EARLY HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY OF CANADIAN, OKLAHOMA

By

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PREFACE

This study has grown out of the interest of the author and wishes of the people of Canadian to have a history of their town written by the Bi-Centennial year. The investigation for this work began in 1972 when the author discovered his home town of Canadian was soon to be 100 years old and began organizing a centennial celebration to take place May 29, 1973. Since that time the author has been encouraged by the citizens and City Council of Canadian to produce a history of Canadian.

The town of Canadian is located in northern Pittsburg County, along U. S. Highway 69, eighteen miles north of McAlester. The population of Canadian is approximately 300 at this present time. Arrowhead State Lodge is located only five miles from Canadian and the shore of Lake Eufaula comes to within one mile of the town's city limits.

The author wishes to express his appreciation to his major adviser, Dr. Norbert R. Mahnken for his assistance in the completion of this study. Appreciation is also expressed to the other members of the committee, Dr. Neil A. Hackett and Dr. Odie B. Faulk.

Special thanks is given to Mary Wells of the Oklahoma State Historical Society, Newspaper Division, and the staff librarians of the Oklahoma State University Library. Also thanks is given to Walter Salmon, Orlean Smith, and Ada Baker of Canadian, Oklahoma, for their invaluable assistance in the recalling of Canadian's history. In addition, appreciation is expressed to Mrs. Estelle George and Mr. and Mrs. Gene McNally of Canadian for their special help and encouragement in this

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Finally, special gratitude is expressed to the people of Canadian for their assistance and cooperation, to the author's parents, David M. and Dortha M. Duke, and to my wife, Patty, and our son, Brent, for the many sacrifices they have made.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The town of Canadian derives its name from the Canadian River but from what source the Canadian River derives its name is open to debate. One possible explanation seeks to relate the name to Spanish sources. The Canadian River has its headwaters in the mountains of New Mexico, which were Spanish. Some authors believe the river derives its name from corruption of the Spanish, Rio Canada or Rio Canadiano. The word Canadiano does not appear in Spanish dictionaries and Canada means a small or narrow gorge, or a sheep path in a steep place. The people of New Mexico have always called the river the Rio Colorado or "Red River" in their country. On the other hand an official Mexican map of the New Mexico country, published prior to the Mexican War, refers to the river as the Rio Canadiano. This may merely have been the Spanish corruption of the English Canadian River, but does make a clear case for the possible Spanish origin of the name.[1]

Other authors believe that the Canadian most likely derives its name from French sources. During the regions period of occupancy by the French, trappers and traders out of New Orleans traveled up the Mississippi and Arkansas Rivers and from there ranged up and down the North Canadian and main Canadian Rivers. Many of these men were of Canadian origin, hence these streams might have been labelled the "rivers of the Canadians". Many other landmarks and rivers in Eastern Oklahoma carry

names of French origin; The Verdigris, Illinois, Poteau, and Fourche Maline Rivers, and San Bois Mountains, to name only a few.

The history of Canadian cannot include just the town-site and its people. Being a rural community its influence and related area extends for several miles to the east, north, and west. The Canadian area is bounded on these three sides by Gaines Creek and the Canadian River. This is an area which at one time contained the best farmland of the region. It is this geographical and economic region with which this paper will deal. This area has a long and diverse background and historical significance, figuring from the earliest explorations to the arrival and development of the area by the Choctaws, and the wagon roads and trails opened through it by settlers; from the ravages of the Civil War to the building of the railroad through Indian Territory, and ultimately the formal establishment of the town of South Canadian in 1873.

After the founding of the town the significance of the area shifts to Canadian's first citizens and its early day experiences. The town experienced slow but steady progress from its beginning in 1873 culminating to a beginning decline in 1913. During this time Canadian rose to be the busiest shipping point on the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad between Kansas and Texas. Its gradual decline following this era will also be investigated.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Elliott Coues, The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike, Vol. 1, (New York, 1895), p. 558; Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., Early Western Travels, 1748-1846, Vol. XVI (Cleveland, 1905), pp. 105-106; Ralph Emerson Twitchell, The Leading Facts of New Mexican History, Vol. II (Cedar Rapids, 1912), p. 84.

CHAPTER II

EARLIEST EXPLORATIONS NEAR THE CANADIAN AREA

Bernard de la Harpe, a Frenchman from Louisiana, was the first white explorer known to have penetrated the lower Canadian River Valley in which Canadian lies. In December, 1718, La Harpe received a grant of land on the Red River in the present state of Arkansas and there established a trading post and fort. The Council of Louisiana had made La Harpe a commandant and had given him instructions to explore the region northwest of his fort, to make alliances with the Indians of that region, and to do everything possible to establish trade with the Spanish in Texas and New Mexico.

In June of 1719 La Harpe was ready to begin exploring and sent out one of his officers to scout ahead. On August 1, as La Harpe made ready to leave, the officer returned with news of war between France and Spain. Taking this news in stride, La Harpe decided to explore north of the Red River, the Spanish boundary, and make commercial treaties with the Indians, thereby strengthening the French position. On August 11, La Harpe set out. His party was made up of the commandant himself and two other "gentlemen", one officer, two enlisted men, two Negro slaves, twenty-two horses, and two of La Harpe's dogs. On August 25, La Harpe's journal tells of entering some small prairies and valleys very pleasing to the sight. The party killed three buffalo that day and made camp approximately three and a half miles east of the present town of

Hartshorne, in Pittsburg County. On August 29, 1719, marching up from the southeast, La Harpe arrived at the confluence of Gaines Creek and the Canadian River. At this point La Harpe mentions in his report one of the only unbelievable events of his journey. In his journal he records the day thus:

> The twenty-ninth, we advanced three leagues to North and Northeast, a difficult enough woods and many little rocky mountains. We entered afterwards the prairies next in a very thick woods, in which our guides lost us. After a thousand impediments we found ourselves on the bank of the west branch of the river of the Ouachitas. . . At two o'clock in the afternoon we joined the Naouydiches party. They were busy smoking some unicorn. It is an animal big as a middle sized horse; he has hair of reddish colour and the length of that of a she-goat, the legs rather thin and in the middle of the forehead a horn, without branches, of a half a foot long; the meat of it is very delicious. This discovery confirms that which M. de Bienville had been told of the savages that in the upper headwaters of the Ouachitas River there were some unicorn.[1]

The French had not named the Canadian Rivers at this time and La Harpe was mistaken about the river at which he had arrived. Though La Harpe makes no mention of Gaines Creek, it is evident he had been following it north for about three days prior to the 29th of August. The Indians he had come upon were probably Caddos, then native to the region. So La Harpe became the first known explorer of the immediate region or the lower Canadian River Valley. He had passed and camped within three miles of the future site of Canadian. After proceeding as far north as the present town of Haskell near the Arkansas, La Harpe and his men took the river back into Arkansas. In 1722 La Harpe returned to north of his first camp near Canadian to the confluence of the North Canadian with the main Canadian River. He was ascertaining if the river could carry trade toward Santa Fe. He believed it could during high water. On returning to his post, La Harpe sent reports to the governor

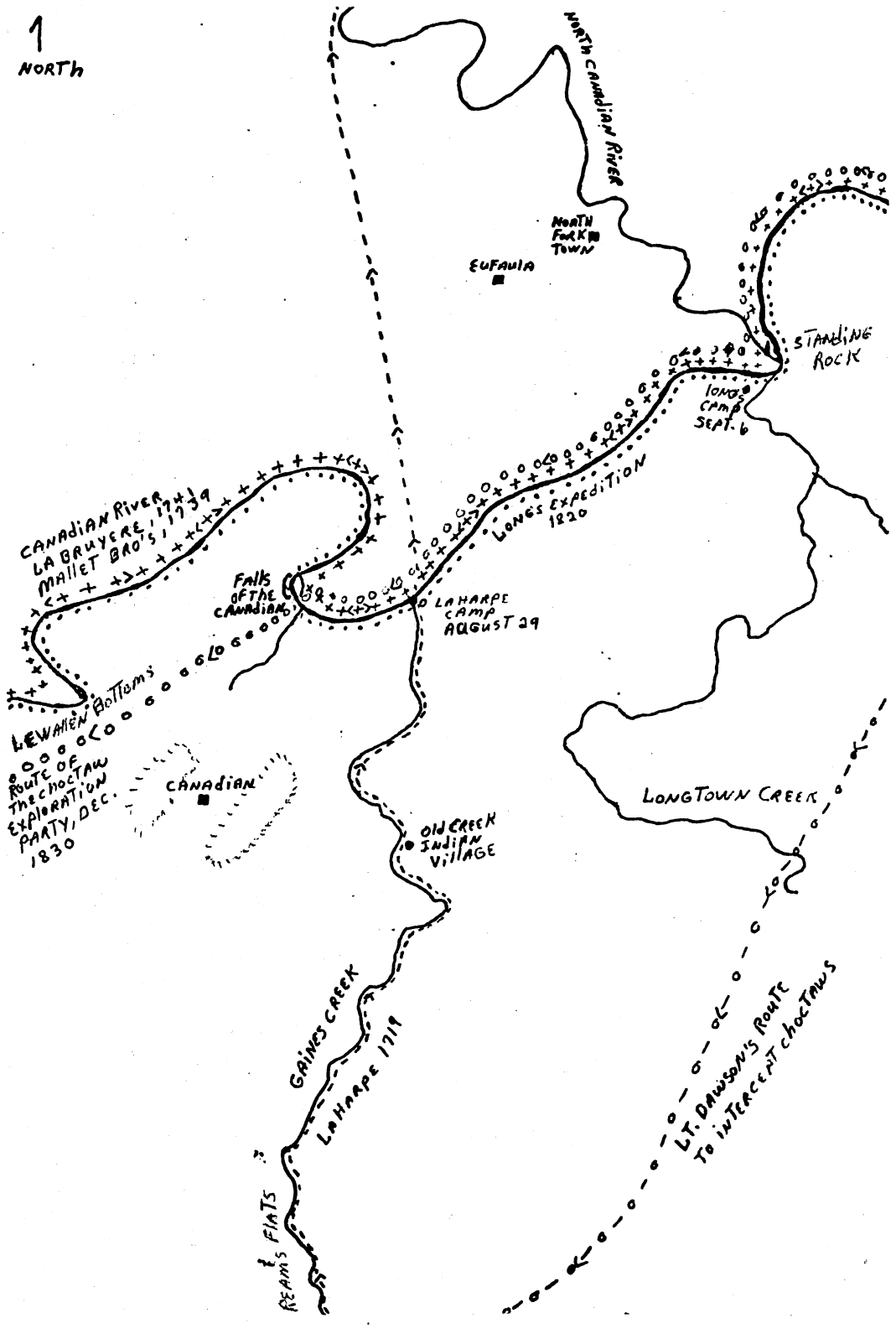


Figure 1. Early Expeditions Near Canadian

in New Orleans strongly recommending the establishment of forts and posts at the mouth of the Canadian and near Standing Rock in the North Canadian. Because of economic hardships in Louisiana at this time his plan could not be carried out. However, the second La Harpe expedition did directly influence the sending of another party to the area in 1741.

In 1739 two French explorers and traders, Pierre and Paul Mallet, passed by the Gaines Creek-Canadian area on their return from Santa Fe to Louisiana by way of the Canadian and Arkansas Rivers. French interest in Santa Fe as a trading center was ever increasing and by 1741 Governor Bienville, of the Louisiana Province, sent Fabray de le Brugere from New Orleans to find, if possible, a more direct and better route to Santa Fe. He was to secure alliances with the Indians he might encounter, determine the nature and extent of the "mysterious western regions", and satisfy lingering doubt as to whether they were contiguous to the Pacific. He was guided on this journey by the Mallet brothers and was accompanied by a few soldiers and Canadians. This party also passed the mouth of Gaines Creek. As they ascended the "south fork of the Arkansas", Brugere gave it the name "St. Andre". That name did not survive and the Canadian River had not yet received its name. The party "became entangled in the shallows and quicksands of that difficult river, Fabray fell into disputes with his men and after protracted efforts the expedition returned unsuccessful."[2]

As Baugere's expedition to Santa Fe had been unsuccessful, so had the French colonization effort in most of North America. In 1762 while at war with Great Britain and fearing that her enemy might take the Louisiana Province, the French ceded the territory to their allied country, Spain.

Though good Spanish control over the Louisiana Territory was established, few explorations were made into the newly acquired Province. The Spanish limited their activity to Texas and settlements along the Mississippi River. But the Spanish would not control the region very long for in 1800, France, now under the control of Napoleon, asked for and received the Province back. At first Napoleon attempted to re-establish strong French control, but troops sent to New Orleans were killed in the Caribbean Islands by Yellow Fever. Still at war and in hard need of funds, Napoleon decided to sell the territory to the United States. Initially in 1802, President Thomas Jefferson had sent Robert Livingston, of the State Department, to Paris with an offer to buy the city of New Orleans for two million dollars. Napoleon proposed selling all of the Province. By the spring of 1803, the treaty had been hammered out, and the United States had purchased the whole Louisiana Territory for fifteen million dollars.[3]

The area of which Canadian would be a part was now American soil. Its usage and value would be tested and debated much over the next one and three quarter centuries. The first known American citizen to tread through the Canadian River Valley came in 1819. Secretary of War John C. Calhoun ordered Major Stephen Harriman Long, of the Army Topographical Engineers, to explore the headwaters of the Arkansas and Red Rivers in the newly acquired Louisiana Purchase and to descend the latter river.

After they had traveled up the Arkansas, into present day Colorado, Major Long's party marched 150 miles south to what they believed was a tributary of the Red River and began following it. On the way, they made careful scientific studies and reports on the flora, fauna, and geology of the country. They continued down the river to its confluence with the

Arkansas before discovering it was the Canadian River and, not the Red, they had explored.

On September 6, 1820, the party passed some very small rapids; Major Long called them the "Falls of the Canadian, rather for the sake of a name than as considering it worthy to be thus designated. One mile below this point is the entrance, from the south of a river fifty yards wide. Its banks are lined with tall forests of cottonwood and sycamore, and its bottoms are wide and fertile."[4] That night the party made camp just below the mouth of the North Canadian near Standing Rock. Members of the party were amazed at its oddity and at its perpendicular sides. The rapids mentioned by Long were located about 200 yards above the present U. S. Highway 69 crossing the Canadian River. The river from the south lined with cottonwood and sycamore was Gaines Creek.

It was on the day he passed Gaines Creek that Major Long made a most significant entry into his daily log, recording his generally unfavorable impressions of the region. This report, along with that of Zebulon Montgomery Pike, who had explored the region to the north, was to influence the course of American expansion and history. Long's report stated,

> We have little apprehension of giving too unfavorable an account of this portion of the country. Though the soil is in some places fertile, the want of timber, of navigable streams, and of water for the necessities of life, render it an unfit residence for any but a nomad population. The traveller who shall at any time have traversed its desolate sands, will, we think, join us in the wish that this region may for ever remain the unmolested haunt of the native hunter, the bison, and the jackall.[5]

Long's expedition was of great importance since it was the first reliable scientific and mapping expedition to pass through the Canadian River Valley. His maps and observations influenced not only the

Canadian area but all of the newly acquired Louisiana Purchase. Long's comments and observations with those of Pike led directly to the idea of a "Great American Desert" extending to the north and west of this region. This idea would later influence the Federal government's search for a country into which to remove the Eastern Indians.

In the year 1830, the Federal government and the War Department were busy making arrangements for the removal of all the Indians east of the Mississippi River. As soon as the Indian Removal Act was signed by President Andrew Jackson, the War Department began exerting itself to secure more exact information about the western regions. Captain Benjamin Louis Eulalieda Bonneville, who was stationed at Fort Gibson, was dispatched to reconnoiter the region of southern Oklahoma which the Choctaw Indians of Mississippi were to settle. Captain Bonneville would later achieve fame in Washington Irving's book, The Adventures of Captain Bonneville.

In September, 1830, Bonneville was ordered to explore the Canadian River area as far as the Cross Timbers, which would have been in present Seminole County. Proceeding from Standing Rock, which he called "Mary's Rock", Bonneville described the Gaines Creek-Canadian area,

> I continued ascending the Canadian 12 3/4 miles West from the same line (and) came to the Mouth of Macomb River [Gaines Creek] or the south fork of Canadian River. It rises in the mountains to the So. West and running North and east to the Canadian. It is about 160 yards wide at its mouth.

His general observations of the Canadian Valley were:

> The banks of the Canadian are low from 3 to 6 feet high, sand hills frequently make to the River on both banks. The bottoms are small, being generally sand beds covered with 5 or 6 inches of allievial soil: there is but little timber in them. I saw no place where I believed a settlement could be made to advantage. . . I saw but

> little game, about 15 deer, 20 buffalo, 2 bears, and one gang of elk. The fact is the whole country is nothing but a barren waste, having no cultivable land, no game no timber.[6]

Up to this time the Canadian River region had received no favorable reports for settlement possibilities. On the contrary, it was called unsuitable for human settlement. Though the region was unfit for white settlement, the government apparently believed it was just right for the Indian. In the removal treaties of the 1820s and '30s, the various tribes to be moved to this area were told of a rich and bountiful land. But in fact, on maps of the period, the Canadian River and Gaines Creek were beginning to be the southern and eastern boundaries of the "Great American Desert".

FOOTNOTES

[1]Pierre Margry, Decouvertes et Establessment de Francais dans 1'Quest et dans le Sud de 1'Amerique (Paris, 1889), pp. 286-287.

[2]Francis Parkman, A Half Century of Conflict: France and England in North America, 2 vols. (Boston, 1927), 1:367-368.

[3]Odie B. Faulk and Joseph A. Stout, Jr., A Short History of the American West (New York, 1974), pp. 66-76.

[4]Thwaites, p. 174.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Grant Foreman, "An Unpublished Report of Captain Bonneville with Introduction and Footnotes," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. 10, No. 3 (1932), pp. 329-330.

CHAPTER III

THE COUNTRY BECOMES CHOCTAW

Though early explorers might have filed unfavorable reports on the area, settlers began to move into the new frontier. Since before Louisiana had become a territory of the United States, Americans had poured across the Mississippi River into what is now Missouri and Arkansas. After the war with England had ended in 1815, even more pioneers flowed in the new territory, many settled near the "Three Forks" trading post, in the soon to be Indian Territory. In April of 1824, Fort Gibson had been established near the "Forks" as the western-most outpost of the United States and from it numerous parties and expeditions roamed across what is now Oklahoma.

There was other activity in this area also, Indian activity. When La Harpe had come to this area he reported numerous tribes of Indians. Some six miles south of Canadian he had passed a party of sixty Comanches encamped on the west side of Reams Flat. Pawnees, Caddos, Choctaws, and the Waring Osage were but a few of the tribes that roamed and hunted along the Canadian River and Gaines Creek. Many small tribes La Harpe had noted were now extinct or departed. Many had been driven south by the fierce Osage. Though virtually no Indians resided in this area in 1815, many tribes located east of the Mississippi had used this region for hunting grounds and a few eastern Indians, Choctaws among them, had voluntarily moved east of the Mississippi.

The Louisiana Purchase had opened the way for whites of the East to rid themselves of their "brother the Indian", both savage and civilized. Soon after the War of 1812 had ended, treaties with the southern Indians began offering vast lands west of the Mississippi in exchange for small portions given up in the Gulf Coast States.

By the Treaty of Doak's Stand, signed October 18, 1820, the Choctaws of Mississippi agreed to relinquish the southern portion of their country to the Federal government in exchange for a wilderness tract west of the Mississippi River. This treaty was not to affect all Choctaws but sought rather, according to the preamble, " . . . to perpetuate [the Choctaws] as a nation, by exchanging, for a small portion of their land here, a country beyond the Mississippi River, where all, who live by hunting and will not work, may be collected and settled together."[1]

Their new land was located between the Arkansas, Canadian, and Red Rivers, beginning immediately west of the Mississippi, and was to run as far west as the headwaters of the Red and Canadian Rivers, and here problems arose instantly. The headwaters of these two rivers did not lie inside United States territory. More importantly, it was soon pointed out that much of the land immediately west of the Mississippi was already substantially inhabited by whites. In fact this area was so populated that by 1836 it was able to join the Union as the State of Arkansas.

