tulsa, Indian Territory, 1900.

They vied for leadership in the white-dominated territorial governments, they founded newspapers across the state, and bold entrepreneurs like Guthrie grocer Sidney Lyons and Wewoka attorney and oilman J. Coody Johnson began amassing financial fortunes.

Ironically, the towering event celebrated and so long strived for by the Twin Territories' majority white population—statehood—triggered a series of events that would so set back the cause of African-American human rights, it would require better than half-a-century to return to its pre-statehood status.



Despite the sorrowful chapters involving Natives and whites in Oklahoma history, the grand triumph of unity is their heritage of mutual Christian worship, including this circa-1900s Sunday School gathering in Indian Territory.

Progressivism

Progressivism emerged from the Populist movement (Chapter 8) of the late 1800s, but expanded far beyond that movement's rural base. It seized the affections of Republican leaders as it already had many Democrats and endured as a permanent influence in the American republic. At the dawn of the 20th Century, it guided in diverse ways the hearts, tongues, and pens of most of the men who birthed the state of Oklahoma.

Progressivism served as the vehicle in which the classical or economic

liberalism of the 18th and 19th Centuries gave way to the modern liberalism of government intervention to achieve individual freedoms and opportunities. For whites—if not Indians or blacks—the earlier, traditional sort of liberalism, which America’s Founding Fathers largely supported, strongly advocated limited government, personal

Progressivism evolved into a broad social and political philosophy of activist government, but its adherents proved diverse and inconsistent in their practice of it.

liberty, and free market economics, and placed much authority in the citizenry on both state and local levels. The historic sea change of progressivism evidenced itself not only in Oklahoma but across America, in Britain, and elsewhere. Charles Haskell, soon to be the state’s first governor, declared the 1906–07 Constitutional Convention’s intent “not just to create a new state, but to create a new kind of state.”

In the early 1900s, those pursuing progressive ideas sought through expanded governmental power—especially on the national level, but in Oklahoma as well—to correct the ills of a fast-growing nation and economy for whom the Industrial Revolution had produced both new products and new problems, not least the perception of a widening chasm between the rich and powerful, and the poor. Progressives (though this term did not initially convey the full import of the previous statement) took aim on correcting the ills of other nations as well, as Presidents like Roosevelt, William McKinley, and Woodrow Wilson launched the U.S. into the global imperialist sweepstakes long pursued by the European powers.

Varieties of Progressivism

The philosophy varied according to its proponents. Some people aimed for economic reform through government control of big business or promotion of farmers’ and laborers’ rights. Some sought social change, such as the vote for women, protection of working children, or prohibition of the alcoholic spirits destroying so many lives. Others desired to replace republican processes of representative government according to constitutional statutes with direct democratic decisions by popular majorities. Progress to others meant codifying separation of the white and black races through segregation and Jim Crow laws.

Adding to the confusion, proponents of these “progressive” notions often opposed one another. As just one of many such examples, a white female suffragette and an African-American male farmer seeking social and political rights might both have claimed progressive interests, yet both might oppose the others’ aims.

No one has better explored the dangers of suggesting a rigid test of orthodoxy for “progressivism” than historian Kenny Brown. For instance, he cites the variance in definitions for such entities as trusts, monopolies and special interests. Also, how Oklahomans as diverse as political leaders, oil men, and tenant farmers often supported

The Constitution is the political wisdom of a dead America.

—Walter Edward Weyl

in practice some of the various entities or actions they opposed in public.

According to Brown:

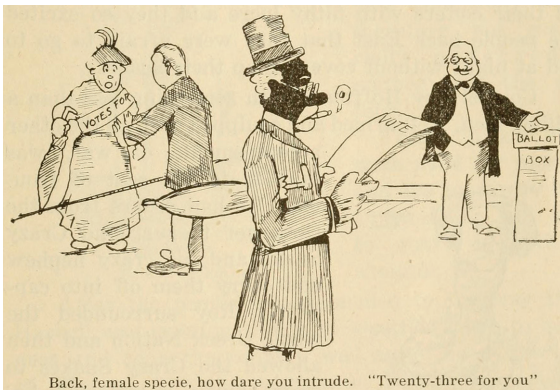
As elsewhere, in Oklahoma there was no unified group of people with common goals who called themselves progressives. There were several separate interest groups that arose and used the prevailing anticorporate sentiment to achieve their



An Oklahoma pioneer family, the Prestons, around 1900 in Cimarron County, so far west it lies in the Rocky Mountain Time Zone.

ends. In particular, Oklahoma farmers and labor union members convinced politicians to draft provisions in the constitution and legislation favorable to agriculture and labor. Legislators also approved laws designed to restrict the actions of various types of corporations. But the language, goals, and results of this political activity were contradictory, inconsistent, and vague.

The late-2000s Tea Party phenomenon perhaps provides a modern if distinct analogy to progressivism. In modern terms, progressivism stands to the political left or liberal side, Tea Parties to the right or conservative. Both



Merle St. Leon's 1916 send-up of the competing interests of white women, disfranchised from voting until 1920, and African-American men, disfranchised in Oklahoma beginning in 1910.

“movements,” however, possess Populist roots, feature an array of often self-serving politicians speaking to particular issues with no little demagoguery involved, address multiple issues, and encompass citizens and groups with a variety of grievances. In both cases, too, many of the latter upon closer examination stand at cross-purposes with one another and are more difficult to solve than the typical slogans suggest.

In the end, progressivism—whose primary era Brown suggests as 1900–1916—evolved into a broad social and political philosophy of activist government, but its adherents proved diverse and inconsistent in their practice of it.

Reasons for Progressivism

At root, progressivism had much in common with another familiar but amorphous term, socialism, in that it sought greatly enhanced governmental control of American society and institutions for the good of the citizenry. Numerous factors set the stage for the turn-of-the-century reformist impulse that gripped civic leaders on the local, state, and federal levels. These included:

1. The social and economic sea change of the American Industrial Revolution
2. Widespread corruption and moral breakdown stemming from the War Between the States, especially its latter stages, and Reconstruction
3. Political and governmental corruption on an unparalleled scale during the 1870s–1890s “Gilded Age,” including within a U.S. presidential administration (Ulysses S. Grant’s)
4. Massive governmental collusion with big businesses such as railroads through exorbitant Protective Tariffs, colossal land giveaways, and other mercantile practices
5. Brutal suppression of American Indian tribes

6. Raging racial prejudice and continued denial of Constitutional rights to African-Americans
7. National financial calamities, most notably the four-year depression that began as the Panic of 1893
8. Economic struggles for millions of people within the working classes (farming, laboring, factory, etc.)
9. Fading societal impact of the Christian gospel the further American society migrated west
10. Upstaging of that gospel with a Social Gospel predicated on the perfectability of man rather than the perfection of God

All this occurred as a group of industrialists centered in the Northeast compiled financial

The ascendance of progressivism set back the social, political, and economic rights of blacks for at least a half-century in Oklahoma.

fortunes never imagined in previous American history. Historian Brown recounted that in 1897, the United States had only twelve huge corporations, capitalized at \$1 billion. Just six years later, in 1903, those numbers had mushroomed to 305 and \$7 billion, respectively.

Roosevelt co-edited *The Outlook*, a key Progressive Party publication. The *Outlook* chastised the supposedly less-progressive Woodrow Wilson and Democratic Party for their accused allegiance to early Christian creeds such as the Nicean, the biblical doctrines of the Reformation, and the U.S. Constitution. Progressive leaders called, instead, for “a new theology, a new science, a new sociology, a new politics . . . men who have faith in themselves” in America. One of them

declared, “The Constitution is the political wisdom of a dead America.”

Progressivism—Pro or Con?

Many historians question key underlying premises for progressivism. They acknowledge legitimate criticism of many practices of railroads and other large corporations of the day, but suggest those critics often frame their attacks too broadly, skewering free enterprise and capitalism in the process. The excesses and corruption of Gilded Age “Robber Baron” industry grew not from classical *laissez-faire* economics, they say, but rather from the mercantilist-fueled (Chapter 2) movement away from it.

Thomas E. Woods, Jr., for instance, suggested that select and unfair governmental collusion with favored industries and corporations through high protective tariffs and subsidies, rather than the rapacious acts of unregulated business, fueled the monopoly problems of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. The weighty evidence for this notion casts the progressive movement as a swirl of efforts to better balance the growing powers of government between the interests of the nation’s powerful institutions and the vast sweep of citizens with little means.

Such supposed “predatory” monopolists as John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie actually accelerated the production of manufactured goods, reduced the prices of those goods to American consumers, entered into voluntary mergers and acquisitions with competitors that made many of the latter rich, and donated billions of dollars (in early-20th-century value) to charitable and public causes. Rockefeller—a devout, tee-totaling Baptist—gave away more than half a *billion* dollars of his personal fortune.