The Federal government, seeing the impossibility of moving out all the white families and their settlements, decided to induce the Choctaws to give up a large and fertile block of land immediately west of the Mississippi by a new treaty adopted in 1825.

Since Arkansas had received territorial status her western border

had been located about nine miles east of the confluence of the two Canadian Rivers. In May, 1824, after an official survey this had been made the official boundary. As a concession in the Treaty of 1825, the boundary was pushed back eastward about seventy miles.[2]

In 1824 several of the Choctaw chiefs were invited to Washington to negotiate a correcting treaty. By that treaty, adopted in 1825, the Choctaws ceded back to the United States that land east of the present Oklahoma-Arkansas border. Two of the chiefs who journeyed to Washington died mysteriously by separate incidents, raising forever doubts as to how the treaty was secured. One of the chiefs, Apuckshunnubbee, was killed in Kentucky while at an overnight stop. On Christmas Eve at the Tennison Hotel in "Washington City" the great chief Pushmataha died. The cause of his death might be found in the expense account of the Choctaw delegation. Hotel bar bill - $2,149.50. Meals and lodging - $2,029.50. Oysters and liquor - $349.75. Clothing, a suit each - $1,134.73. These two chiefs were replaced by younger, less experienced ones.[3]

Even though the new treaty had settled the boundary disputes, only 150-200 Choctaws had settled in the new land by 1829. For the whites of Mississippi and the Federal government removal was proceeding too slowly. On October 17, 1827, the head of the Indian Department, Thomas Loraine McKenney, visited with the Chiefs of the Choctaws to urge them to move west. At first the Choctaws refused to negotiate but then agreed to send a delegation of six with a Chickasaw party to explore this western "Indian Territory". Congress appropriated $15,000 for their expenses and appointed a Baptist missionary, Reverend Issac McCoy, to conduct the party which was to begin its examination from St. Louis.[4]

Exactly one year from their meeting with McKenney the party set out, first into Kansas then down the Verdigris River into Indian Territory. On November 26, they made camp near Fort Gibson until December 2nd for a "big council" meeting. On December 4, the party crossed the "North Fork" of the Canadian River. Reverend McCoy, as the fiscal agent of the party kept a daily log, and an interesting note is made for December 5th and 6th,

> We were now in buffalo country, though but a short distance south of Fort Gibson. On the 5th of December, four of our Indians became separated from us, as they were in pursuit of buffalo, the last of whom did not reach our camp until after dark, when he was conducted to us by a Cherokee, on whose camp he had by chance fallen. On the following day, two buffalo were taken by some of the party at camp on the south of the Arkansas, and near the junction of that river and Canadian river, December 7th, our explorations terminated.[5]

If the party followed the Canadian down to the Arkansas then camp the night of the 5th was probably made near the Gaines Creek-Canadian confluence. Knowing the Choctaws held the lands south of the Canadian, the party probably traveled along a trail on the south side of the river, what is now roughly Oklahoma Highway 9. The two buffalo were probably killed just a few miles east of Gaines Creek.

Congress now began moving at an even faster rate to remove the Indians. Andrew Jackson, elected as President in 1828, had pledged in his inaugural address to make every effort to remove all Indians from the East and the Indian Removal Act of May 28, 1830, authorized the President to set aside for the American Indian,

> Any territory belonging to the United States, west of the river Mississippi, not included in any state, or organized territory, and to which the Indian title has been extinguished, . . . to be divided into a suitable number of Districts, for the reception of such tribes or nations of Indians as may choose to exchange the lands where they now reside, and remove there.[6]

On September 27, 1830, agents of the Federal government succeeded in negotiating a new treaty with the Choctaws, this time at Dancing Rabbit Creek. This treaty guaranteed the westward removal of the Choctaw Indians. The Nation was to receive a tract of country west of the Mississippi River, beginning near Fort Smith where the Arkansas boundary crosses the Arkansas River,

> running thence to the source of the Canadian; if in the limits of the United States; thence due south to Red River, and down (it) to the west boundary of the Territory of Arkansas; thence north along that line to the beginning . . .[7]

As soon as the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek had been signed the Choctaw chiefs again asked to see this new land. In December of 1830 a delegation of Choctaws and Chickasaws arrived at the mouth of the Canadian River. The delegation was headed by George S. Gaines, a trusted trader and friend of the Choctaws. Once the tribe had settled in this region they named Gaines Creek in his honor. When the party reached the Canadian, Gaines sent to Fort Gibson a request for an escort into the "wild interior" of what was to be the new Choctaw Nation. Brigadier General Matthew Arbuckle quickly responded and sent twelve mounted troopers under the command of Lieutenant James Lowes Dawson. Not waiting for the escort Gaines and the Choctaws proceeded up the Canadian. After passing the mouth of Gaines Creek the party turned to the southwest and traveled down the Lewallen Bottoms just west of the future site of Canadian. This exploring party was following a zig-zag course between the south bank of the river and the interior. Dawson and his men arrived three days later and set out cross-country to intercept the Choctaws. His description of the country and the conditions of the march give good insight into the hardships so often suffered on such expeditions.

> After a march of ten or twelve miles through poor mountain land we descended into the valley of a stout sized creek running n. and emptying into the Canadian. The bottoms of this creek are fertile and adjoin some rich well-timbered upland.[8]

This creek was probably Gaines Creek. Continuing his march up river "to a point thirty or forty miles above the Fork", he encountered a party of three Delaware Indians and from them learned that the whole country bordered on the river was burnt and that he could not subsist his horses. This burned country was the area bounded by Gaines Creek, Coal Creek, and the Canadian River.

One log entry of Dawson's report is extremely descriptive of a bad winter's day march in Indian Territory. Dawson writes,

> We crossed a branch of the South Fork of the Canadian. [Gaines Creek] This day was the most intensely cold that I ever experienced. The weather was so extremely severe that the party was obliged to halt once or twice during the day and kindle a fire to prevent them from becoming frost bitten; we found some shelter from the inclemency of the weather and where our good fortune supplied our horses with a small quality of acorns which had escaped the ravages of the hunters fire. The ice formed during the preceding night was so thick that we had to cut a passage for a ford with axes. It was sufficiently strong to bear the horses but we could not force them to cross until a clear passage had been opened.[9]

After the completion of this tour the Choctaws and Gaines returned to Mississippi to begin the removal. The tribe was to be removed during the fall of three years, 1831, 1832, and 1833. Originally the Choctaws were to be removed from east of the Mississippi by steamboat but because of expense and difficulty removal took place by wagon and on foot. Because of the haste and expense involved they were forced to leave their cattle and other livestock. Most were ruined financially by this move and were never compensated for these losses.

One of the major routes of entry into this country was past Fort

Smith, up the Arkansas, then the Canadian. When they reached the South Fork [Gaines Creek] the immigrants turned south and settled in the river and creek bottoms from this point to the Boggy. Undoubtedly some Choctaws settled in the bottom land just west of Canadian around this time and it was not long before families had established a settlement along Gaines Creek east of Canadian by the "old Gaines Creek Road".

An archeological survey of the Canadian and Gaines Creek area in 1950 revealed that a permanent village had been established on the east bank of the creek a little after 1850. A Christian Indian cemetry was established two miles up a small stream directly across the creek. Until about 1962 sea shells could still be seen marking graves there. A rock overhang across the creek from the village still harbors a few sea shells and one Indian grave has been found approximately twenty feet from this site.[10]

Along with the Choctaw, white settlement also proceeded in the area. North Fork Town near the mouth of the North Canadian had long been settled by whites and people of mixed blood and the country also proved a secure haven for outlaws from Missouri, Texas, and Arkansas. Choctaw citizenship was easy to gain either by marriage or by the payment of an annual fee which enabled one to be employed in the Nation for a period of one year at a time. Slowly but with gaining momentum, the Choctaws lands began passing into the hands of others. In the immediate region, mixed-blood dominated North Fork Town held top influence and controlled the trade of the area. Most of the white settlers came from Arkansas but Texans and Missourians were also common to the area. Inter-marriage with the Indians was very common. As a result of Choctaw slave holdings, there were many Negroes in the area also.

In 1832 the Chickasaws had ceded their land east of the Mississippi to the Federal government. The Chickasaws were relatives of the Choctaws and the two had been neighbors in Mississippi. Even before the Choctaws had finished their migration, the Federal government approached them concerning the ceding, or leasing, of a portion of their new land to the Chickasaws. Seeing the ineviatability of their circumstances, in late 1836 the Choctaws agreed to negotiate. The result was the Treaty of Doaksville, struck January 17, 1837. Under its provisions the Chickasaws were to have the "privilege" of a district within the limits of the Choctaw country, to equal representation in the Choctaw General Council; and the Chickasaw people were to be entitled to all rights and privileges of the Choctaws, with the exception of receiving monies from the Choctaw annuities. The two tribes could settle in each others' districts. The boundaries of the district were within the southern and western portion of the Choctaw Nation. The "south fork of the Canadian" formed a part of that boundary.[11]

Like the Choctaws, the Chickasaws suffered much on their own trail of tears. In the new land, they were outvoted in the council government and treated as seconds by their old neighbors in this new territory. For many years trouble brewed and only compromises held the Nations together . Finally in 1855, the major problems were to be resolved with the Chickasaws and Choctaws in treaty with the United States agreeing to the separation of the Nations.[12]

While the Chickasaws had been moving in and the Indian Territory had been expanded from the border with Canada to the Red River, new and exciting activity had been taking place across the American Nation. It began slowly with a few Americans carrying trade to the Mexicans in

Santa Fe. The 1840s and '50s would prove to be very busy years around the Gaines Creek-Canadian region; many now famous people would eventually pass this site.

FOOTNOTES

[1]U.S. Congress, Senate, Indian Affairs. Laws and Treaties. S. Doc. 452, Vol. 2, 57th Cong., 1st sess. (1903), pp. 133-134.

[2]Richard Peters, ed., U.S. Statutes at Large, Vol. IV (Boston), 1850), pp. 40-41; Grant Foreman, Civilization of the American Indian, Vol. 14 (Norman, 1936), pp. 1156-1158.

[3]Foreman, pp. 158-159; "1824, Choctaws, John Pitchlin," Office of Indian Affairs, Retired Classified File.

[4]Thomas L. McKenney, Memoirs, Official and Personal, Introduction by Herman J. Viola (Lincoln, 1846; reprint ed., 1973), pp. 1, 316; Peters, p. 315.

[5]Issac McCoy, History of Baptist Indian Missions, Introduction by Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr. (New York, 1970), pp. 364-367.

[6]Peters, pp. 411-412.

[7]Laws and Treaties, pp. 221-227.

[8]"Report of Captain Dawson to Colonel Arbuckle," Arkansas Advocate (March 9, 16, 1831); James Henry Gardner, "The Lost Captain," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. 21, No. 3 (1943), p. 242.

[9]Ibid., p. 243.

[10]Grinding stones, pots, shells, and cave found by author on family property prior to inundation of Lake Eufaula. The cemetary is now on State Lodge property.

[11]Laws and Treaties, p. 361; Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, Choctaw Agency (1824-76), 1832-1838.

[12]U.S. Congress, Senate, Vol. II, No. 512, 23 Cong., 1st sess., (1834), pp. 273-275, 301, 354-360, 570, 700, 787-788; Laws and Treaties, pp. 361-362.

CHAPTER IV

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ROADS AND TRAILS

Soon after Mexico had declared its independence of Spain in 1810, Santa Fe was thrown open to trade with the Americans. A road was quickly established from Independence, Missouri, to the Mexican territorial capitol of Santa Fe. By 1835, after settlements had grown up in the Indian Territory near the Canadian River, trade began to move west out of Belle Point (Fort Smith) toward Santa Fe along the Canadian River. The earliest established route ran on the north side of the river so travelers could stop at recently established North Fork Town. With its trading houses, stores, and blacksmiths, it offered the last touch of civilization until one reached Santa Fe. Other roads, however, were soon brought into use. One followed the south side of the Canadian, then dipped southwest between Longtown Creek and Gaines Creek toward Boggy Depot, then continued west.

In 1839, Josiah and John Gregg, Santa Fe traders, left Van Buren, Arkansas, bound for Santa Fe. The route they took up the Canadian was new and in a book published in 1844 titled Commerce of the Prairies, Josiah Gregg was able to give much insight to life in this region, its geography, wildlife, and its possibilities. This round trip from Arkansas to Santa Fe and back was also to be Gregg's "last trip across the Prairies".

Like others along the Canadian, Gregg found little that would ever

present attractions to "agriculturists". The land was said to be either too sandy or too marshy for cultivation, but concerning the two routes to Santa Fe, he wrote,

> the route from Arkansas possesses many advantages. Besides it being some days travel shorter, it is less intersected with large streams; there are fewer sandy stretches, and a greater variety of wood-skirted brooks, affording throughout the journey very agreeable camping places.[1]

The more southern climate was also looked upon with much favor.

In nearly all accounts of travel across the Indian Territory, mention is made of "The Cross Timbers". At various times and by various people, this jungle-like mass of shrub-brush and oak trees was described as extending into northern Texas and as far north as Kansas. It was Gregg's description of the Cross Timbers that others studied and planned around.

> The Cross Timbers vary in width from five to thirty miles, and entirely cut off the communication betwixt the interior prairies and those of the great plains. They may be considered as the 'fringe' of the great prairies, being a continuous busy strip composed of various kinds of undergrowth; such as black-jack, postoaks, and in some places hickory, elm, etc., intermixed with a very diminutive dwarf oak, called by the hunters 'skin-oak'. Most of the timber appears to be kept small by the continual inroads of the 'burning prairies'; for, being killed almost annually, it is constantly replaced by scions of undergrowth; so that it becomes more and more dense every reproduction. The underwood is so matted in many places with grape-vines, green briars, etc., as to form almost impenetrable 'roughs', which serve as hiding places for wild beasts, as well as wild Indians . . .[2]

In spite of the barrier presented by the Cross Timbers, the use of the Canadian River route to Santa Fe continued for some time until when in 1844 the Mexican dictator General Santa Anna closed the trail out of fear that too many Americans were entering his province. In spite of its initial reason for being cut off, the route still saw frequent users. In the early fall of 1845 directions were given to the Bureau of

Topographical Engineers to make a report on the upper Arkansas River and the surrounding Comanche country. Lieutenants James W. Abert and William G. Peck were to head this expedition. After having traveled up the Arkansas the party ended its journey at Bent's Fork, Colorado. From this point Abert, the chief officer, was ordered to descend the Canadian for his return to Fort Gibson. For the purpose of reporting, the Lieutenant kept a daily log of their travels. Like Gregg's narrative, it presents a very interesting picture of the area near Canadian and some local inhabitants. On approaching the Gaines Creek-Canadian area, Abert's log reads,

> We now traveled on a narrow strip of land between the Canadian and its north fork, which stream appears to be the more heavily timbered of the two; for, in looking in the direction of the north fork, we saw a dense forest of oaks extending as far as the eye could reach. As buffalo were still invitingly frisking about us, we despatched two of our men to get meat for the camp.[3]

These were the last buffaloes seen by the party. It seems few buffalo ventured to cross through the Cross Timbers. This was also the distance that most buffalo herds kept between themselves and civilization, Fort Gibson being about 100 miles distant. Large Indian villages had by now sprang up in the region. A few more miles down the trail, on the north side, this party was questioned by some settlers who, "doubtless supposed that we had been robbing Santa Fe traders, or shooting Indians, as there are some people on the border fond of such amusements." The Lieutenant then proceeded to give a description of the dress he and other members of the expedition usually dawned, as did most other frontier explorers.

> The costume of the party was such as would likely excite some suspicion; for we were dressed in buckskin trousers, with fringed seams; shirts of bright red flannel, and

> calico of all colors; our hair long and wild; our faces sunburnt and unshaven; and, with our rifles flung across the saddle-bow, we presented a formidable, (if) not to say ferocious, appearance.[4]

For some years still the route remained in use and in 1849, it was to see its heaviest usage and eventually its last.

In January, 1848, gold was discovered in California and the "Rush of 49" was soon on and again the Canadian River route west would prove to be of importance as a highway for "49'ers" and their "gold fever". The acting Governor of California at this time was General Richard Barnes Mason, by chance, a former commander of the garrison at Fort Gibson. Being well known throughout the territory, when news of his official report reached Fort Gibson and Fort Smith, hundreds rushed to the forts to prepare to go to "California or Bust", as was their popular slogan. Many Indian citizens would join in these forthcoming expeditions. Among them were a few Choctaws. Throughout the fall of 1848 and early months of 1849, small groups wandered into Fort Smith and some began their trek across the Indian Territory. Still others gathered to be escorted by the Army in the early spring of 1849.[5]

On April 2, 1849, orders were received at Fort Smith to form an escort to leave the fort for Santa Fe, for the purpose of affording protection to citizens immigrating to the newly acquired territories. Captain Randolph B. Marcy was to be the commanding officer. The Captain was ordered to proceed in this march, "along the valley of the main Canadian, wholly on the south side of the river, by the most direct practicable route", (to Santa Fe). The Captain and his men were to go ahead of the party until they "arrived near to Edwards" on the Canadian. "The principal objects of this expedition are: to ascertain and establish the best route from this point to New Mexico and California; to

extend to such of our citizens...traversing your route such facilities as circumstances may require, and ...to insure them a safe and unmolested passage across the prairies..."[6]

Marcy's detachment was composed of 79 other officers and troops and one civilian doctor. The Captain's "train" consisted of eighteen wagons, one six-pounder iron gun (cannon), and a travelling forge, each drawn by six mules. Captain Marcy and his troopers set out on April 5. On April 11, the Fort Smith and California Emigrating Company began following. There were 479 in the company, in seventy-five wagons drawn by 500 oxen and 500 horses and mules. With the hundreds of pack and saddle horses and extra dray animals, the train stretched three miles long on the narrow road.[7] This was the largest party to ever pass near the Canadian area.

On April 10, Captain Marcy and his troops reached Gaines Creek. In his written report, he refers to the stream as "the south fork of the Canadian or Gaine's creek", but on his table of distances and camp sites, he lists it as "James creek". The table also shows that an Indian farm was located by the crossing as was a ferry.

> The south fork of the Canadian is 76½ miles from Fort Smith; is one hundred feet wide, and twelve feet in depth at the ferry. There is a ford about three hundred yards above the ferry, where the stream can be crossed when the water is not high. From here our course was 18 degrees south of west, over a rolling prairie, for ten miles, until we struck the bottom of Coal Creek, 88 miles from Fort Smith.[8]

The party had forded Gaines Creek south of Canadian, the rolling prairie was probably Reams Flat.

Marcy, with the aid of an engineer, cut out a crude road as they headed for Santa Fe, constantly marking the route, taking readings on the sun and carefully measuring the distance. Miles were counted by

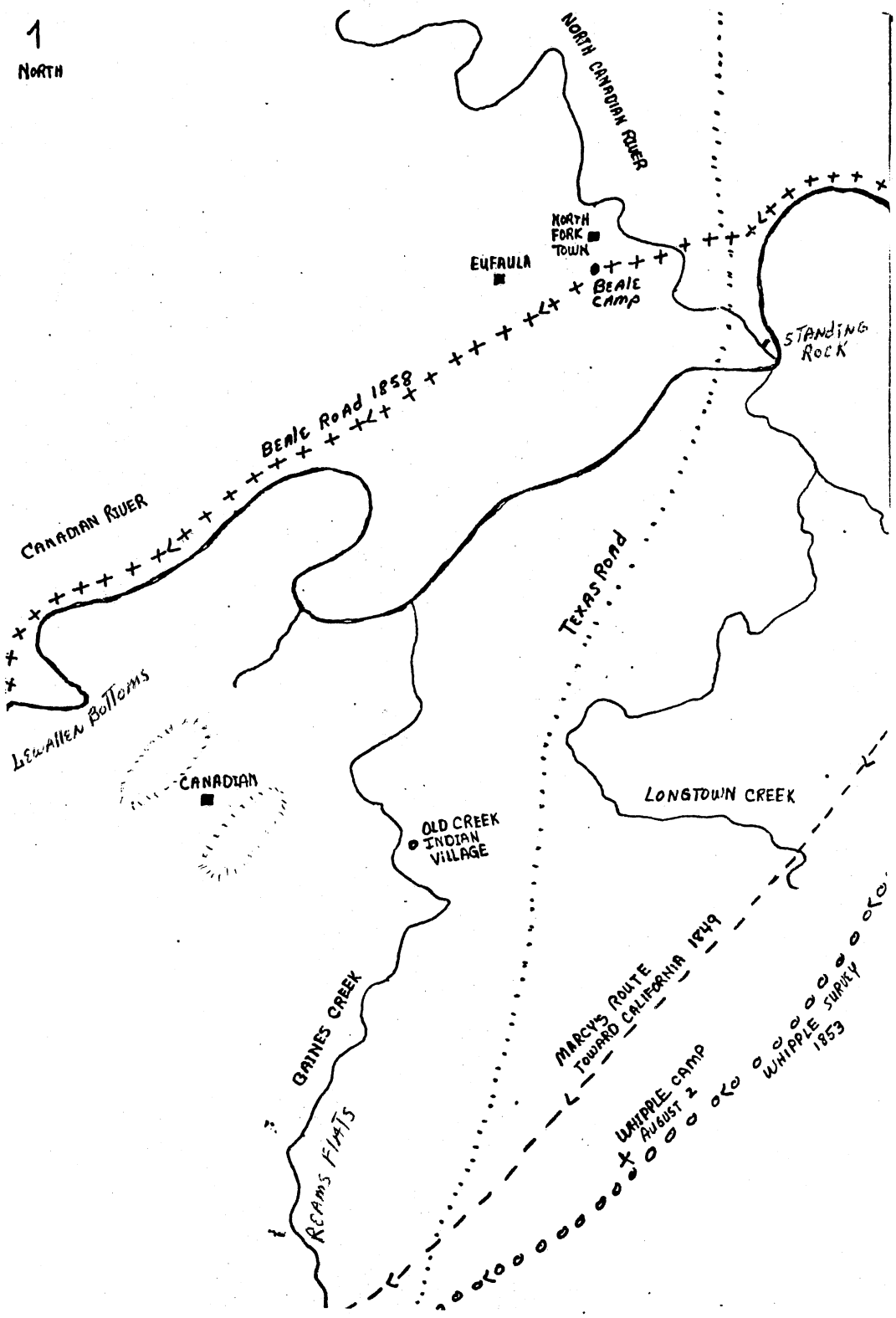


Figure 2. Early Roads and Trails

chain length and viameter, a red mark on a wagon wheel. He found the total distance by this route to be 819½ miles. But once in Santa Fe, the party discovered that no direct western route lay out of that town for California. In consequence thereof, Marcy and the migrants had to drop south 364 miles to Dona Anna. At this point, Marcy and his command were relieved by another escort party and they returned to Fort Smith by crossing up through Texas entering Indian Territory near Fort Washita. Marcy's journey was not only significant for the Indian Territory, but also important for the discoveries he made in the Southwest disproving stories concerning rivers and mountains which actually did not exist. Marcy was also the first to find the true headwaters of the Red River. This and other expeditions by Marcy were to influence the course of all American history. Throughout the eleven years following Marcy's return to Fort Smith until the Civil War began, national debates would run hot concerning proposed military roads and railroads to span the continent. Many of these roads would eventually pass by the Gaines Creek-Canadian area. Marcy himself said, "I am of the opinion, that but few localities could be found upon the continent which would present as few obstacles to the construction of a railway as upon this route".[9] Unfortunately, the building of either a road or a railway would prove to be no easy task due to geography, and most importantly, politics.

The year after Marcy established his trail, 1850, the American nation felt a relief of tension, but at the same time heard a warning bell of a crisis yet to come, for in that year, the Great Compromise of 1850 was struck by several individual acts of Congress. The Compromise primarily dealt with the admission of states and territories to the Union as either "free" or "slave", but caught up in debates from time to time

were arguments for a transcontinental railroad. Northerners wanted a route at or above the 39th parallel north, through "free" country, while Southerners demanded one along the 32nd parallel which was shorter and more practical. In early 1853, the Congress ordered that surveys be made along five parallels to ascertain the most practicable and economical route for a railroad from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean. One of these routes was to be along the 35th parallel, which passed through the Choctaw Nation along the Canadian River. To conduct this survey, Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, who in eight years would become President of the Confederate States of America, ordered First Lieutenant Amiel Weeks Whipple of the Topographical Engineers to begin a survey at Fort Smith. On July 15, 1853, the party left the area of the fort bound first for Skullyville. This party was composed of geologists, engineers, surveyors, astronomers, meteorologists, a physician, and a renowned German artist, writer and topographer, Heinrich Baldwin Mollhausen. Mollhausen was the first person to ever make drawings or sketches of the Canadian River region. One of his works shows the confluence of what he supposed was the Canadian and Gaines Creek. While La Harpe had been the first "white" in the region, Long's party the first scientific, and Marcy's had been the largest, the Whipple party was surely the most scientific and "learned". Almost daily, while in the Choctaw Nation, the party passed by numerous Indian farms and stores where they were usually greeted by educated Choctaws wearing typical "white man's clothing". Their only complaint was the high prices for food stuffs. Beeves (cattle) were $10 a head, sheep $2.50, and corn was as high as $1.50 per bushel.

On August 2, camp was made on a little creek flowing into the

Longtown, a little east of present Blocker. The party remained there for two nights because as Mollhausen said, "it was in a most lovely little valley, on the border of a murmuring brook and beneath the shade of lofty unbrageous trees . . . The mules, freed from their burdens, were grazing in herds, or rolling in the cool soft grass to cleanse their heated and dusty bodies".[10]

While at this camp some members of the party, including Mollhausen, explored the region to their north. After a hard ride across rocky ridges and marshy lowlands, this,

> party reached the Canadian at the intended spot, namely where the Northfork and Southfork joined it . . . The scene had a dreary desolate character, and though the banks were richly grown with cotton-wood and cedar, no agreeable effect was produced. Trunks of trees, blacked by the effects of the water and of time, lay uprooted and half covered with sand, their withered, ghostly-looking branches and roots sticking out; here sat the white heron motionless . . . and the vulture wheeled slowly above . . . We were all glad to get away from a place that had so little attraction.[11]

Though the artist says he arrived at the "Southfork", usually the designation for Gaines Creek, he was probably at Longtown, from which the North Canadian can be seen.

On August 4, the Whipple party approached the Gaines Creek area near Reams Flat, after several days of heavy rains.

> Passing into the bottom lands belonging to Gaines' creek, the foliage of the forest seemed too dense to allow the sun to warm the earth or evaporate the moisture, and the road was one long succession of miry sloughs and muddy pools. Having travelled seventeen and a half miles, we camped upon La Honda, a branch of Gaines creek.[12]

The next day, the party trooped only a quarter of a mile and forded Gaines Creek. From there they headed southwest and encamped at Perryville.

The Whipple railroad survey through the Choctaw country did not bring a railroad to Indian Territory, because by the time the survey was completed and the report made to Congress in 1854, the flames of sectional hatred prevented any transcontinental railway attempts until the North and South could settle their differences. Eventually, around the turn of the century, a railroad was built near this route out of Fort Smith; this was the Fort Smith and Western. This road ran three miles south of Canadian.

More directly, the Whipple survey influenced the direction of surveys for a military road into the West and Southwest. Throughout the years from 1857 to 1859, the government caused several roads to be surveyed from the West Coast east and from the Mississippi River west. In late 1857, a survey was pushed out of Fort Defiance on the eastern California border toward the Colorado River in New Mexico. The route was along the 35th parallel and was approximately the same as Whipples'. The oddity of this expedition was that for transportation the party used a mixed herd of mules and camels. For meat a flock of 350 sheep were driven along. To head and superintend this odd survey, Secretary of War Jefferson Davis commissioned Edward Fitzgerald Beale, one of the most colorful and active men in the history of the American West. Beale had great success with the expedition of camels and these animals remained in service for several years before the idea was given up. Many of the camels were sold to zoos or circuses, but some were turned loose, and over the years until as late as the 1900s, many stories and legends abounded about camels roaming the American Southwest. After the conclusion of this survey, Beale was commissioned to survey a route from Fort Smith to Albuquerque, New Mexico, estimating the cost of

constructing a railroad. During most of the month of October, Beale waited in Fort Smith collecting his men from all over the States. Finally on October 28, the party set out. When they reached Skullyville, Beale divided the party into three units. He would head unit one over the Immigrant Trail that turned to the north of the Canadian. Unit two would follow two days behind estimating railroad construction in detail. Unit three would follow the Marcy route by Perryville. They were to meet at Aird's (Edward's) which was about five miles south of present Holdenville along the Canadian. The purpose of units one and three was to determine the shortest route to Edward's from the fort. "Compared distance by Mr. Law's (Unit Three) viameter and our own, and find his road three miles shorter; so much for that matter, which has been a bitter dispute between the north siders and south siders ever since I arrived at Fort Smith".[13]

After crossing the Canadian, Beale camped near North Fork Town,

> an insignificant village. Here we found corn had advanced from its usual rates of two bits to a dollar a bushel; of course, there had been a short crop, a drought, an unusual demand -- in fact, a thousand plausible reasons were given for this increased price -- but the true one . . . which was that a government train and its quartermaster's drafts were on the road.[14]

Quite frustrated, Beale rode ahead to get a cheaper rate than the $1.00 which had been quoted him. Thirty-five miles away, he found it for $.75 a bushel. When the rest of the train arrived, the price was up to $1.00.

Besides estimating building cost for the railroad, Beale made recommendations as to what creeks to bridge for the road. Pursuant to these recommendations, several bridges were actually built. The closest ones to the Gaines Creek area were across Emachaya Creek and the San

Bois. In later years, the town of Iron Bridge would acquire its name from the bridge on the latter. During the Civil War, several of the bridges were destroyed, including "Iron Bridge".

Though Beale's survey was the first and only to get immediate results, by the building of bridges, it was also the last official expedition to use the 35th parallel west. Both of the routes surveyed by Beale became established roads in Indian Territory. Eventually the south road or Marcy's would become State Highway 31 from near Spiro to McAlester then U. S. Highway 270 to Atwood, which would be a few miles across the river and south of "Edwards". The Beale Road which crossed the Canadian to North Fork Town is presently State Highway 9 from Fort Smith to Eufaula. The Texas Road, which by Beale's time was having good usage, is U. S. Highway 69 through most of the state.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Josiah Gregg, Commerce on the Prairies, 2 vols. (New York, 1945) 2:154-155; Thwaites, Vol. XX, pp. 217-221.

[2]Gregg, Vol. II, p. 200; Thwaites, Vol. XX, p. 255.

[3]U. S. Congress, Senate, Doc. 438, 29th Cong., 1st sess. (1846), p. 112.

[4]Ibid., pp. 119-120.

[5]The Arkansas Democrat (April 4, 1849), p. 2; The Arkansas Democrat (April 13, 1849), p. 2; The Arkansas Democrat (July 27, 1849), p. 2; The Fort Smith Herald (April 4, 1849), p. 2; The Arkansas Democrat (March 16, 1849), p. 2.

[6]U. S. Congress, Senate, Executive Doc. 64, Series No. 562, 31st Cong., 1st sess. (1849-50), p. 169.

[7]Grant Foreman, Captain Marcy and the Gold Seekers (Norman, 1939), pp. 142-143.

[8]U. S. Congress, Senate, Executive Doc. 66, Series No. 562, 31st Cong., 1st sess. (1849-50), p. 173.

[9]Ibid., p. 192.

[10]Baldwin H. Mollhausen, A Diary of a Journey from the Mississippi to the Coast of the Pacific, Vol. I (New York, 1858; reprint ed., New 1969), p. 62.

[11]Ibid., pp. 65-66.

[12]U. S. Congress, Senate, Executive Doc. 78, Series No. 760, 33 Cong., 2nd sess. (1854-55), p. 13.

[13]U. S. Congress, House, Executive Doc. 42, Series No. 1048, 36th Cong., 1st sess. (1859-60), p. 11.

[14]Ibid., p. 10.

CHAPTER V

THE ANTE-BELLUM PERIOD

The discovery of gold in California in '49 and the establishment of the Marcy Road toward Santa Fe had brought about a flurry of activity in the states adjacent to Indian Territory, and also in the Choctaw Nation. The 1850s had brought several official survey expeditions through the Nation plus hundreds of civilian travelers still going to California. Though many Choctaws had profited from trade with these wagon trains, most of the citizens in the Nation resented these encroachments by whites. Trouble was also arising with the adopted Chickasaws, who since the 1837 treaty, had resented their non-sovereign status in the Choctaw Nation.

Incidences arose and disputes flared into fights as to the rights and limits of the Chickasaw District in the western part of the Nation. Finally on November 4, 1854, a new treaty was entered into by the two tribes. Ignorance of geography had caused these disputes and so the Chickasaws being the main disputing party agreed to pay for a new survey of the boundaries in question if the Choctaws would agree to stand by the judgment rendered by the surveyor.

One area in question involved Gaines Creek. The treaty of 1837 had described the boundaries of the different districts, but some of these lines later proved to be erroneous. Part of the boundary was to run from "the line dividing Musha-la-tubbee and Push-meta-haw districts;

thence eastwardly along said district lines to the source of Brushy Creek; thence down said creek to where it flows into the Canadian River, ten or twelve miles above the mouth of the south fork of the Canadian. . . . [Gaines Creek]".[1]

In point of fact, the stream which the treaty called Brushy Creek did not flow into the Canadian but was only a branch of Gaines Creek. By 1854 the geography of this area was well known and so the two tribes were anxious to settle on definite lines of boundary. To effect this survey, a civil engineer, Captain R. S. Hunter was employed. In a letter to Douglas H. Cooper, the agent of the Choctaws, Hunter made several observations of the region. He said Captain Marcy's maps had been of great help and aware that "Brushy Creek", supposedly emptying into Gaines Creek was claimed by many people to be the line separating the Choctaw and Chickasaw districts, Hunter took special care in surveying this area. On the immediate Gaines Creek-Canadian area he had this to say,

> The land on Gaine's Creek, from the California road to its mouth is generally poor. Thence for nearly twenty miles (west), there is a belt of very good land along the Canadian, from one to four miles wide. Coal Creek and its tributaries furnish small parcels of good land.[2]

Still the leaders of the tribes were not satisfied. The Chickasaws desired not just a district but their own sovereign nation. This being agreeable to nearly all the citizens, the Federal government in 1855 entered into yet another treaty with the Choctaws and Chickasaws. This time the two were permanently separated as governments but would retain only one agent, he to remain at Boggy Depot. Both tribes had to relinquish claim to any land west of 100 degrees west longitude and furthermore lease to other tribes that land west of the 98th degree.[3]

The main cause of antagonism was now gone, but the separation had disrupted district lines in the Choctaw Nation. Accordingly, the Choctaws found it necessary to draw up new district and county boundary lines. The first counties had been organized in 1850 when the Choctaw Council had reorganized its judicial system. Under this reorganization, nineteen counties had been formed in the four districts. The town of Canadian was in the Chickasaw District in Perry county. Gaines Creek formed a portion of the eastern boundary of the Chickasaw District. Across the Creek in Mosholatubbee District was Gaines county. After the separation of the Nations, this area of which Canadian was to be a part was incorporated into the Mosholatubbee District in November, 1855. Besides the original four counties of Skullyville, Sugar Loaf, San Bois, and Gaines, a new county was formed. The new county was named Tobaksi, meaning coal. Tobaksi county was roughly the same as the northwest half of present day Pittsburg county, plus a small portion of Hughes county.[4] The Choctaw "Tobaksi" has been corrupted by whites into "Tobucksy". Though coal was not mined in any real quantity in this county as yet, it was known to be available there. It is interesting to note that in 1907 when Statehood came to the Indian Territory, this area was incorporated into Pittsburg county because of the rich coal mines around Krebs. The name was adopted from the coal town of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, after dropping the 'h'.

The 1850s were very complex years throughout the Choctaw Nation. The General Council found it necessary to amend the tribal constitution several times. Often as in the case of the Skullyville convention of 1858 bitter arguments broke out and for a time, civil war within the tribe was feared. The 1850s also brought problems with slavery. In

March 1854, the Choctaws received a copy of the United States Attorney General's opinion, addressed to the President, "respecting the right of persons to reclaim fugitive slaves from the country of the Choctaw Nation of Indians". In the North, this new fugitive slave law was ill-received but was looked on very favorably by the slave-holding Choctaws. The newspapers of the Nation and those of Fort Smith were filled with reward offers on runaway slaves. A study of the letters received by the Office of Indian Affairs for the 1850s shows a building question over the right to hold slaves and other related questions. Clearly, half of the letters received in 1859 pertained in some way to slavery.

Only a handful of slaves had been brought to the Nation during the "removal", but by 1860 there were 2,297 listed Negro slaves and 67 freed Negroes in the Choctaw country. There were 385 slave holders and as many as 227 slaves belonging to one man. The slaves averaged approximately six to each slave holder in the Nation. The ratio of Choctaw citizens to Negro slaves was approximately 8:1.[5] Very often the questions on slavery were complicated and, on occasion, very tense. In August of 1859, an Adam Nail (or Neil) wrote a letter to Choctaw Agent Cooper, requesting help in the case of a claimed Negro slave, in behalf of a local citizen, Betsy McGilbery.

While still in the East, a Choctaw, Imoklash-hopi (Singer), gave a Negro girl (Pender) to his niece Amaha while they were still young children. When grown, Amaha became Mrs. William McGilbery and had a daughter, Betsy. When old enough, the son of Singer, Secobige, claimed the Negro girl Pender and sold her. The matter was brought before a council trial and Mrs. McGilbery got Pender back.

In 1856, Mrs. McGilbery died and bequeathed to her daughter Betsy

the slave Pender and all her children. One of these children, Jack, was stolen by Ward Coachman, a prominent, if not notorious, son of Secobige. Coachman lived across the Canadian in the Creek Nation. Coachman sold the slave, Jack, to the Myer's Brothers Trading Company of Fort Smith. Claims were filed against Coachman, but the Creek court awarded Jack, Pender, and her other children to Coachman. The case then went to a circuit court in Fort Smith and the slaves were once more returned to the McGilbery's. Adam Nail was asking for help against the Myers and Coachman because,

> Ward Coachman with his command came to McGilbery's and caught two negros and a pony . . . got the negros . . . but the pony was run off . . . they never got it. Myers comes occasionally in the dead hours of night, with weapons, Pistols and double Barrel Guns, and force open doors in connection with persons unknown to us . . . all of which can be proved; threatening to take any negro belonging to McGilbery. Negroes continually on the run. No set of men could stand what we have.[6]

Nail asked Cooper to find for them a proper court and settle the matter.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Laws and Treaties, pp. 486-488.

[2] "Letter to Agent D. H. Cooper from R. S. Hunter," Letters received by the Office of Indian Affairs, Choctaw Agency (Oct. 11, 1854).

[3] Laws and Treaties, pp. 531-536.

[4] Constitution and Laws of the Choctaw Nation (1869), Oklahoma Historical Society Collection, pp. 488-490.

[5] Eighth Census, 1860, United States Census Office, Vol. I (Washington, D.C., 1864), p. xv.

[6] "Letter from Adam Nail to Agent Cooper," Letters received by the Office of Indian Affairs, Choctaw Agency (August, 1859).