Shifting lawgiving authority from the legislative branch of government to the (current) popular majority, as progressives urged on many fronts, again broke with the Founding Fathers’ vision. And though two millennia of Christendom offered



A Carnegie, Caddo County saloon, circa 1900. Indian Territory had long outlawed such establishments with their recreation and vice, and Oklahoma Territory would do so in 1907 at Statehood.

no gleaming record on the issue of slavery—racially-based and otherwise—the “survival of the fittest”—influenced Social Darwinism (Chapter 8) that opposed theistic Christianity and fueled both populism and progressivism did anything but advance the rights of African-Americans in Oklahoma or other states. In fact, the ascendance of progressivism set back the social, political, and economic rights of blacks for at least half-a-century in Oklahoma.

Indian State?

As leaders of the five great Indian republics realized the impossibility of regaining control—outside the Union of American States—over their lands, people, and institutions, they determined to make the best of their situation. For years, they petitioned the Dawes Commission, the Interior Department, Congress, and President Theodore Roosevelt himself to honor the United States’ long and oft-repeated promise of their self-governance. “As a people we have kept our faith with United States government,” they wrote Roosevelt in urging his support for Indian Territory statehood

apart from that of Oklahoma Territory. “... you know our hopes and ambitions; and we appeal again to your sense of justice and fair dealing.”

As though the wise and insightful voice of Elias Boudinot (Chapter 3) still sounded among them, the five tribes also recognized the awful carnage wrought upon them by alcoholic spirits. They passed prohibition laws long before any American state did. This issue further fired their determination to remain unhitched from their neighbor to the west. As recalled by Oklahoma pioneer Angie Debo, “They

objected strongly to the open saloons that carried on such a thriving business in Oklahoma Territory ... (and) preferred the (prohibition) system to the arrogance with which the liquor traffic dominated the life of Oklahoma (Territory).”

Working together with white leaders of Indian Territory, these Natives—most of them mixed-bloods—convened the 1905 Sequoyah Convention in Muskogee. They aimed to establish the new state of Sequoyah, named in honor of the legendary Cherokee linguist and educator, and remain separate from whatever white-dominated state might evolve from Oklahoma Territory to

(The Indians) objected strongly to the open saloons that carried on such a thriving business in Oklahoma Territory ... (and) preferred the (prohibition) system to the arrogance with which the liquor traffic dominated the life of Oklahoma (Territory).”

—Angie Debo

the west. They believed this their best chance to gain a strong voice in the area's looming American state(s). According to historian Bob Blackburn, "The Sequoyah Convention was the voice of the Indians and their desire to have their own state to serve the needs of their own people."

The Sequoyah assembly included many of the pillars of early Oklahoma, including no less than four future governors. Two men, though, towered over both the gathering and early Oklahoma—Charles N. Haskell, who immigrated from Ohio in 1901, and William "Alfalfa Bill" H. Murray, who did so from Texas in 1898. Ironically, both these magnetic founding fathers of Oklahoma were white, though Murray qualified as an intermarried Chickasaw citizen, having betrothed Mary Alice Hearrell, niece of Chickasaw Governor Douglas Johnstone.

Haskell, already a heavyweight in the railroad, legal, and petroleum fields, possessed such stature



Charles Haskell – First Governor (1860–1933)

This Ohio-born railroad, building, and law magnate proved a big enough man to lead a big and brawling new Western state through its baptism of fire. He was a man of action in a remarkable era and land. Controversy and accolades alike festooned him and he made close friends and bitter enemies of those who would be President and those who were. He led the infant state with a cocksure confidence he backed up with deeds and he might even have saved it a time or two. In a distant generation, he rises up as a preeminent founding father of Oklahoma and one of the great men in its history.



that he would soon do ferocious personal—and very public—battle with an American president, while a three-time presidential candidate rose to his defense. Though Cherokee lobbyist James Norman first heralded the idea of an Indian Territory statehood convention, Haskell parlayed the concept into reality. Exhibiting the vision, shrewdness, and judgment of character that illumined his career, he persuaded Principal Chiefs Pleasant Porter of the Creeks, William C. Rogers of the Cherokees, and Green McCurtain of the Choctaws on the merits of such a convention. Later, Creek Chief John F. Brown also assented, though Chickasaw Principal Chief Johnstone opposed the effort.

Sequoyah Convention

Privately, Haskell doubted the possibility of statehood for Indian Territory, though not because the notion lacked merit. The territory's population had ballooned to around 700,000 people, nearly twice that of the most populous previous American state to join the union. Congress fast-tracked Nevada, for instance, to statehood in 1864 with a population of only 30,000. Why? Wartime President Abraham Lincoln and his Republican



Carriages park outside the Missouri, Oklahoma & Gulf passenger train station in pre-statehood 1900s Muskogee. Charles Haskell's leadership built this rail line, from Missouri through Texas, as it did many other businesses.