CHAPTER VI

THE CIVIL WAR IN INDIAN TERRITORY

As the United States' national elections approached in late 1860, the Choctaws became concerned over the possible dissolution of the Union. In December of that year following Republican Lincoln's election to the Presidency, the Southern states began their secession. Many Choctaw leaders viewed this as inevitable and justifiable. Worried about the collapse of the Federal government, the General Council on February 6, 1861, instructed their delegates in Washington to treat with the officials regarding the safety of their invested money, and if possible, to withdraw it and deposit it in some Southern banks. The following day, delegates were appointed to meet with any inter-tribal convention that might convene, to discuss their relations with the Federal government, "so long as said Government is in existence, otherwise to urge a renewal of such relations with such Confederacy as may be framed among the Southern states".[1]

That same day, February 7, the General Council adopted a resolution expressing deep regret and great sorrow at the present unhappy political disagreement between the Northern and Southern states. It further resolved,

> That in the event a permanent dissolution of the American Union takes place, our many relations with the General Government must cease, and we shall be left to follow the natural affections, education, institutions, and interest of our people, which indissolubly bind us in every way to the destiny of our neighbors and brethren of the Southern States . . .[2]

How prophetic the words, "indissolubly bind us . . . to the destiny of our neighbors . . ." would seem by the end of the War in 1865. The Choctaws did stand close to the Confederacy and most certainly they shared the same fate. The last official Confederate command would be surrendered in the Choctaw Nation, the last and strongest holdout for Southerners in the Indian Territory.

At the same time that the Choctaws were meeting in special session, the Southern governments were meeting to frame a constitution for the Confederate States of America. Both the Choctaws and the Confederacy were wasting little time readjusting. By July, the Confederate commissioner of plenary powers, Albert Pike, began meeting with the tribes in Indian Territory at North Fork Town to create treaties of friendship and alliances. On July 12, the Choctaws, joined by the Chickasaws, signed their treaty. They acknowledged themselves to be under the protection of the Confederate States of America, and of no other power. For their part, the Confederacy agreed to assume all the responsibilities which had been carried by the United States.[3] The Choctaw Nation was now officially a part of the Confederate States of America. The Choctaw reasoning was sound and sincere in these undertakings, but along with a good portion of the rest of the South, the Choctaws faltered when they thought the Federal government would peacefully allow the separation of the Southern states. This hope was finally dashed when in late April of 1861, Confederate artillery began bombarding Fort Sumter, South Carolina. The Choctaw delegation and Douglas Cooper, their agent, quickly returned from Washington. On May 13, Confederate Secretary of War, L. P. Walker, empowered now Major Douglas Cooper, to raise a volunteer mounted regiment among the Choctaws and Chickasaws to be commanded by

himself. The Choctaws were easily the most eager Indian allies the Confederacy had, and Cooper had no trouble raising this First Regiment. Even in the face of being second classed, they remained ready to serve and fight. In a letter written in July, Major Cooper stated the nearing completion of the Choctaw Regiment of Mounted Rifles and declared many others to be desirous of service. But he also lamented the lack of co-operation at Fort Smith, the Confederate Headquarters, and the failure to supply the needed arms. He further states that the Choctaws and Chickasaws could furnish as many as 10,000 warriors if needed and that they were extremely anxious to form another regiment. "There seems to be a disposition", wrote Cooper, "to keep the Indians at home. This seems to me bad policy. They are unfit for garrison duty, and would be a terror to the Yankees".[4]

The Choctaws were indeed ready and willing, but they were not to taste battle for another two months. In the time between their enrollment and their first engagement, the Choctaws, among 2,000 others, drilled and practiced at newly established Camp Pike. This camp was located just north and east of Whitefield at the intersection of State Highways 2 and 9, next to the Canadian River on the Beale Road. Cooper, now a colonel, was in charge of these headquarters.

Not far from Camp Pike, Chief Opothle-yohola, a loyal Creek, was assembling his people, ex-slaves, and supplies to head north to Federal safety. They were encamped by "Fisher's Store", Fishertown being about three miles northeast of North Fork Town. Colonel Cooper had written the Chief several times admonishing him to cease his activities and bow to the wishes of the government. The Chief ignored these requests and so accordingly, Cooper determined to take direct action. This would

mark the first campaign use of the Choctaws or any Indian troops by either side in the Civil War. This action took place approximately twelve miles north-northeast of Canadian.

Having exhausted every means to negotiate a settlement, Cooper resolved to advance upon the Creeks with the forces under his command and, "either compel submission to the authorities of the nation or drive him and his party from the country". To this effect, on the 15th day of November, 1861, troops were moved up the Deep Fork of the Canadian towards the supposed camp of Opothle-yohola's forces. The camp, which had been abandoned, was found, and the trail followed. The Loyal Creeks were pursued and caught near the Cimarron River. The Creeks had hid in ambush and in the first engagement the Confederate command was forced to fall back. As soon as the firing was heard at the main position, the Choctaw and Chickasaw regiment began advancing on the enemy. Because of the darkness of the night they came to within sixty yards of the enemy before savage firing broke out. Commenting on his troops' first battle, Cooper stated,

> The promptness with which the Choctaws and Chickasaws came into line and the steadiness with which they maintained their position during the entire action merit unqualified praise, especially when it is considered that the night was extremely dark, and the number and position of the enemy uncertain, and that they stood for the first time under an enemy's fire.[5]

This running battle with the Creeks continued until they fled into Kansas where they suffered much that winter due to their loss of supplies, cattle, and many loved ones. So the Choctaws first battle in the Civil War ended in neither a true victory nor a defeat, but a short war was proclaimed because all the South had done well that year of 1861. 1862 would be a fair year also, but by the end of 1863, the romantic

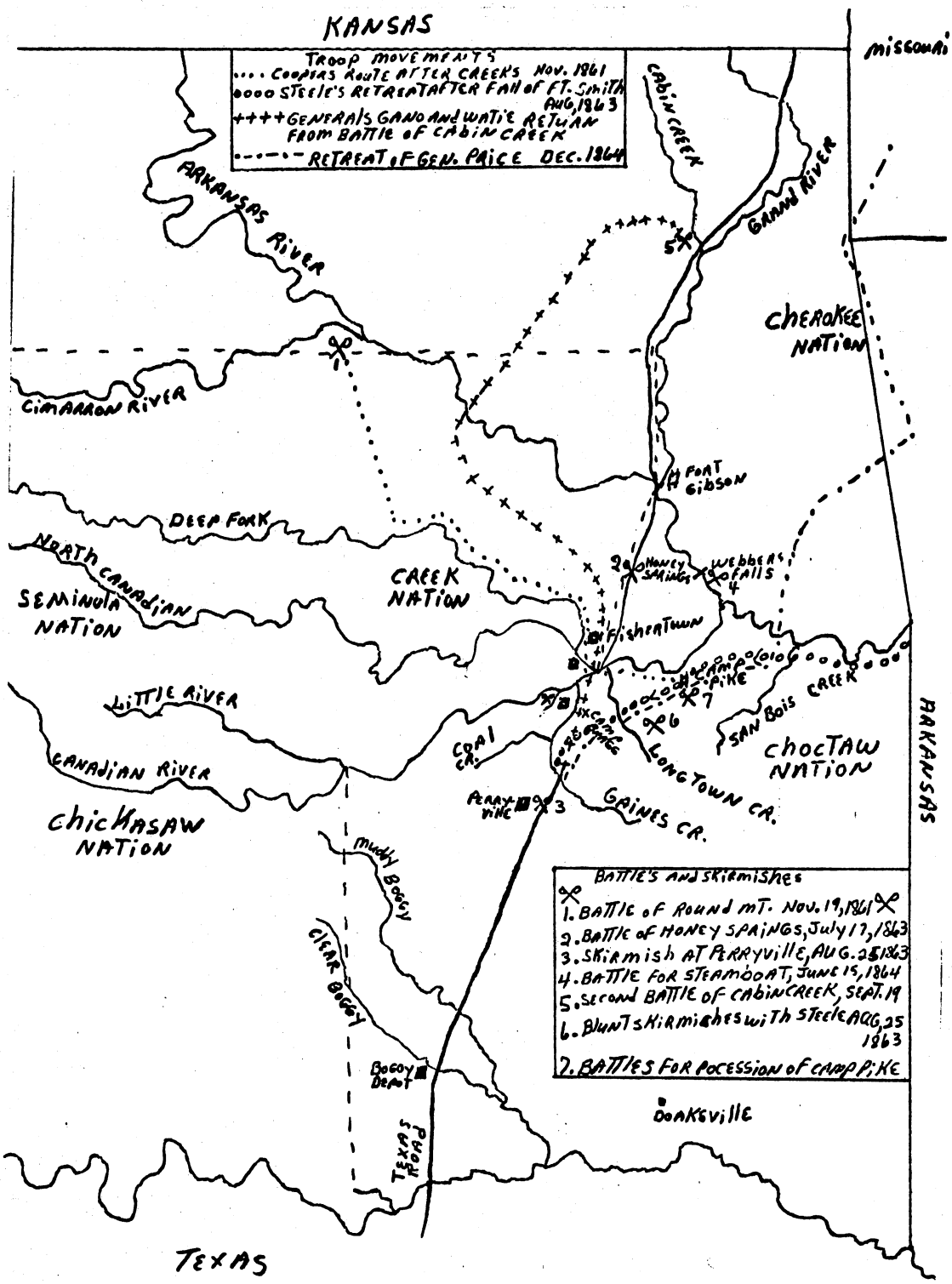


Figure 3. Civil War Activity

dream would be lost.

Activity in 1862 was slower than the preceding year in Indian Territory, but it was also the year of the most decisive battle fought west of the Mississippi. This was the Battle of Pea Ridge or Elkhorn Tavern, in the northwest corner of Arkansas. Some 16,000 Confederate forces were opposed by 10,500 heavily armed Federals. The battle took place on March 7th and 8th. General Albert Pike was commanding a division of troops. Among them were four full regiments, two battalions and some detached companies of Indians. One of the regiments was the First Regiment Choctaw and Chickasaw Mounted Rifles under General Cooper, plus the Choctaw and Chickasaw Battalion.

Since the end of the battle the merits and usefulness of the Indian troops which participated have been much debated. Some authors have claimed their main objective was to consume huge quantities of food, others say they committed gross inhumane atrocities by reverting back to their "savage nature", but still other authors more readily see their part as effective and as a major contribution. Though it did become a Union victory, the battle would have been predetermined and undecisive had not the Indians, over 3,000 in number, been present. General Cooper and his Mounted Rifles and the Choctaw and Chickasaw Battalion did not actually participate in the battle. They were hastening toward there when they met with the Confederate retreat.[6]

The year had been reasonably quiet in the Indian Territory, but the Federals had gained nominal control of the territory north of the Arkansas River. The Choctaw Nation was now the bastion of the Confederacy in the Territory. Throughout the year, small numbers of Southern sympathizers and the dispossessed migrated into the Choctaw Nation. By

the end of 1863, huge numbers of destitute families had entered the Nation seeking food and safety. Throughout the War, the Choctaw people shared what they could with these people.

Fort Gibson, renamed Fort Blunt by the Federals, had been captured by the Federals in December, 1862. The Commander of the Department of Indian Territory, Confederate States Army Brigadier General William Steele, believed Fort Gibson had to be retaken if the country north of the Arkansas was to stay in Confederate hands. Steele ordered General Cooper to establish a headquarters at Honey Springs near Elk Creek. This was to be a staging area for a proposed attack on Fort Gibson. Before taking action, Cooper was to receive reinforcements of 3,000 men from Arkansas. They were to arrive at Honey Springs, along the Texas Road, on July 17.

Major General James G. Blunt had arrived at Fort Gibson on July 11. General Steele learning of this, on July 15 ordered Brigadier General William L. Cabell, from Arkansas, to send forward, toward Honey Springs, such portion of his brigade as was in readiness. Cabell had been resting and regrouping his 3,000 troops near Camp Pike. From the 11th to the 15th, Blunt had been busy constructing flat boats to ferry his men across the rain swollen Arkansas. He had been hampered in crossing the river because Cooper had troops stationed in "rifle-pits" at every crossing. At midnight on the 15th, Blunt succeeded in crossing the river much farther up stream with 250 cavalry and four pieces of light artillery. As he marched back down the river, the outpost troops fled the rifle-pits back toward Honey Springs. Blunt immediately began crossing his forces in boats and by 10 p.m. of the 16th, commenced moving south with less than 3,000 men, mostly Indians and Negroes, and twelve

pieces of artillery. At daybreak on the 17th Blunt's forces came upon the Confederate's advance guard about five miles from Elk Creek, and with his cavalry drove them back toward their main force, which was then forming on the south side of Elk Creek.[7]

Early on the 16th, General Cooper had sent out the First Cherokee and Choctaw Regiment and a squadron of Texas cavalry as this advance guard. The morning of the 17th had dawned damp, cloudy, and dreary as this advance guard met Blunt's forces. The advance of the enemy came in sight of the position occupied by the Choctaws and Texans and they "commenced a brisk fire upon them", which was returned, and followed by a charge which drove the Union forces back. Soon after the Federals had been driven back, it began raining, "which rendered (all) arms wholly useless". The Choctaws and Texans then fell back slowly to the main camp for the purpose of obtaining a fresh supply of ammunition and preparing for the impending fight. Accordingly, the Union advance halted until the main body could be brought up to form a line of battle.[8] General Blunt halted his men behind a little ridge about one-half mile from the enemy's line, "to rest and eat a lunch from their haversacks". After a two hour rest, he formed them into two columns, one on the right of the Texas Road, the other on the left. The infantry was in column by companies, the cavalry by platoons and artillery by sections, and, "all closed in mass so as to deceive the enemy in regard to the strength of (the) force". Blunt then moved his forces forward in line of battle and soon drew their fire. "In a few moments the entire force was engaged . . . the fighting was unremitting and terrific for two hours, when the center of the rebel lines . . . became broken, and they commenced a retreat".[9] The Confederate forces were now in full retreat. The Choctaws

had become discouraged by the worthless ammunition and had given way and were then ordered to fall back with the other troops, which were moving off in an easterly direction.[10]

After a further chase of eight miles toward the Canadian, General Cooper's "affair at Elk Creek", and General Blunt's "Battle of Honey Spring" had ended. Cooper reported 134 of his men killed and wounded plus 47 taken prisoner. He estimated enemy losses exceeded 200. He had much praise for the Choctaw's and Texan's outfits and much condemnation of his poor arms, inadequate supplies, and wet, worthless gunpowder. Superior Union artillery and larger forces were cited as reasons of defeat, but, in all reality, his forces outnumbered those of Blunt almost two to one. Blunt listed his losses at 13 killed, and 62 wounded, 150 enemy killed and 400 wounded and 15 wagons captured.[11] All things considered, the Confederate Indian forces had made a poor showing at this, the most decisive battle in Indian Territory.

Through the rest of July and until August 8, the command moved around from Honey Springs to Soda Springs, about two miles from present Checotah, and finally back to south of the Canadian River. By August 12, the Confederate line of defense was along the Canadian from Longtown Creek to San Bois Creek. General Steele did not believe he and Generals Cooper and Cabell could hold this position and so on August 16 ordered a Captain S. Howell down the road toward Perryville to begin some defensive works along the Texas Road. He was to establish his camp ten to twenty miles north of Boggy Depot.

Meanwhile at Fort Gibson, Blunt was awaiting reinforcements, "to again move against the enemy". On August 22, General Blunt and reinforcements under Colonel William F. Cloud, from Kansas, began moving

across the Arkansas and toward Steele's position. This Union advance was composed of 4,500 men. On the 23rd, Steele abandoned his camp and began moving down the valley of Longtown Creek.

By the 24th, Blunt had arrived at the abandoned works around Camp Pike and learned early the next morning that Steele and the Confederates were at Perryville and at daybreak headed in that direction. "About 10 o'clock the advance guard met in the timber, a company of Choctaws . . . Four of their men were killed . . ." This skirmish took place about sixteen miles due west of Canadian near State Highway 71 between Enterprise and Quinton. Several more times during the day, the two sides fired at each other as the Federals advanced. At 8 p.m. that evening, they arrived at the town of Perryville, where they were fired upon by two horwitzer batteries charged with canister shot.[12] The main body of Steele's forces were some miles down the road and only a company had been left to stall Blunt. Perryville was a regular military post and an important depot, being the only point between Boggy Depot and North Fork Town. The whole town of Perryville was burned. Also during this campaign the depot at North Fork Town had been destroyed along with a smaller depot "3 miles south" called "Canadian Depot" or "Johnstons" on the south side of the Canadian. More importantly, after Perryville had been taken, Blunt marched on Fort Smith and set up headquarters there on September 2. The Confederate forces were now in control of only the far southern half of the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations. Mass desertions were now in process and many civilians began seeking the charity of the Federals. Nearly all of Indian Territory had become a waste land. Crop failures were causing famine among the citizens of all tribes. General Steele summoned up the failures of the army as due to

powder that became "a paste" on the slightest contact with moisture, and by stating, "as I have ever feared, the Indian troops except one regiment of Choctaws, were no service whatever. The greater part of the Cherokees were absent (on duty elsewhere), and the Creeks utterly refused to leave their country after (its) occupation by the enemy".[13]

On September 23, General Steele left General Cooper in command of the Confederate Indian troops in order to return to Louisiana. In a letter dated October 9, 1863, Cooper stated his immediate intensions, "The enemy is now at Fort Smith, (and) North Fork (Town) though not in large force . . . I am moving this morning in the direction of North Fork, via Camp Johnston, near Canadian, where there is an abundance for forage".[14] North Fork Town was then occupied by a small force of Union troops. The Union Commander, upon hearing of Cooper's advance, burned North Fork Town and retreated northeastward. Cooper moved on to Camp Pike where he received a visit from the infamous Colonel William Clarke Quantrill on October 12. Battle activity diminished for the rest of the year as both sides went into winter camp.

January 1864 brought a vigorous reorganization of the Indian Territory Command. General Cooper became a Division Commander and Colonel Tandy Walker was given command of the Choctaw Brigade. The first six months of 1864 seemed to belong to the Federals as they made several sweeping campaigns across the Creek and Choctaw Nations. The one major campaign of 1864 that was to be related to the Gaines Creek-Canadian area began to develop in early September as the Confederates began to regroup around Camp Pike for a new offensive.

On September 13, General Gano and 1,200 of his Texans met with Cherokee General Stand Watie and 800 of his men at Camp Pike. They

agreed on making a campaign through the Cherokee Nation. On the 16th, this command attacked Federal forces engaged in the moving and storing of hay at Flat Rock, near present Wagoner. Over 150 Federals were killed and captured and approximately 6,000 pounds of hay plus several wagons and mowing machines were burned. More important than this victory, though, was the information acquired from the prisoners, of a wagon train expected at Fort Gibson. Immediately, a large detachment of the Confederate command went in search of the wagon train. It was discovered near Cabin Creek on the 18th. The train was made up of 255 wagons and a vast herd of mules. By midnight, the rest of the command arrived and an immediate attack was decided on. The first shots were fired around 3 o'clock the morning of September 19th. In a report from General Gano, dated September 29, 1864, at Camp Bragg along Gaines Creek, the day's events are outlined,

> advanced the entire line to within 500 yards of the enemy's position. An officer (Union) came out in the darkness to hold converse, and having informed us that they were Federals and learned that we were rebels, he called on God to damn us and invited us forward . . . Crash after crash of shell swept Yankees, negroes, pins, and mules away from the land of the living, while every regiment and company poured in volley after volley.[15]

Six hours after the first volley had been fired, the field was carried by the Rebels along with more than $1,000,000 worth of Federal property. Union losses were estimated at 23 and the Confederate only 6. These Union supplies had been headed for Fort Gibson, which made this victory doubly good, since earlier in the year. General Watie had captured a steamboat, near Webbers Falls, bound to resupply Fort Gibson.

As the Confederate command moved back to the safety of the Choctaw Nation, they made a movement to the west and finally turned back south near Tulsey Town. Just south of present Checotah, the troops entered

the Texas Road and proceeded by North Fork Town, crossed the Canadian and proceeded along Gaines Creek to Camp Bragg, west of the Texas Road. Camp Bragg was probably located on the east side of the creek near the location of an old Creek village along the "Old Gaines Creek Road". While at Camp Bragg, Generals Gano and Watie made field reports of their actions, regrouped and rested. The Generals' arrival at Camp Bragg had ended the engagement at Cabin Creek, known in history as the "Second Battle of Cabin Creek". More importantly, this battle marked the last significant encounter between Union and Confederate forces in Indian Territory and Camp Bragg, the end station, was located only three miles from the future site of Canadian.

The last activity to be associated with the Gaines Creek-Canadian area took place in November of 1864. In October, General Sterling Price, one of the outstanding Confederate commanders had begun a campaign in Missouri and after some success suffered a heavy defeat on October 25th. After destroying many of his own supplies he began a quick retreat across Missouri, into Arkansas, then through the Choctaw Nation. Camp was made the night of November 9th at Camp Pike, and the following night camp was made on a "branch" flowing into Gaines Creek. On November 12th, camp was made along Gaines Creek at Reams Flat. From here the retreating army went to Perryville, then marched across the Red River. This marked the end of the final battle related movements to pass by the Gaines Creek-Canadian area.

Because of the numerous campaigns by both sides in the Canadian River region, food supplies and all attempts at farming and ranching had ceased. A large portion of the populace had already been forced to search for food and safety in the southern half of the Nation and north

Texas, but General Price's retreat through the region had done even more to demoralize the population. As with all the South, the Indian Territory found itself out of nearly all supplies and equipment by late 1864. Small forays were made across the Canadian and Arkansas Rivers by the Choctaws and Cherokees, but the war was quickly winding to a halt. That halt came on April 9, 1865, when General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox, Virginia. On May 26th, General E. Kirby Smith, Commander of the Trans-Mississippi Department, of which Indian Territory was a part, surrendered to General Edward R. S. Canby at New Orleans. On June 18, 1865, Principal Chief Peter P. Pitchlynn signed the instrument of surrender on behalf of the Choctaws. General Watie as commander of the Creeks, Seminoles, Cherokees, and Osage troops surrendered his command on June 23rd and thereby became the last Confederate General to surrender in the Civil War.[16]

Oddly enough, the Choctaw Nation, once persuaded to leave the South, was the last region of the Confederacy to sign a surrender. The South and the Choctaw Nation would suffer greatly in the next ten years. The South would ultimately regain its position, but the Indians of Indian Territory were to see their land and government disappear. Under the treaties they were forced to sign in 1866, they gave up many of their sovereign powers. The Civil War would leave many ill feelings and scars across the Nation. Though tempers and passions would cool, they would never be forgotten, especially in portions of the Choctaw Nation. In the 1870s as the railroad built into the country, many towns sprang up; one of these was McAlester, which is still known as the "Heart of Little Dixie".

The fires of the Civil War had raged all around the area that was

to become Canadian and there may have been military patrols pass between the hills in which Canadian sets. Locally, there is some evidence that Union and Confederate forces could have met three miles north of Canadian on Sand Branch (or Mill Creek). In 1923, a group of workers were sawing timber at a mill on this creek when their saw blade cut through a tree exposing what they believed was a cannon ball. In 1913 a local newspaper ran an article requesting information from old soldiers about the "Canadian Civil War Battle". Though there is no official mention of any such contact between Union and Confederate forces, the story could well be true, but not every engagement could be reported, recorded and saved.[17]

FOOTNOTES

[1]The War of the Rebellion: A Compliation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. (70 Vol., 128 books, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series I, Vol. I, pp. 681-682.

[2]Ibid., p. 682.

[3]Official Records, Series IV, Vol. I, pp. 445-466.

[4]Ibid., Series I, Vol. III, p. 614.

[5]Ibid., Series I, Vol. VIII, p. 6.

[6]Ibid., pp. 283-292.

[7]Ibid., Series I, Vol. XXII, Part 1, pp. 447-448.

[8]Ibid., pp. 458-460.

[9]Ibid., pp. 447-448.

[10]Ibid., p. 460.

[11]Ibid., pp. 460, 448-449.

[12]Ibid., p. 597.

[13]Ibid., Series I, Vol. XXII, Part 2, p. 1013.

[14]Ibid., Series I, Vol. XXVI, Part 2, pp. 303-304.

[15]Ibid., Series I, Vol. XLI, Part 1, pp. 788-791.

[16]Ibid., Series I, Vol. XLVIII, Part 2, pp. 1100-1101, 1105-1106.

[17]Interview with Orlean Smith, Canadian, Oklahoma (9 September 1972).

CHAPTER VII

THE M. K. AND T. RAILROAD

As the end of 1865 brought the end of the Civil War to the Indian Territory, it also brought the soon to be hated term, "reconstruction". The policy of reconstruction was to renew the Southern states' governments to what "the Federals" thought they should be. After a period of time and if the several states conformed to Federal policy, they were to be allowed back into the Union on an equal basis, but, as in most instances of defeat in war, the vanquished fell victim of the victor. Many revengeful politicians were appointed to oversee the Southerners, and villianous carpetbaggers took advantage of the beaten and dispossessed white, black, and red.

In 1866 the Choctaws were forced to sign a new treaty with the Federal government. The final treaty, signed April 28 provided in part that the western Leased District be surrendered but on the payment of $300,000.00; the tribe had two years to decide the fate of their freedmen; Negro colonization would be confined to the Leased District if it did take place, and the Choctaws retained almost complete control of white immigration; trust fund monies were to be restored and annuities renewed.[1]

This was the longest and most complicated treaty entered into between any of the Five Civilized Tribes and the Federal government during the period of reconstruction. It contained over fifty articles. The

most important article for the Canadian area was Article Six of the treaty by which the Choctaws granted a right-of-way through their country for companies to "undertake to construct a railroad . . . from the north to the south thereof, and from the east and west thereof . . ." This north to south railroad was to be realized in only six years.[2]

Only six months after the official surrender of the Confederate government, a group of men met in Emporia, Kansas, to make a decision that should have been as historically significant as the launchings of the Union and Pacific Railroads toward each other. The recent Civil War had worked great economic hardships on both sides and one of the main hardships in the North had been the loss of abundant agricultural goods and cattle at reasonable prices. The men meeting at Emporia on September 20, 1865, hoped to be able to fill these needs while turning a handsome profit, by the construction of a railroad from central Kansas to the Gulf of Mexico.

By the end of the Civil War, two railroads had already reached Kansas. These terminus' were at Saint Joseph and Kansas City. The lines there could easily reach the "Transcontinental" and any point East. What was lacking was a route to the Gulf from the central United States and a line into the cattle and cotton area of the Southwest. The Union Pacific Railroad Company, Southern Branch, incorporated that September day at Emporia was going to fill the gap. But in order to do so, it would have to overcome many obstacles. Its one advantage lay in the experiences of the Union Pacific management which had already headed west. However, there were two problems that off-set any advantage; that of strong initial competition to the southern border of Kansas and the negotiations with the civilized Indian Nations rather than Plains Indians

who were controlled by the government.

Throughout 1867-68, the directors of the Southern Branch worked to get financial backing. In the fall of 1869, actual construction began out of Junction City for Emporia. The Indian Nation had decreed that only one road could be built through the Territory and at this point the Southern Branch was behind the Missouri River, Fort Scott, and Gulf Railroad in the race to be first to reach the Indian Territory, and thereby claim the standard grants of land to build the line. To effectively win this race, the Southern Branch went into reorganization. New directors came forward, better personnel were acquired, and the road was then reborn not as just a branch of other lines but as a full-scale railroad unto itself. Accordingly, it was renamed on March 31, 1870, and the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad came into being. The "Katy" as it quickly came to be called was now on the move.

On June 6, 1870, the M.K. & T. arrived at the border of Kansas and the Cherokee Nation; they had won the race. They had worked hard but had also used some questionable tactics to win the race. Some creeks had been dammed instead of bridged, several miles of grading were too narrow for regulations, and lesser weight track had been used than was called for. However, their competitor was still sixteen miles away and according to the government, the M.R., F. S. & G. had illegally changed its route. Through default and perhaps a little "usual" deceit, the Katy earned the right through the Indian Territory. In all the Katy would claim 3,100,000 acres of land as a grant to pay for construction of this line, but in 1914, this claim was denied. The Katy suffered but survived.

Before reaching the Territory the Katy had been the victim of

financial crisis and physical set-backs. Lawlessness and vicious quarrels had broken out many times as was usual to railroad settlements and building in their beginnings. The Katy had seen hard conditions, but the activity it was yet to see in Indian Territory was far worse than could have been expected. Since the end of the Civil War, outlaws had regularly sought haven in the Nations. There had been little to induce them to remain, and generally after a brief hiding period, these "roughs" returned to the States to reek more havoc. Now the railroad promised to bring prosperity to the Indian. The less "law-ified" nations and settlements of the Territory were instantly transformed into "fierce little hells of gambling and murder" as terminus towns gave way to newer terminus towns.

By August 27, the "Three Forks" area of the Verdigris, Neosho, and Arkansas Rivers had been reached. Gibson Station was created as a temporary terminus as it would take several months to complete bridge building and track laying across the rivers. Because the track layers were idle much of this time, the town boomed and here the roughs took possession in earnest. On several occasions, as many as three men were killed in one night. It was said that sometimes the graveyards were better populated than the towns along the railroad. One night, one of the roughs lost at a game of Keno; in a rage, he left but later came up behind the tent and tried to shoot the dealer in the back. His bullet missed the dealer and killed another man. "The keno man just got a board and put it behind himself, and the game went on".[3]

Because of late winter weather and a bridge disaster, building proceeded slowly and the track did not reach the North Canadian River until March 25, 1872, and it was April 15th before the bridge was completed

across and a "dump" of materials made near the town of North Fork. Supplies were stockpiled about two miles south of North Fork Town as bridge building across the Canadian was being completed. For this "temporary" station, the Katy General Manager, Bob Stevens, took the Creek Indian Agent's suggestion and gave it the name, Eufaula, after an important village in the history of the Creek tribe. At Eufaula the railroad was again delayed when the newly finished structure on the south side of the Canadian gave way and collapsed on the sandy river bottom. This new delay was directly responsible for the establishment of Eufaula as a permanent town and for another smaller settlement on the south side of the river. This town would, in a year, be called South Canadian, but because of its mobs, roughs, gamblers, and cut-throats, it was then widely known as Buzzards Roost and, at best, Sandtown. In April, 1873, one year after the bridging of the Canadian, as the line was completed into Denison, Texas, a correspondent for an Eastern magazine traveled the length of the M. K. & T. to report on its building, success, and advantages. Reporter Edward King of the famous Scribner's Monthly magazine wrote thus of the little community,

> On the Canadian River is a town which has at various times possessed the euphonious appelations of 'Sandtown' and 'Buzzards Roost'. It is now merely a collection of roofless cabins, but was long the rendevous of all the ruffians infesting the Territory. Perched on a waste near the river's sake, it was a convenient location for murder and plunder, and travelers learned to give it a wide berth.[4]

Due to the ceremony that was to surround the bridging of the Canadian, several Eastern newspapermen were around the Eufaula-Sandtown area in April of 1872. Reporter and author for the Cincinnati Commercial, John Hanson Beadle, who had come to report on the railroad and Indian country, related an event that had taken place a couple of days

before their arrival. It seemed that a Texan returning home with the proceeds of a cattle sale stopped at "Canadian Station" and began drinking with the local thugs, "he was seen at 10 o'clock with them, drunk and generous with his money; a few days later (,) his body was washed ashore some miles down the Canadian". To future newcomers, Beadle had this warning, "These murders are (usually) upon their own class, and newcomers who are weak enough to mix in, drink and gamble with them".[5]

While the outlaws were pillaging stores and burning stockpiles of ties to delay the track at the Canadian River, the railroad officials invited Secretary of Interior J. D. Cox to preview the new frontier railroad. His visit was set to coincide with the bridging of the Canadian. It is probable that the officials wished to acquaint the Secretary with the lawlessness of the region and thereby secure some Federal protection. This visit took place the closing days of April, 1872, and the line was then complete to present day Canadian. Reporter Beadle gives a first-hand description of the eventful day,

> We were off from Muskogee at 7 o'clock a.m. to see the remaining forty miles of road completed, then a little south of the main Canadian . . . We cross Little Canadian or North Fork, within a mile of the Methodist Mission, (Asbury Manual Labor School) . . . Two miles down the river is situated North Fork town . . . We hear a white man has just been mortally wounded in an affray there . . . Between the two Canadians the piece of road is seven miles long and midway thereon was then the nominal terminus and the station for the El Paso Stage and Mail Line. We pause here for an hour (at Eufaula) . . . Thence to Main Canadian we traverse a dense forest . . . The bridge here was finished several months before, and about the time the track was laid the southern abutment gave way . . . We went over on the first locomotive which crossed; hitherto construction cars had been shoved across singly by hand. After our passage the engine brought over a very heavy train loaded with iron, and the bridge was then officially pronounced safe.[6]

After visiting the bridge, the party returned to Eufaula to spend

the night, where the following day, the Secretary was to be conducted on a tour of the town. That night, a man was shot and killed within a hundred yards of the Secretary's sleeping car. During the course of the night, a member of the visiting party became ill, so the Superintendent-in-Chief left the train to go about the tent town searching out a doctor; by mistake, he entered a tent of gamblers and one, named Callahan, who happened to be a little out of humor, thrust a six-shooter into his face and exclaimed rather pointedly, "Air ye lookin' for me? I'm ready if y'are!" The Superintendent then made a quick retreat back to the train without a doctor.[7]

On the tour the next morning, the Secretary passed by the tent where the dead man was "laid out". The Secretary had made comment on the "intruders in the Indian country" and all over town each thug boasted to the Secretary that, "he had a good right to stay in the Nation, and he meant (with an oath) to stay, and he'd like to hear any one hint that he'd better go away". To further illustrate their contempt, they bragged on murderous exploits, shot off their guns and later in the day, took a shot at the Secretary as he attempted to address a group from his railroad car. At such a display of contempt and lawlessness, the Secretary did exactly what the Katy officials had hoped he would. A telegram was dispatched to Washington declaring that neither life nor property were safe in the Indian country and that the Indians should be aided at once in expelling the gangs. Several squads of the Tenth Cavalry from Fort Sill responded immediately to the call. The ruffians, "got together . . . armed to the teeth, and blustered a good deal; but the cavalrymen arrested one after another . . . When one of the terminuses was asked his name, he usually answered that it was Slim Jim, or

Wild Bill or Lone Jack (with an oath), and that he was a gambler of a pounder . . .". With another oath, he would state that he intended to stay right there in the Territory, "Whereupon the officer commanding would say: "Well . . . Lone Jack . . . I'll give you twelve hours to leave this town in and if you are found in the Territory a week from this date, I'll have you shot! And they took the hint".[8]

The military was highly respected and feared and for a short time the temperature of the region around the railroad cooled off. As was expected though, this was merely a calm and not an end. The next day, the Secretary was gone from the Territory, and after a few weeks the Cavalry returned to duty elsewhere. The crooks, murderers, and scum of the earth again arose from hiding and hit the iron trail in search of riches from the pounder's pockets. It was at this time, the close of April, that the Katy was building through the site of South Canadian, Tobaksi County, Choctaw Nation.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Laws and Treaties, pp. 702-714; Angie Debo, Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic (Norman, 1967), pp. 83-90.

[2]Laws and Treaties, p. 703.

[3]Edward King, "The Great South, The New Route to the Gulf," Scribner's Monthly Magazine (July, 1873), p. 271.

[4]Ibid., p. 281.

[5]John H. Beadle, The Undeveloped West (St. Louis, 1873), p. 371.

[6]Ibid., pp. 396-397.

[7]Ibid., p. 401.

[8]King, p. 272.

CHAPTER VIII

CANADIAN'S BEGINNINGS

Canadian was not an officially organized railroad town as were so many other communities along the Katy line. In Canadian the railroad set up a round house, station, stock pens, and a cotton platform, but the town's location was determined and organized by private Choctaw citizens, on its merits as a central meeting point for their surrounding farms. Another consideration was that the small valley in which Canadian is found was not easily usable as farm land and this area therefore would not be needed for agriculture. Some farmers in the immediate area, and first citizens, included George Moncrief, Charles McDuff, E. S. Cheadle, G. W. Walker, and R. L. Reams, Jr.[1] Other first residents included several businessmen who had formerly been at work in Sandtown. The less law-abiding elements had continued to follow the rails south.

Canadian had been fortunate in that the outlaws continued to follow the tracks. Perhaps it was the strong bearing displayed by the local citizens; perhaps it was the supposed worthlessness of the area inhabitants that had caused the gangs to move on. The Katy was fortunate too for they did not experience any further major delays or lawless uprisings until the tracks reached the end of the line at Denison, Texas. For a certainty, criminal elements did remain active in the Nation, as well as at the terminuses, as is seen from letters and dispatches from the Choctaw and Chickasaw Agent located at Boggy Depot.

On June 25, 1872, Agent L. D. Griffith sent a telegram from Boggy Depot via the nearest telegraph office, which was then located at the new town of South Canadian, "Boggy Depot. C.N. XXVTh. Via South Canadian Ter(minus). XXVIITh. Hon. C. Delano. Secy. of Interior. Washn. DC. Through misapprehensions of the necessity for the constant pressure at the Terminus (Canadian) Capt. P. C. Lee has been ordered away just when he had established good order. Cannot he be returned at once. Without a company no one will be safe from here to the end of the track. L. D. Griffith. U.S. Indian Agt. Colect Govt. Rate."[2] In an accompanying letter, of greater detail, to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, J. A. Walker, Griffith summarized this of the withdrawal: "As once the order was known those who had been compelled through fear to abandon bad practice, started for reinforcements and whiskey."[3]

As the railroad had continued to advance, new terminus tent towns had sprung up, but until the tracks reached Atoka, much deeper in the Choctaw Nation, Canadian remained the southernmost operating terminus of the M.K. & T., and therefore some of the first town citizens of Canadian were railroad personnel. Signals and a telegraph were operated at Canadian and siding rails were in evidence. One or two small and primitive general stores were undoubtedly operated near the tracks, but it is not known by whom. On May 29, 1873, almost eleven months to the day that the track had reached Canadian, the United States Post Office Department entered South Canadian, Tobaksi County, Choctaw Nation, Indian Territory on its list of postal offices. R. D. Burton was installed as the first postmaster. The Burton family owned a farm north of town and was destined to remain in Canadian for another quarter century. Canadian had the distinction of being only the thirty-third

designated Post Office in the Choctaw Nation, out of some 300 which were established before 1900.[4]

Canadian did not experience a boom in population as did many railroad towns. Its growth was slow but steady and progressive. One of the reasons for Canadian's slow growth was to be found in the economy of the United States. What caused a flutter in the economy of the States created convulsions in Indian Territory, where the standard of living was substantially lower, and the nation-wide "Panic" in 1873, created by over-speculation in western land properties and over-extension in railroad building, kept economic growth slow. Many of the new railroads beginning to cross the West folded. It is to the great credit of the Katy that they were able to keep themselves afloat. The Katy managed to remain in operation, but the markets she had just recently opened were effectively closed again. If the farmer could not secure the needed price, his crops remained in the field, and everyone continued to suffer. Luckily for the small town, the "Panic" did not stay long, and by 1875 the economy was once again on the upswing.