Congressional colleagues feared Lincoln would not win re-election without additional votes against Democratic opponent and military hero George McClellan, who wanted to negotiate an end to war and a return to the Union for the South.

This time, however, the Republicans running Washington determined to keep out a territory boasting over twenty times the population Nevada had claimed. Southern Democrats filled Indian Territory and had grown increasingly dominant in Oklahoma Territory as well since around 1898. No matter how many requests the Indians made of him, President Roosevelt—a progressive, an activist, and no great admirer of the South nor its politics—had no intention of allowing the Oklahoma country to send two sets of likely-Democratic Senators and Representatives to Washington to oppose many of the Northern-dominated Republicans’ agenda. Haskell perceived all this, but he also believed that without statehood for Sequoyah, tribal leaders would consent to single statehood for the Twin Territories, which he did not oppose.

Indian Territory voters confirmed Republican concerns by sending an overwhelmingly-Democratic congress of delegates to the Sequoyah Convention. There, Porter won election as President and Chairman of the convocation. Each of the five Indian Republics provided a vice president—mixed-blood chiefs Rogers of the Cherokees, McCurtain of the Choctaws, and Brown of the Creeks, as well as Haskell for the Creeks due to his leadership qualities and Porter’s chairmanship, and Murray in place of his uncle Johnstone for the Chickasaws. Delegates also tabbed Haskell as convention vice-chairman. Famed Creek poet Alexander Posey served as secretary.

The Sequoyah delegates labored to craft the framework for an American state. The searching light of history testifies they accomplished that audacious mission—though not for the state they intended. Even as friendly U.S. Congressmen introduced bills to admit the state of Sequoyah, Roosevelt declared his implacable opposition to the

two-state plan, Congress shot down all dual-statehood bills, and the Hamilton Statehood Bill passed both legislative houses to pave the way for the 46th state of Oklahoma’s entrance into the Union.

The lasting legacy of the Sequoyah Convention lay elsewhere. The 45,000-word Constitution they authored under “Alfalfa Bill” Murray’s leadership set the tone for the next year’s Oklahoma Constitution. And the men who wrote it captained that later and more important effort. The assembly believed America’s surging industrialization was littering the country with the debris of the common man who no longer had the wherewithal to maintain his rights—nor at times even his physical survival—against a government-favored oligarchic juggernaut, and a corrupted, money- and power-grubbing one at that. So the Sequoyah representatives planned for a state not where government would rule, but where the majority possessing humble means could again access and utilize that government for its rights as they believed America’s founders had intended; that is, to serve and represent not only the powerful few, but all the people.

Also, a company of Natives, at least of the mixed-blood variety, rose to lead the new state. And for the first time in American history, Indians and whites teamed in a large and concerted cause

*The Sequoyah Convention was
the voice of the Indians and their desire
to have their own state to serve the needs
of their own people.*

—Bob Blackburn

toward a mutual objective. The agreements, differences, biases, and disputes they faced forged them into a united assembly that dominated the Oklahoma Statehood Convention. After Sequoyah, they knew how to work together as a team and when to act to forward their goals.

Oklahoma Constitutional “Reforms”

1. Child labor law
2. Eight-hour day for government workers
3. Safety code for mine workers
4. Factory inspection law
5. Favorable homestead exemption for farmers
6. State income tax
7. Graduated income tax
8. Prohibition of alcohol sales
9. Property tax
10. Vigorous taxes on business and industry
11. Increased regulation of business and industry
12. Prohibition of monopolies
13. Corporations must incorporate in Oklahoma

The men of Sequoyah bided their time as necessary, forged ahead as able, and determined

to outlast what they and the sweep of Oklahomans viewed as arrogant, unwelcome Republican carpetbaggers ruling them from afar without sensitivity or understanding of their ways and culture. Soon, Haskell and Murray and others knew, Oklahoma would be their state and not Roosevelt’s and his party’s. Most whites in Oklahoma applauded, believing their rights championed. Most blacks did not, seeing many of theirs discarded. Twin Territory Democrats assayed the political landscape well. Their attitudes toward their political and in many ways cultural foes have, rightly or wrongly, endured as part of their heritage among the people of Oklahoma, even into a new century.



The Glass Mountains, located in Major County, northwest Oklahoma.