Actual pictures of the town during this period are lacking, but facts and estimations from various sources reveal a town of approximately 100 people. Many of these area residents lived three miles away, but Canadian was the closest town and, therefore, their town. In area size, the town occupied only three small blocks, two on the east side of the tracks and one on the west. Along the west side of the main line lay the side track and on its west side the small, crude loading dock. About 100 feet to the south were the holding pens for shipping livestock. On the east side set a small one-room station and telegraph office, with a couple of storage sheds around it. North, about 75 yards up the tracks,

were located the switch and more supply buildings. A wagon road which followed the tracks out of Eufaula along its eastern side crossed over the rails immediately north of the small station house. The main road, now replacing the Texas Road, continued on toward "McAlester's Store", while a smaller trail led southwest out of town toward Captain Moncrief's farm and several others. In 1876 the railroad constructed a small split-level house for occupancy by the station house operator. The house was located within twenty-five feet of the tracks on the west side. Today the house is still standing in good condition, and is the home of Fred and America Burwell. This home, soon to be 100 years old has been moved one-half mile south from its original foundation. Though easily the oldest house in Canadian, there are several others, built during the 1880s, still standing in good condition.[5]

By 1880, Canadian's growth tempo began to quicken. In its beginning, Canadian was only a station to ship farm products out and a few manufactured goods in but in this new decade, Canadian was to begin its true calling, that of a trading center and ginning community. The two most prominent business leaders of this early day were the Graig (Craig) brothers and John O. Toole and his brother. Toole was destined to be the biggest trader in Canadian and one of the biggest in Indian Territory. In the mid-1880's, these two business factions hired large numbers of clerks and common laborers to work in their stores. In 1887, a dentist, J. E. Wite, was brought into town under their employment. Other new citizens became residents under the guise of being employed by other Choctaw citizens. Some of the larger employers in Canadian at this time were G. W. Walker, R. D. Burton, and Ben F. Hightower. Most of the new residents were listed as "farmers" or "renters".[6]

Naturally, not all of the new citizens arriving in Canadian were Choctaw or Chickasaw citizens. Under the laws of the Choctaw Nation, a non-citizen could marry a "blooded" citizen and thereby obtain all the rights of a regular full-blood Choctaw. Under another plan, non-citizens could come into the Nation by being employed or sponsored by a citizen. It was under this guise that the great majority of early citizens settled in Canadian. By the paying of a small fee, the employed one could remain in the Nation a full year. One could even be employed as a renter. This entitled him to not only reside in the Nation but also work or operate a business. Some of the fees for different occupations were as follows: Clerk, Jeweler, Photographer -- $10.00 annually; Butchers, Teamsters, Mechanics, Shoemakers, Carpenters and Engineers -- $5.00. The fee for a common laborer was only $2.60.[7] Many of Canadian's citizens may have had no permit to be in the Choctaw Nation or any of Indian Territory. This group of individuals were regarded as "intruders". The Indian republics did not have the money or personnel to keep out so many whites, and the white settlements continued to grow as time went on. The agent for the Five Civilized Tribes in Muskogee, in 1881, estimated there were 15,000 permit residents and, in 1884, 35,000 non-citizens with and without permits in the Indian Country. By 1890, the figure for non-citizens had risen to 140,000 out of a total population of 210,000 for all of Indian Territory.[8]

Canadian continued its steady growth through the mid-1880s. The Tobaksi County Permit Registers reveal that from 1886 through 1889, Canadian residents and businessmen were hiring or gaining permits for almost as many new employees and residents as was McAlester and Krebs with their large coal mining operations. In December of 1893, an A.P.

(Tony) Chamberlin began hiring stone cutters, masons, and common laborers for the Canadian area, and it appears from this that Canadian soon had its first major stone and brick buildings. This stone was acquired from a local stone quarry which was opened on the top of the hill just one-half mile west from the downtown area. Another quarry was opened approximately two miles southeast of town. One source has it that some of the larger sandstone blocks from these quarries were shipped to Austin, Texas, for use in construction of new State Capitol buildings. Later these quarries supplied building stones for Canadian's schools.[9]

In 1887, Canadian residents dedicated their first church building. This was the Baptist Church. It was a small two-story wooden frame building which had been made possible through the joint efforts of the church members and members of the A.F. and A.M. South Canadian Masonic Lodge Number 22, which had been founded in November, 1875. The building was located on Smith Street approximately 150 feet south of the present Baptist Church. Church services were held downstairs and the second floor was used by the Masons. These arrangements continued until 1908.[10]

Prior to the building of this first church residents met at the homes of lay preachers of the community and during pleasant weather "brush arbors" were constructed and the meeting took place outside. The second church formed in Canadian was the Methodist Episcopal Church South, and the third religious sect to form in Canadian was the Christian Church. Like other frontier towns, Canadian at this time was unable to secure full-time pastors and therefore relied on the "Circuit Preacher". This preacher made it his duty to travel around the country

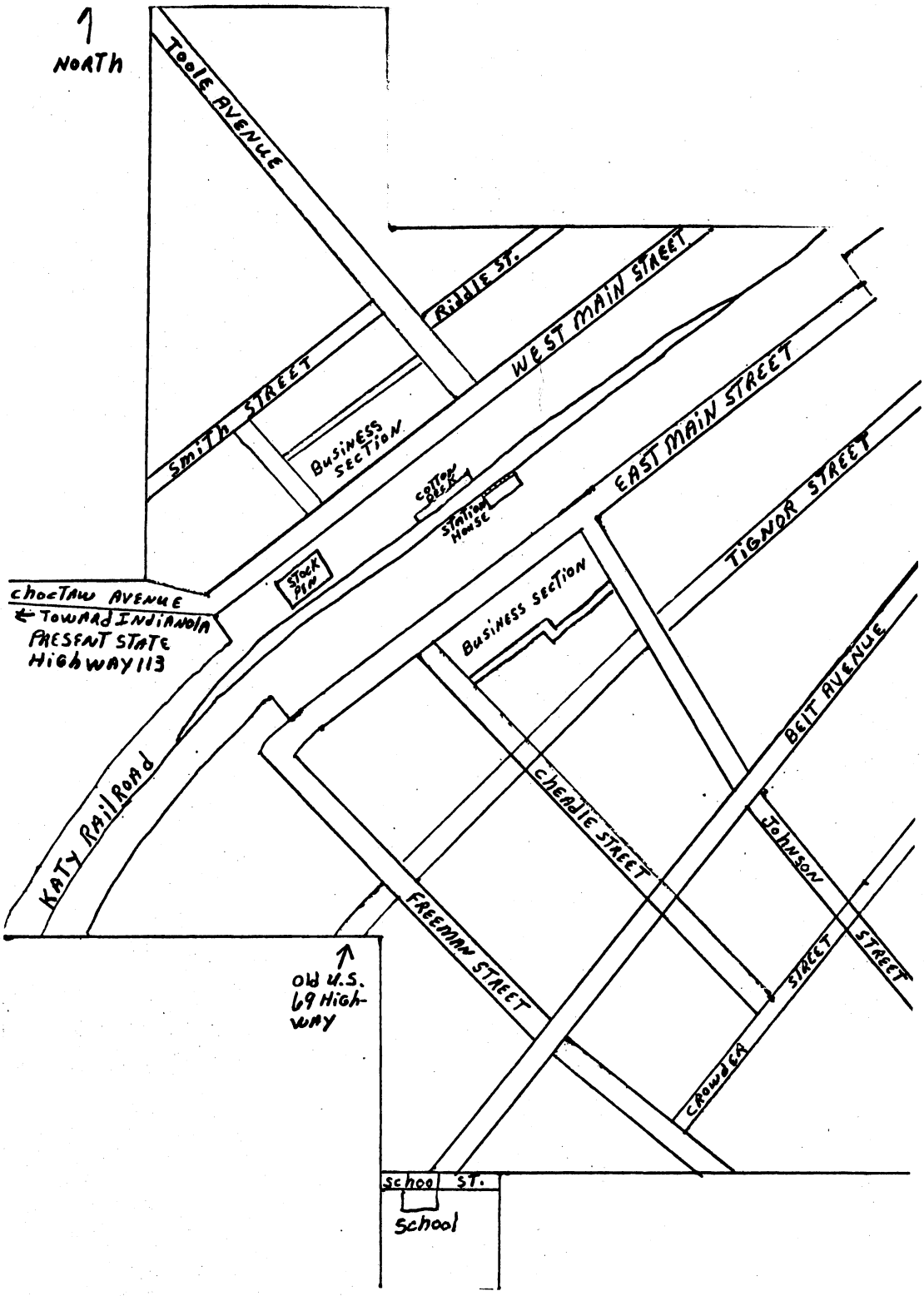


Figure 4. Canadian Street Map, 1910

and give the sermon and conduct baptisms on differing Sundays of the month. The earliest directory of church services in Canadian comes from March, 1895. At this time, the Baptist Church had Reverend L. F. Patterson and Reverend Charles Henderson directing the congregation, while services were conducted only the first and third Sundays of each month. In the Methodist Episcopal Church South, Reverend Story directed the services the second and fourth Sundays, and the Christian Church met only every second Sunday of the month under the Reverend J. W. Barteetts.[11]

Aside from the churches, the most active and prominent social organization in Canadian was that of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. The I.O.O.F. South Canadian Lodge Number 7 was organized early in 1889. The major contribution of the Odd Fellows in Canadian was to the local education system. The majority of Canadian residents being non-citizen, there were no Choctaw public schools available and, therefore, the system in Canadian had to be self-supporting. A teacher was paid a salary from the fees collected for each pupil attending classes. These classes met for the first time regularly in the basement of the I.O.O.F. building on the corner of Toole Avenue and West Main Street. The town's first newspaper, the South Canadian Bazoo, reported on April 19, 1895, on the school system and town pride surrounding it.

> The rooms are large, well lighted and fitted with forms, desks, black boards, and school apparatus, almost equal to an ordinary academy, and necessarily is, and should be, the pride, and admiration of every Odd Fellow or other citizen of the town.[12]

The fees for attendance were divided, like the school, into three levels. Primary grades, first, second and third, were $1.25 per month per student. Intermediate grades, fourth and fifth, were $1.50 per

month and the Advanced grades, anything above a fifth grade speller and arithmetic, were $2.00 a month. Teacher of the intermediate and advanced courses was Thomas Compere, Principal, and of the primary grades, his wife, Jennie Compere. Classes consisted of readers and spellers for levels one through five and primary arithmetic and geography for grades up to three. Fourth and fifth graders began primary history and intermediate arithmetic and grammar.[13]

Canadian's first school building was not constructed until 1896. It was located at the southern end of Belt Avenue on the same site as the present school. It was a wooden frame structure of only four rooms which faced west, divided by a hall or "breezeway". Each room was occupied by two grades. Canadian's oldest citizen, Walter Salmon, attended this school in 1898 as a fourth grader. The Salmon family had moved to Canadian in 1893 and young Walter was employed as a water boy while his father was a Katy line foreman.[14]

To towns of the 19th century, the most important facilities to serve the community were those of a newspaper and a school. The desire to acquire schools and news had always been the most important quest in frontier towns. These were their links to knowledge and understanding of the outside world. The first newspaper to be published at Canadian appeared March 1, 1895. This was the South Canadian Weekly Bazoo. James D. Tignor served as owner, publisher, and editor. The Bazoo was primarily an advertising sheet and carried few world or national news items but the Bazoo was a perfect example of frontier resourcefulness. The construction of its press was completely the design of Mr. Tignor's, and quite an oddity. The Fort Smith Elevator, one of the oldest and most popular papers in the Territory, commented,

> The Bazoo is something of a curiosity, as it is printed on a press of Mr. Tignor's own invention and make. In its construction he used a common marble slab as the bed. For the cylinder a Bruah cylinder of a cotton press was used. This was covered with wood to bring it up to the requisite diameter, then the 'tympan' of paper and cloth completed the outfit. A crank attached to the center of this cylinder acts as a motive power. The inside of the cylinder is filled with log chains, old iron, etc., to give the required weight. With this unique press Mr. Tignor gets out a first rate looking sheet . . .[15]

After like comment, the Purcell Register of Purcell, Oklahoma Territory, declared the Bazoo was, "Another illustration of, where there's a will there's a way!" The determination of Tignor to put out a first class and informative newspaper can also be seen in his motto that appeared underneath the masthead, "Hew to the Line, Let the Chips Fall Where They May".

Tignor had come into Canadian through the non-citizen permit system. His permit of twelve months was first issued October 10, 1893. He was listed as a carpenter under the employment of Captain George Moncrief. In 1894, he received another permit of twelve months, this time as a barber. One of his attractions for subscribing to his newspaper was to offer to shave each new patron free for a month. He listed his barber business as that of a Tonsorial Artist. To further his finances, Tignor also sold bicycles besides running his main business, a printing office. It was his good fortune to be the only printer in Canadian and therefore, handled most of the hand bills, the most popular form of advertisement in that time. Tignor was a prime example of Canadian's enterprising businessmen.

Canadian, in the early 1890s, began experiencing a surge in growth. The local newspaper was filled with reports of building and planning. The fly of the hammer and sing of the saw were heard from daylight to

dark. Cotton crops increased and trading houses and general merchandise stores pushed business and competition so strongly that Canadian soon came to be recognized as the leader of trade in the region. Many patrons came up the long twenty-mile wagon road from the McAlester area in order to take advantage of the highly competitive businesses. Canadian merchants advertised in both Eufaula and McAlester newspapers.

Canadian's livelihood centered around cotton. By 1890, three cotton gins had been established in the town, and at one time a total of five gins were operating from the thriving community. Long raised platforms stood along the side railing for loading the bales of cotton into the Katy boxcars. To handle this cotton and sell it to manufacturers, trading houses had sprung up. When a farmer brought the first of his cotton or corn crop into the gins or mills, he consigned his crop to one of the local businesses which then sold the cotton to larger or national interest. The farmer usually received around four cents per pound in the seed for his early cotton, in the depression years of the 1890s. It was at this time that the farmer exchanged part of his crop for large equipment or household items. Around this occasion of "cashing the crops" and finally receiving some "fruit of the labor", grew an annual town festival. During the picking season, the Katy transported laborers free to such "cotton stations" as Canadian. The gins were required to run twenty-four hours a day through the height of the season to stay abreast of the flow. Some cotton was hauled in from as far as fifty miles in the early years. As the money began to roll in, the drummers and medicine shows did also. The pan handlers, side shows, and wheels of fortune crowded the Main Streets on either side of the Katy tracks. Small theatrical groups also came to perform in vacant buildings to add

for a short time the class and show of the larger cities. Many of these wagon-based businesses stayed on for weeks. The wilder attractions ran every day and all night on Fridays and Saturdays. Some of the main activities and attractions were, a rodeo in the railroad stock pens, wheels of fortune, a rifle gallery, and the pitching of baseballs at a black man's face seen through a hole in the back of a large tent.[16]

To handle this cotton business, there were several large trading stores and numerous small ones. The largest in town was that of the Toole Brothers. Other large trading and merchandise stores included, The Spot Cash Store, operated by J. D. Browder; the McNabb Brothers Trading Company; Brown Mercantile Company, owned and operated by Joe Brown; the Racket Shop, operated by William L. Belt; and Smith Hardware, owned by J. G. Smith. Some of these establishments did thousands of dollars worth of business over the "trade" or "sale days", usually Friday and Saturday. Every item one wished to purchase could be secured from any one of these larger stores. Work clothes, imported women's wear, fur coats, Springfield wagons, $7.50 men's suits, hats for everyone, guns and black powder, every kind of farm machinery, plus a full line of canned food stuffs. The Toole Brothers even sold coffins and funeral accessories but were given close competition on this product by the S.A. Cope Undertaking Shop, which offered a full line of "Coffins, Caskets, Robes, Hose, Slippers, etc., of all sizes (with) Coffins from $10.00 up".[17]

The second most prominent businesses in early Canadian were the drug and patent medicine stores. The two largest and most reliable were the Fulton Drug Store, owned by J. D. Fulton and the J. P. Mickle Company. So that the druggist could have prescriptions to fill, there were

no less than seven resident doctors in Canadian by 1895. These were Doctors W. H. Murphy, R.A.R. Hallum, J. T. Lowery, J. P. Mickle, W. E. Crowder, W. P. Lewallen and his son, T. B. Lewallen.[18] Doctor Lewallen remained to practice in Canadian for fifty years until his death. His large impressive home, built in 1907, stood until 1970. Doctor W. E. Crowder in 1902 moved four miles south of Canadian and founded the town that bears his name, as the Fort Smith and Western Railroad built across the M.K. & T. tracks at that point.

The Katy Railroad performed important services to the residents of Canadian and the surrounding region. On the Katy tracks, connections were operated for the Choctaw, Oklahoma and Gulf Railroad. The Katy advertised for the fastest transportation into Texas and to St. Louis and the Choctaw, Oklahoma and Gulf declared, "direct connections from South Canadian to Fort Smith and Fort Smith return to South Canadian". The Fort Smith train departed Canadian at 8:11 a.m. and arrived Fort Smith 1:25 p.m., a good time for an over 100 mile journey in 1895. The Katy stopped four times daily in Canadian. No. 1 Northbound at 6:38 a.m., No. 4 Southbound at 8:11 a.m., No. 2 Northbound at 8:08 p.m., and No. 3 Southbound at 9:37 p.m.[19]

Like the rest of the town the local newspaper continued to change over the years and in November of 1895, Tignor changed the name of his sheet to The Monitor. The format remained the same, as did the subscription rate of $1.00 a year. Most of the items in the press were of local actions by the citizenery and reports of businesses and business trips. One of the most common reports dealt with injuries received by passengers while getting on or off the "flyer". The editor often reprimanded the railroad in his press releases for its failure to make

complete stops when it was behind schedule. Another common tragedy reported were drownings in the Canadian River both north and west of town and in Gaines Creek, by the ferry. Most of the drownings occurred when men fell from their horses while crossing. The most gruesome tragedy of river crossings befell the family of a farmer, George Glover. After spending the day shopping in Canadian, Mrs. Glover, a teenage daughter, and a smaller boy and girl were attempting to cross the Canadian on the ferry northwest of Canadian. In mid-stream the ferry was hit by a wall of water three feet high and was overturned. The mother managed to hold on for a brief time but her children were swept away. The older daughter was carried around the river's bend and up Gaines Creek as the flash flood waters pushed the regularly slow moving creek backwards. Three miles up Gaines Creek she was seen by a group of men on the Gaines Creek road, but was swept three more miles before another group was able to affect her rescue. She was taken to Doctor Lewallen's home in Canadian and was reported to have been "torn in shreads" but eventually recovered. Mrs. Glover had lost her hold and was being carried down stream when she passed by her young son who was clutching a tree limb by one hand and his younger sister, white and lifeless, in the other. His mother, seeing the girl dead, shouted for him to let her go and save himself. He, too, was later found dead. The little girl's body was not recovered until a month later when a Porum farmer notified papers he had found a body along the Canadian river bank.[20]

Outlaw activity also made the news in the early 1890s but Canadian and the immediate region was relatively unmolested. The reason for this might be found in one of the local news items from the surrounding community of Indianaola, that stated, "Since the breaking up of the Cook

gang, Log Johnson has dismissed his military company and ran his battery under the shed: peace and quiet rains throughout, except a little riot or street brawl such as is common in most frontier towns".[21] The Cook gang was a notorious outlaw band in both Indian and Oklahoma Territories. Their speciality was robbing trains. From the indication that a "battery" (cannon) was put away, it seems the local citizens were taking heavy steps to deter the criminals.

The good humor of the Canadian people and their editor is also shown in press releases. A Marion McMurry reported that a bear had killed a pig in their pen on the outskirts of town, and the editor added this note to the report, "I think it must of been a two legged bear as there is plenty of them now days".[22]

In August of 1898, for some unknown reason, editor Tignor dropped out of the newspaper business until September 15, 1899. In his absence, the local paper became the Canadian Advertiser and was published by a C. H. Finnigan. Finnigan, like Tignor, had a sense of humor, too, as is seen from the September 8 issue of 1899. It seems a prominent lady had dropped a $10.00 earring into a group of fifteen chickens. Thinking it had been eaten, she killed the whole bunch one by one, then found the ring where an old hen had dropped it in the grass". Finnigan ended the story by stating assuredly, "The family (is) already tired of chicken".[23]

Interesting stories from Canadian often centered around the Canadian River railroad bridge. The bridge was a total wooden structure of around 1,300 feet in length, a long bridge for its day. In extremely dry seasons, a man was posted at the bridge to walk across it after each train had passed. Engines of this time were powered by burning coal to produce steam and they emitted a great many sparks as they moved over

the rails. It was the important duty of this bridge walker to see that the bridge had not caught fire.

In the "rise of '98" as it is recalled by some Canadian residents, a terrific flood threatened the railroad bridge. As the river rose, large trees were dislodged from its banks and crashed into the pilings of the bridge. As they collected among the pilings, they began to catch more water and the force of the river soon threatened to collapse the structure. Men from Canadian were hurriedly employed to go down into the raging river and chop up the trees to dislodge them. In an ultimate effort to save this vital bridge, a special train was run from Kreb's coal fields loaded with huge coal boulders to sit on the bridge in an attempt to stabalize it. Finally, even this desperate effort failed, and in one great burst of fury, the bridge was uprooted and swept away by the rushing Canadian River. After this catastrophe, the Katy Railroad dug a canal to divert the angle of the river. The new course allowed the railroad to build a new bridge further east down the river on a better location.

Local projects of the Canadian area in the later 1890s centered on improving the school system, advertising the town, and improving the roads and ferrys to better the trade possibilities. One of the undertakings in 1898 was the grading of the Gaines Creek road and establishing a safer ferry for the crossing. The Canadian Advertiser carried an editorial on September 2 suggesting the businessmen of Canadian, "devise a plan to (establish a free) ferry boat across Gaines Creek", and give the farmers who lived in that direction free transportation.

> The farmers at the forks of the creek and adjacent thereto have made a proposition to haul the lumber to the creek provided the merchants of South Canadian will pay the

> expense of constructing the ferry and arrange the matter of free transportation. The old ferry is in bad condition and we understand the farmers generally are afraid to cross the creek during high water periods . . .[24]

The Gaines Creek ferry was especially treacherous because the landing on the west side set on a very small piece of bottom land surrounded by steep hills. A small stream, known locally as Rock Creek, entered Gaines Creek just 200 feet above the ferry landing and during high water the small ground was quickly covered and the waters swirled badly because of the confluence. This problem was finally overcome when a bridge was finished high above the creek in 1911.

Town incorporation was also being pushed in the late 1890s as a result of the work of the Dawes Commission. Fighting had arisen over the city limits of many towns along the railroad and near the coal fields, so a Judge Clayton of the United States District Court at South McAlester urged all the towns in the Choctaw Nation to file petitions of incorporation, "to prevent any future misunderstandings and interminable litigations that has burdened other towns and courts". The petition for incorporation was to be accompanied by a correct and absolutely accurate map, showing all streets, alleys, blocks, and lots. The map was to be the guide for all time to purchasers and owners of property.

According to directions, the Canadian City Council called in surveyors and had city limits drawn for the town. For this purpose, the town incorporated 197.5 acres as the townsite, plus an additional 147.5 acres for a total incorporated area of 345 acres. The survey was concluded November 14, 1900, and accepted by the Department of the Interior on January 8, 1901.[25] Though Canadian was now an incorporated town, confusion remained over its name, South Canadian or Canadian,

since it appeared both ways on the petition. Many official state maps of older vintage still refer to the town as South Canadian, some with the South marked through. Until recently, an exit sign on U.S. Highway 69 designated the Canadian exits as, State Highway 113, South Canadian, and Indianola. To correspond with the new incorporated city, the town determined to drop the "South" of South Canadian. This was done on the incorporation petition and with the United States postal system, and the name became official December 11, 1899. James F. Mitchell, who also ran a feed store, was serving as Canadian's postmaster at the time. A few years later, Postmaster Mitchell was accused of taking approximately $300.00 from the Post Office till to make a business deal in McAlester. One story has it that Mitchell made a note of his using the money in his record books and promptly returned the balance but his act became known to certain elements of the town who were unfriendly to him and charges were filed against him in Federal court. Found guilty, he was sent to the Federal penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kansas. Old timers in Canadian still disagree as to the guilt in Mitchell's case.[26]

Canadian was pressing ahead as the 19th century prepared to close and though the town was progressing it had managed to remain socially stable, as no major crimes or city disasters had taken place in the last five years. Despite the advantages that neighboring McAlester was continually offering, Canadian had managed, through its excellent business houses and practices, to grow and prosper. What the new century might hold was eagerly awaited. New programs for expansion of the town and its businesses were already being planned by Canadian's leading citizens.

FOOTNOTES

[1]"Letters from Charles McDuff, E. S. Cheadle, G. W. Walker, R. L. Reams to J. A. Walker." Letters received by the Office of Indian Affairs, Choctaw Agency (1872-73).

[2]Ibid., "Letter from L. D. Griffith to C. Delano."

[3]Ibid., "Letter from L. D. Griffith to J. A. Walker."

[4]Grant Foreman, "Early Post Offices of Oklahoma," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1928), p. 5.

[5]Interview with America Burwell, Canadian, Oklahoma (23 December 1972).

[6]Tobaksi County Permit Register, Book 259 (1887), Oklahoma Historical Society Collection.

[7]Ibid., (1890).

[8]"Report of Union Agent," Commissioner of Indian Affairs Report (Washington, D.C., 1881), pp. 161-162; Ibid., (1884), pp. 142-143; Ibid., (1890), p. 89.

[9]Permit Register (1893); Interview with Walter Salmon, Canadian, Oklahoma (23 December 1972).

[10]Interview with Orlean Smith, Canadian, Oklahoma (23 September 1972); Interview with Haskell Young, Canadian, Oklahoma (13 October 1975).

[11]South Canadian Bazoo (March 15, 1895), p. 4.

[12]Ibid., (April 19, 1895), p. 1.

[13]Ibid., (March 15, 1895), p. 4.

[14]Interview with Walter Salmon, Canadian, Oklahoma (4 November 1972).

[15]South Canadian Bazoo (March 15, 1895), p. 1.

[16]Interview with Walter Salmon, Canadian, Oklahoma (23 December 1972).

[17]The Canadian Advertiser (September 2, 1898), p. 2.

[18]The Monitor (November 22, 1895), p. 3.

[19]South Canadian Bazoo (March 15, 1895), p. 1.

[20]Canadian Valley News (June 9, 1911), pp. 1, 4.

[21]South Canadian Bazoo (April 26, 1895), p. 1.

[22]The Monitor (November 22, 1895), p. 2.

[23]The Canadian Advertiser (September 8, 1899), p. 4.

[24]Ibid., (September 2, 1898), p. 2.

[25]Incorporation Petition, Oklahoma Historical Society Collection.

[26]Interview with Walter Salmon, Canadian, Oklahoma (26 December 1972); Interview with Orlean Smith, Canadian, Oklahoma (23 September 1972); Grant Foreman, "Early Post Offices of Oklahoma," p. 286.

CHAPTER IX

CANADIAN'S FINEST DAYS

The turn of the century was greeted in Canadian with mixed emotions. The fall of 1899 had brought a failure in the cotton crop. It was reportedly the worse failure in fourteen years. Bottom land was expected to produce only between 300 and 500 pounds per acre and higher ground crops were complete failures. Most of the farmers turned their stock in on their fields rather than try to gather the small and scattered bolls.[1] Without cotton to sell the Canadian farmers could not buy and the trading houses could not sell their goods, so most of the residents of Canadian celebrated Christmas and New Year's quietly and simply. Canadian had suffered a hard blow but not a knockout.

The ever growing coal business in the McAlester and Krebs district was continually drawing away Canadian's laborers and a few of the businesses. The Toole Brothers, who had been so prominent in Canadian, began setting up operations in McAlester and in a few years would move there entirely. But fortunately, as these people left, others came. Many of present-day Canadian's fathers and grandfathers settled in the area around this time. The Georges, McNallys, Murdaughs, Hallums, and Connors moved into the country east of Canadian and came to own thousands of acres of land by the time of statehood. Many of their descendants still live in or around Canadian.

Two George brothers, Nin and Flem, moved to the area from Wolf

City, Texas, in 1901. Through hard work and the help of the Murdaughs and McNallys, who were mixed blood citizens of the Choctaw Nation, they began acquiring large land holdings in the wild, rough hills east of town. By the 1920s, the George ranch contained over five thousand acres and the champion breed of trotting horses which they raised were nationally known and highly prized. Orlando George moved into town from the George ranch in 1926 and became the Canadian postmaster until his death in 1964. His wife, Estella George, was appointed postmaster in 1966 and retains that post to the present time.[2]

Other new settlers in Canadian were the Connors. John P. Connors moved his family to Canadian from St. Louis, Missouri, to establish a law practice and to farm. Mr. Connors soon came to be Judge Connors and was widely known as an excellent "agriculturist". In 1907, Judge Connors was appointed the first Chairman of the State Board of Agriculture. Connors State College in Warner, Oklahoma, is named in his honor. Some years later his son, Mike, was appointed head of the Oklahoma Tax Commission by Governor Alfalfa Bill Murray and continued in that office until his death in 1974. The Connors Building in the State Capitol Complex is also named in honor of the Connors.[3]

Canadian's population began to slide in the early 1900s, but the town businesses continued to build new brick stores and local residents constructed several large and impressive homes. In anticipation of statehood, the Federal government conducted a census of the Twin Territories in 1900. In the list of minor subdivisions, the town of Canadian was listed with a population of 522. In 1907 another census was taken, and Canadian was listed with only 401, a decline of 121 persons in only seven years.[4]

One of the major reasons for this decline was the building of a town just four miles from Canadian, Crowder. Crowder was founded around the railroad tracks as the Fort Smith and Western built a line toward Shawnee and across the M.K. & T. in 1902. The first General Merchandise business opened in Crowder was operated by a Canadian man and the first purchase, of ten cents worth of Star Tobacco, was by Canadian's editor, James Tignor. Advertisements appearing in Crowder's first newspaper show most of the businesses owned or ran by ex-Canadian residents. Many of the smaller homes of Crowder were moved there from Canadian on double wagons drawn by mule teams.[5] For several years, Crowder continued to grow at the expense of Canadian.

In an effort to stem the flow out of Canadian and possibly to attract new business, Editor Tignor began publishing articles promoting Canadian. One such "Booster" appeared in the Advertiser for March 1, 1901.

> Canadian: Canadian has a population of 700; nine general stores, three drug stores, one bank, two hotels, and several restaurants, four cotton gins which gin over 5,000 bales each season; the M.K. & T. R.R., American Express Co., and telephone connection with the outside world; a city of churches, schools and lodges; natural resources in coal, timber, stone and water; the best farming country surrounding it to be found in the territory.

Tignor went on to describe the citizens as, "people full of energy, snap and ambition; a most hospitable people, a city live and growing, representing a trading population of 50,000".[6]

In the paper of the same date, there also appeared a report that the various soliciting companies representing the Fort Smith and Western were going to be in town. Tignor pointed out that it was up to the people and businessmen of the community to convince them to locate the

line nearer to Canadian. Eventually, the line passed three and a half miles south-southwest of town. A coaling and water stop were located on the east side of the Indianola Road, present State Highway 113. Though this was not a regular station, the train could be boarded from there. The coke and burned coal emptied at this stop still scars the ground so that nothing grows in that spot. As it turned out, the F.S. & W. did not decide the fate of Canadian as the article feared, for Crowder failed to become the great shipping depot it was hoped for and soon ceased to grow and began to decline. The Fort Smith and Western line did not pay off and by 1940, the tracks, rails, ties and bridges were pulled up and used elsewhere.

Canadian's pace of development continued somewhat subdued for several years, but by 1907, Canadian was again making progressive moves. The population of 1907 was down from what it had been in 1900, but in only three years, by 1910, the population grew from 401 to 481. Neighboring Crowder had realized a loss of 53 citizens, and Indianola, nine miles away, witnessed an increase from 307 in 1907 to a 1910 figure of 481 to equal Canadian.[7] Indianola's growth was due to the building of a large wagon and carriage factory in the town.

Major improvements and ventures were launched from Canadian in the statehood year. One of the new additions to the town was that of a new newspaper, The Canadian Enterprise. This press sheet was published and edited by a B.W. Williams. Williams had moved his press to Canadian from Indianola. The Enterprise was the highest quality paper to be published in Canadian up to its time. Williams maintained a connection of correspondents on the east and west side of town as well as correspondents in the surrounding communities. Where the earlier newspapers had

let news items come in to them as they ran their printing service, Williams covered the region looking for news.

The two most significant additions to Canadian in this year were the Bank of Canadian and the William L. Belt Trading Company. The bank was first organized in May of 1906 with a capital stock of $10,000 but quickly grew in 1907 to a bank of $25,000. The Canadian Bank was one of a chain of sixteen banks. M. C. Young of Canadian acted as the local bank's vice-president and W. A. Fogil was its first cashier. At the end of its first year in business, its deposits had increased fifty percent and a dividend of fifteen percent was declared. The bank also featured a burglar-proof safe, fire-safe vault, insurance against robbery, and all of its officers were highly bonded.[8]

Belt had come to Canadian nine years earlier as the manager of the Racket Shop, but had soon begun his own moderate mercantile business. In 1907, he was reputed to be doing $100,000 worth of business annually in the largest single-story, wooden building in Indian Territory. On July 5th of that year, six car loads of bricks arrived in Canadian for Belt to begin the construction of a new eighty by one hundred foot, one-story masonry building. This was the first brick building on the west business side. It would not be until 1912 that the entire block was made up of brick buildings. The Belt Trading Company was easily the most impressive business house in Canadian. Belt's enormous supply of stock was delivered in six to ten boxcar loads at a time. Every item carried by a furniture, hardware, clothing, farm equipment, and toy store were to be found in Belt's. As many as thirteen clerks worked the floor at a time.[9]

By 1907, Canadian had lost one of its churches and gained another.

The Methodists were now under the leadership of Reverend W. H. Long, while the Baptists were still served by Reverend L. F. Patterson, but the Canadian Christian Church had disappeared. The new church was one constructed by the Negro residents of Canadian, in the north part of town. The Reverend Mr. Long was the only resident pastor in Canadian. He spent the first and third Sundays of each month at the Methodist Churches in Indianola and Crowder, and at this time, was busily engaged in building a church house at Crowder.[10]

Two other social organizations had been added to those of the Masons and Odd Fellows by 1907. These were the Farmers Union Local 148; head officers being George Moncrief and G. W. Walker, and that of the Rebekans, Canadian Lodge Number 8, Mrs. Ben Turner and Mrs. W. P. Lewallen, head officers. Other important organizations were those of the Canadian Board of Trade composed of President J. G. Smith and Secretary C. E. Janeway, plus all the leading town businessmen, the Canadian Commercial Club, and the Daughters of the Confederacy. City officials for the year were: Virgil A. Pipkins--Mayor, J. D. Browder--Recorder, M. A. Murdaugh--Marshall, W. L. Belt--Treasurer, and J. G. Smith--City Attorney. The city Aldermen were Fred Hurlbutt, G. E. Richardson, W. A. Byars, C. T. Grinstead, and W. A. Foyil.

Several new businesses were begun in Canadian during the early years of statehood. The Oklahoma Hardwood Lumber and Handle Company was operating a $10,000 saw mill on Gaines Creek, producing up to 30,000 board feet of lumber a day. Another smaller saw mill, owned by G. T. Smily, was operating on Mill Creek where it met the Canadian. In 1908, this mill was sold to the Houston and Richardson Lumber Yard in Canadian. The lumber yard had moved into Canadian just prior to statehood.

Medical services in Canadian had dwindled from seven to two practioners by 1907. These were Doctor W. P. Lewallen, a General Practitioner and Doctor J. L. Wood, a resident of one year, a physician and surgeon. In association with the medical practices, three drug stores were located inside the city. These were the Ewing Drug Company, Canadian Drug, and the Fulton Drug Store. The speciality of the Fulton Drug Store was advertised as having the "finest soda Fountain facilities in Indian Territory". Con Ewing, owner of Ewing Drug was only twenty-five years old, when in August of 1907, it was reported that he mistakenly drank a glass full of carbolic acid. Immediately discovering his mistake, he jumped on his horse and rode to the home of Dr. Wood, but despite his skill and medical efforts, in a few minutes Ewing had breathed his last.[11]

Like business, crime was also on the increase in Canadian and the local newspapers were dotted with reports of break-ins, burglaries, brawls, and late night carousing. The local marshall was Marcus C. Murdaugh, who also operated the largest livery stable in town, and whenever the marshall arrested someone, the editor of the paper invariably referred to that person as being "lodged in the Calaboose". Parties arrested on city ordinances were brought before either the mayor or Justice of the Peace. A sample of Canadian's justice can be seen from the following. Five men charged for disturbing the peace and another group of prominent men arrested for gambling were fined only five dollars each. The fine for not cutting weeds on one's property was twenty-five dollars. The peace of the town was disturbed frequently, but Canadian's weeds were always cut.

In the summer months before 1907 election campaigns began in

earnest, to fill the multitude of new state offices, Canadian played host to numerous office seekers and politicians plus a great assortment of other diverse groups. During the week of June 22, William Jennings Bryan, "that great apostle of modern democracy", and frequent candidate for the presidency, passed through Canadian on a northbound passenger train. At the brief stop, he was greeted by a small crowd on the station boardwalk and many a school boy had a tale to tell when school resumed in the fall. That same week, a company of horse traders came into town. The paper reported they went away quickly "after not doing so well, as we are pretty good horse traders ourselves". To add further color to this parade of travelers, "a gang" of gypsies camped on the outskirts of town. They, too, did not fare so well when two of their number were arrested for "plying the trade of fortune telling without a license", required by city ordinance.[12]

During June and July, Canadian Democrats and Republicans met to elect delegates to the county conventions. The local Democrats elected Judge Connors, John O. Toole, J. D. Fulton and M. W. Priddy as their delegates while the Republicans sent Mayor Pipkins, W. B. Manners, L. D. Burton, S. N. Bradshaw, J. J. Thompson, and L. W. Tate. Judge Connors was chosen by the county delegates to represent them in the State Convention meeting in Oklahoma City. The Democratic primary held in Canadian showed a total of 210 votes cast for the various candidates for U. S. Senators, and the vote for Oklahoma's first Governor stood thirty-four for Lee Cruce and seventy-five for Charles N. Haskell. In the final September elections, there were a total of 213 votes cast. The gubinatorial vote stood, 103 for Haskell, 101 for Frank Frankz, and 4 for C. C. Ross, the Socialist candidate. There were 124 votes in favor

of accepting the new State Constitution and 82 against. The vote on the prohibition amendment was divided 94 pro and 99 con. Other results reported at this time were those of a special census of the soon to be new state. Indian Territory listed 689,967 inhabitants to Oklahoma's 718,766. Pittsburg county had a total population of 37,677, making it the third largest in the state, behind the counties of Oklahoma and Pottawatomie.[13] On November 22, the local paper carried the headlines, "Oklahoma's A State - Ceremony at Capitol was very simple". For two months, the Enterprise had been publishing the text of the new Constitution with editorials explaining certain articles. In Canadian, the passing away of the Indian Territory was mourned by few, but the distinction of having become the 46th state also brought out little emotion.

The highlight of the local news for 1907 centered around a controversy over rights to one of the public water wells and on a large picnic to mark the anniversary of the Canadian Civil War Battle and Confederate Soldier's Reunion. The controversy over the well arose when the city council gave exclusive rights to the public well on Johnston Street to two of their own number, Will Belt and J. D. Browder, plus Doctor Lewallen, J. D. Fulton, and J. B. Dixon, a local blacksmith. The new city law gave the well outright to these men and banned others from its use. A few nights later these men met and formed themselves into the Canadian Water Works. Another meeting of the City Council authorized the Water Works to begin laying pipe and charge any amount they wished for service. As it turned out, only the members' homes were connected to the Works, which had been constructed during a dry period.

The Canadian Civil War Battle was supposed to have taken place

August 22, 1862, and an annual reunion of ex-Confederates was held on August 23 of each year at McAlester. Canadian "Old Settlers" and Confederates met on August 15 of 1907 for their reunion and picnic. On this particular occasion, eight "beeves" and a couple of pigs were barbequed and fried chicken was served by the hundred parts.

The new year of 1908 opened in Canadian with business changes. The Belt Trading Company was opening a mill on the west side of town to begin grinding corn. The sawmill on Gaines Creek, which had been forced to close in October for defaulting on a $300,000 loan was reopening under new ownership. The Canadian Board of Trade was opening a new ferry it had taken a charter on across the creek, and the members of the Baptist Church moved into their new building. It featured stained glass windows and a large bell tower. A "Brother Caves", a local resident, preached the dedicatory sermon on January 17th.[14]

Some worthy news items for 1908 included the report by the Board of Equalization that the taxable valuation of property in Canadian's incorporated limits stood at $104,486.00 for the year 1907. One hundred bales of cotton were still being stored in the new Farmers Union warehouse awaiting a better price, and the Canadian Gin was still opening occasionally to finish the last remnants of the cotton from the preceding year. There was a spread of "light smallpox" nearing the Canadian area, and for the first time, Negro residents in Canadian were mentioned in press releases. In February, a separate waiting room was added to the depot for Negro residents, in accordance with the State's Jim Crow (segregation) law, and in March, an article appeared about the opening of "their school" with a Miss Lucas as teacher. There have been three "Colored Schools" at Canadian, two stone ones are still standing in fair

condition. Each of these were large, one room structures and were aided with city money before statehood. There was also one Negro owned business on Canadian's west side around this period.[15]

A new development which came to Canadian in 1908 was its division into wards as authorized by a new state law. In a special City Council meeting to which the citizens were invited, the town was divided into four wards. Ward number One was to include all that part of town west of the M.K. & T.; Ward Two included that part east of the railroad and south of Cheadle Street; Ward Three included that part north of Cheadle Street and east of Belt Avenue, while the Fourth Ward included all that part north of Cheadle Street and east of the tracks to Belt Avenue. According to the new law, the city council was to be composed of one trustee from each ward. This called for new city elections, which took place May 4. Successful candidates were: Justice of the Peace--C.E. Janeway, Clerk--J.D. Browder, Treasurer--W.L. Belt, Marshal--Dave Haley, City Attorney--J.B. Loggins, Ward 1 Trustee--Tom Manners, Ward 2--M.W. Priddy, Ward 3--A.F.H. DeLespinasse, and Ward 4--Carter Grinstead.[16]

The final bit of news from Canadian in this year was the unfortunate end of the local newspaper. On April 24, the editor announced he had gone to Indianola in an attempt to secure more advertising revenue as the local merchants had ceased giving him enough patronage to meet his $75.00 a month budget to print the paper and live in Canadian. The May 1 issue declared the paper was moving back to Indianola after the May 8 issue. Subscribers could get their money back or receive the paper from Indianola where it could carry a Canadian column. The reason for Williams' leaving or suffering lack of patronage may have been due to problems of his own making for within a year's time, J. D. Tignor had

returned from Crowder and began publishing again. The paper was called the Canadian Valley News. It was much improved over Tignor's last paper and showed a marked professionalism over Williams' Enterprise.

News for Canadian in 1909 is rare because of the lack of a local newspaper, but it is known that a new business located in the town that year. This was the Farmers Trading Company. It occupied a large spacious building and was the result of a combination of several local prominent farmers and businessmen. About the same time, the Canadian Trading Company, itself only a couple of years old, built a new store of comparable size to that of Belts and did business on the northwest corner of West Main Street and Toole Avenue, adjacent to the Canadian Gin property, owned by the same people. This was an especially fancy store for the Canadian region, and few establishments in McAlester could best it in appearances and line of stock. The store had a bank-type vault to hold the large amount of cash brought in by the store and paid out by the gin. In later years, the Trading Company was bought out by two young men who ran businesses on East Main Street, Elec Grossman and Joe Brown, who combined to create the Grossman-Brown Department Store. This was the last large store to close in Canadian. It did so around 1935 when trade from the local area could no longer sustain a store of its size. Canadian's oldest resident, Mr. Walter Salmon, stated he bought a small garden plow from the Canadian Trading Company in 1909; the plow has since made fifty-four garden crops, and though he no longer uses it, he claims it is still a good plow.[17]

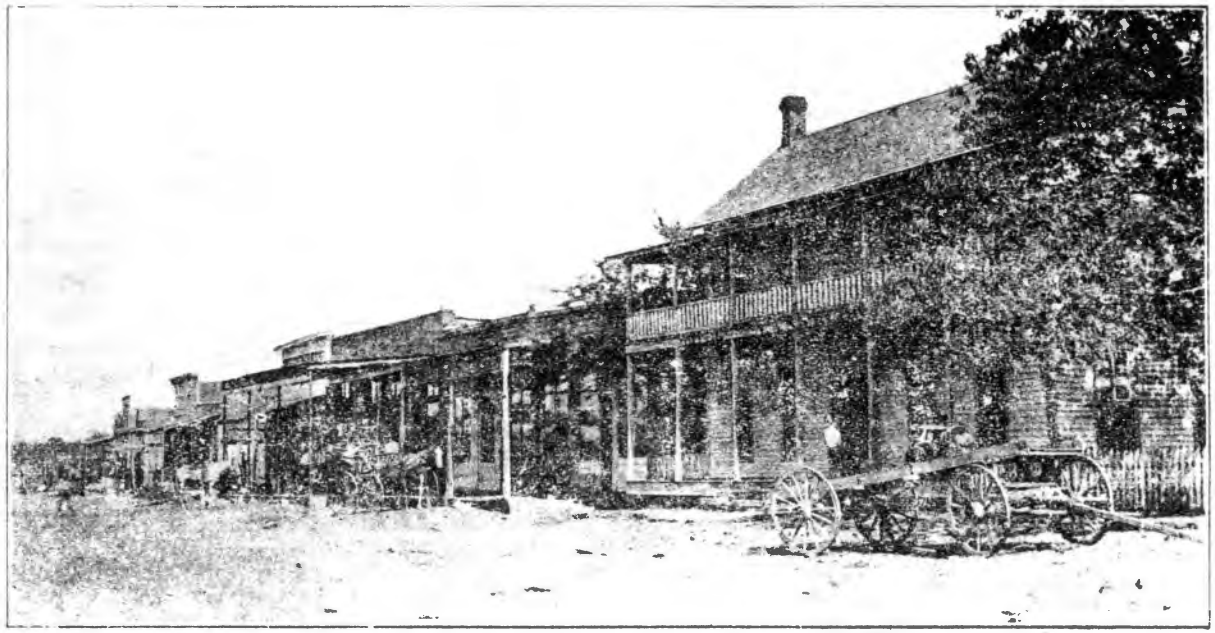
The year 1910 was an especially active year for Canadian. The year began with great success and high hopes but ended with a fiery tragedy. In early 1909 prominent citizens had begun agitating for the building of

a high school. The old four-room structure built in 1896 had been crowded with the standard eight grades plus two primary classes. Late in the year the school board, composed of Doctor W.P. Lewallen, Judge Charles E. Janeway, and Professor M.C. Young, began the laborous task of supervising the planning and building of a structure suitable in size for progressive expansion and suitable to the people. Their success and hard work was evident when in early January, 1910, a large and magnificant two-story brick and stone school building was opened to spring classes. The school house had eight classrooms, a full basement, and a storage attic. The first floor featured a large auditorium with a second floor balcony and an elegant library room. It was fully "heated, lighted and ventilated according to modern methods and cost $18,000". At the opening of its fall semester, the school had an enrollment of 150.[18] Even before the new school had been constructed, pupils from other towns had come to Canadian for their education and it was believed that the new school would attract as many as twenty families to the area within the year. Hopes were high for the progress Canadian had made and would continue to make. The local newspaper reported,

> Since the building of our school new life and energy has been infused into our people, and better business houses are being built, and fine and up-to-date residences are to be seen in every hand. Over $50,000 will be put into new houses and businesses by January 1, 1912. We confidently expect to double our population in 5 years.[19]

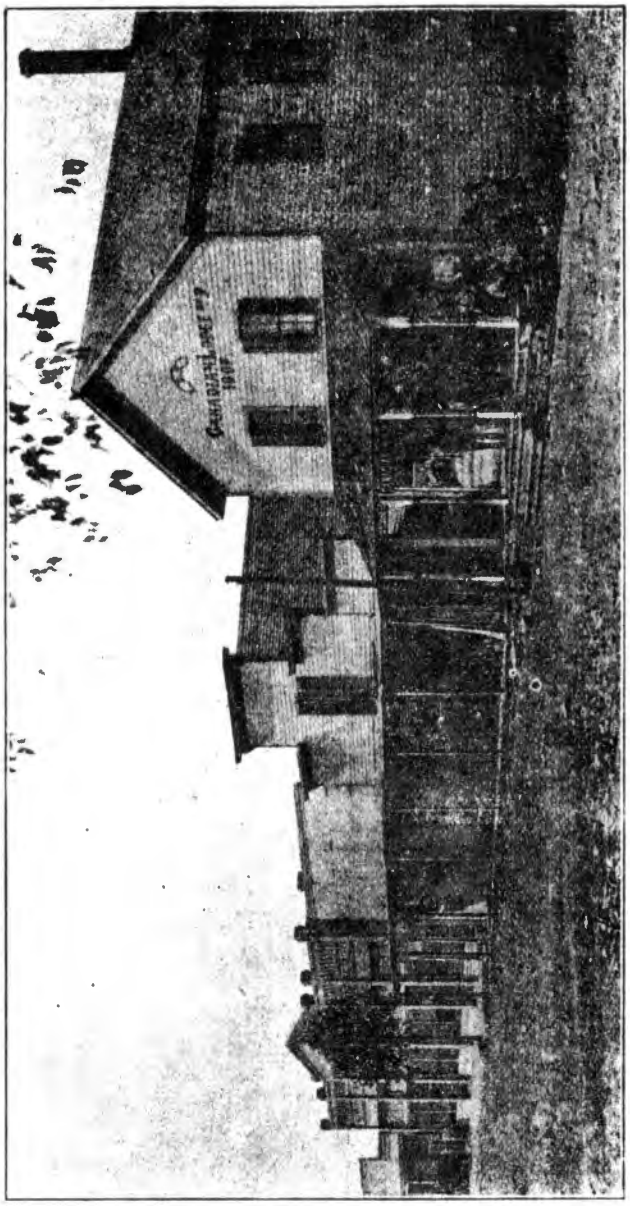
The paper's estimate of $50,000 being pumped into Canadian in the next year was to be proved correct, but the confidence expressed about doubling the population was not. In fact, just the opposite was to happen.

To coincide with the rejoicing over the new school, there was also



VIEW OF EAST MAIN ST., CANADIAN, OKLAHOMA.

Figure 5. View of East Main Street, Canadian, Oklahoma



STREET SCENE—CANADIAN, OKLA.

Figure 6. Street Scene, Canadian, Oklahoma

a period of mourning. Between Christmas day 1909 and New Year's Day 1910, a fire completely destroyed the block of businesses on East Main Street. Most of these buildings were wooden frame and were swept away in a matter of a few hours. The concentrated efforts of the townspeople had failed to save even one building. Only the walls of one stone building remained after the fire. It took several months for cleaning operations to be completed and for new structures to be erected. These new businesses were not as large as the ones before them, and due to the lapse in time of their reopening, many of their patrons had taken their accounts across the tracks to West Main.[20]

Three years earlier, Canadian had embarked upon a campaign to improve the town. The result had been the replacing of wooden buildings by brick ones and the construction of several magnificant homes. In 1910, the push for a "city beautiful" was again renewed. The results of this effort were even more successful. Several more of the elegant homes which still grace Canadian were put under planning or construction. The largest was that of J. D. Fulton, which was to set at the southwest corner of Cheadle Street and Belt Avenue. This residence is now the home of Mrs. Bill Connors, daughter-in-law of Judge Connors, and remains a credit to the town, as do several other of the homes of this period. The need for more houses was a problem in these early years, as it is today in Canadian. The newspaper featured numerous editorials and "want ads" declaring the need for more homes. In character with Canadian's typical commercialism, the paper reasoned the construction of new homes "would be a good investment for some of (the) monied men in town".

Further town improvements included a move to lay "good concrete"

sidewalks on the principal streets and in front of the residential blocks, that could afford to pay for the construction. Another noble community betterment project was the attempt to erect a hospital at Canadian. Local groups, "determined to build a hospital and work on it with a determination that (would) not subside short of success". The idea was to begin a hospital of moderate size and staff it with Canadian's two resident doctors, W. P. Lewallen and John L. Wood, plus physicians from the outlying communities of Crowder and Indianola. Unfortunately, not enough support was secured and the plan fell by the wayside. Similar community improvement projects were to meet defeat in the next few years and when the town no longer offered attractions to possible newcomers it began to decline. Meanwhile, this one setback was little noticed in the busy streets of Canadian. Canadian was not only holding its own against the growing city of McAlester but was also increasing its population and status.[21]

One of the highlights of 1910 for Canadian came in November when the town's most enterprising businessman, Will Belt, arranged to install an electric power plant to light his "mammoth" store building and "elegant home". The Belt home was located on the southeast corner of Belt Avenue and Johnson Street and his store occupied the middle of the business block on West Main. As a free public service, Belt also provided electrical power to the new school. This was the first elecricity brought into Canadian. Public electric service would not serve Canadian until 1940. Before this time, gas lighting was used in most of the businesses and several homes.[22]

Public water works and electric lights remained on Canadian's list of progressive improvements. The proposal for public water was to build

a pumping house and filtration plant at Gaines Creek, "where an unlimited supply of pure water could be found". It was decided though that if such an enterprise were possible, the cost would be prohibitive. Gaines Creek may not have been the right location, but efforts to plan for another location were entirely lacking and again Canadian failed to progress. A serious pattern of gradual decline was being established. The bond issues necessary to support community advancement were consistently being voted down.[23]

Though Canadian failed in some of its advancement moves, there were still those persons who chose to support it. One of these people was a local artist, photographer and poet, Miss Esther Smith. Besides operating the town's only photo studio, Miss Smith often wrote poems, many of them appearing in the local paper. One of these poems was a "booster" for Canadian, describing the various businesses and enterprises in Canadian and was entitled, "Hustling, Bustling Canadian". A few of the stanzas included:

> We are proud of our little city
> With just reason too,
> For we're on the old 'Katy'
> Daily trains not a few.
>
> We also have two Hotels
> Are modern and up-to-date,
> For courtesy - Good meals
> None better in the State.
>
> Now last but not least
> Is our Post Office, Grocery store combined
> For things to eat and a square deal
> Geo. Newton here you'll find.[24]

As 1910 began drawing to a close, the worse diaster to ever hit Canadian occurred just two days before Christmas. The headlines of the News read, "FIRE MAKES A CLEAN SWEEP. Entire wooden block on the west side goes up in flames". At 1:30 a.m. December 23, a raging fire

destroyed the wooden stores on West Main from Toole Avenue to Belt's new brick store. These buildings consisted of the Odd Fellows building and Canadian Drug Company, the Catrell Barber Shop, the pool hall, J.G. Smith Hardware, and two wooden buildings belonging to Belt. It was theorized that the fire started in either the pool hall or barber shop.[25]

Though fifty percent of Canadian's businesses were out of operation for several months, most were able to come back. The ashes had not yet cooled when the plan was formalized to erect the entire block in brick buildings in place of the old ones. This venture was led by Will Belt, Smith Hardware, the Odd Fellows and the Bank of Canadian. In the new block the Bank would occupy the first floor of a new building on the corner while the Odd Fellows would retain the second story. The Canadian Drug Company was now replaced by the Bender Drug Company.

Once again the town had suffered a major set back, but again the businessmen pushed forward. In April of 1911, the Bank of Canadian received a national charter and its capital stock was increased $15,000. Other good news for the year was to be found in the achievements of individual citizens. When the new school had been completed in 1910, a new Superintendent had also been hired. This was Professor David L. Roe, former resident and teacher in Missouri. It was his distinction to be issued U.S. Patent No. 990,010 on April 18, 1911, on a multipurpose livestock gate-opener. The gate could be made to open for large livestock and vehicles or only for small livestock.[26] Another individual that distinguished herself was Miss Ruth Burtt. The Canadian Valley News reported she was the first woman in Oklahoma to secure a copyright on a song. The song composed by Miss Burtt was entitled "Independence Day", and the newspaper was selling copies of the song for twenty-five cents.[27]

While several individuals were gaining great accomplishments in 1911, Canadian was again losing out. Though unseen by the citizens at the time, Canadian's fate was being determined, and its progress halted. On May 5, an editorial announced a new bond proposal for bringing water and electricity to the town. The editorial stated: "A good water supply will bring manufacturing establishments to our town . . . it will increase the value of all town property". It was further editorialized that if Canadian failed to pass this badly needed bond, the community could no longer compete with McAlester and Eufaula, which were quickly modernizing. The vote on the bond issue was held on July 11, and the beginning decline of Canadian was the result of the "no" vote majority.[28]

The local businessmen had worked hard to pass the bond issue. They had invested large amounts of capital into construction and the general building up of Canadian. Their new brick block on the west side was already under construction. All they could do was hope the "improvement" bond issues would receive a favorable vote next year, for without these essential public services, water and electricity, the Canadian business community could not survive. Each year McAlester and Eufaula were drawing away new business, industry and citizens that could have been Canadians had it offered the same modern conveniences.

By 1913 Canadian was truly in eclipse. The business section had rebuilt after the fire but patronage had begun to drop, and several of the establishments changed hands. The smaller businesses on East Main Street found it increasingly difficult to survive and closed. Canadian's business section was reduced by a half. The Canadian Valley News also found it unprofitable in Canadian and Tignor moved to McAlester. Another

paper, the Pittsburg County Leader began publication but could hold out only until 1914, when it folded, leaving Canadian without a newspaper. Because of a $35,000 embezzlement in 1919 the Bank of Canadian was forced to close. The 1910s had brought a recession in the economy and falling farm prices left Canadian farmers and trading houses badly hurt. Canadian's population had also begun to fall at an alarming rate. The rate of decline from 1900 to 1930 was approximately one quarter each ten year period. The population in 1900 had stood at 522 and the population in 1930 was only 295.[29]

Canadian's growth had been slow but its decline in stature was much quicker. Much to its credit the town had been born in bad economic times in the 1870s and survived but the changing economy of the State and the Nation, plus a complicated business recession of the 1910s was more than the little town could hold out against. Fortunately a decline in Canadian did not spell its end, for the town has been able to continue on, but only as another one of the hundreds of small towns spread across Oklahoma.

FOOTNOTES

[1]The Canadian Advertiser (September 8, 1899), p. 3.

[2]Interview with Estella George, Postmaster, Canadian, Oklahoma (4 October 1975).

[3]Interview with Mrs. Bill Connors, Canadian, Oklahoma (13 October 1975); The Canadian Valley News (November 22, 1907), p. 1.

[4]Thirteenth Census of the United States, Department of Commerce, 1910, Bureau of Census, Vol. III (Washington, D.C., 1913), p. 452.

[5]Crowder City Advertiser (March 7, 1902), p. 1.

[6]The Canadian Advertiser (March 1, 1901), p. 2.

[7]Thirteenth Centus, p. 452.

[8]Canadian Enterprise (July 12, 1907), p. 4.

[9]Ibid., (July 5, 1907), p. 1; Ibid., (July 12, 1907), pp. 1, 4.

[10]Ibid., (June 28, 1907), p. 4; Ibid., (July 12, 1907), p. 4.

[11]Ibid.; Ibid., (August 16, 1907), p. 1.

[12]Ibid., (June 28, 1907), p. 4.

[13]Ibid., (June 12, 1907), p. 4; Ibid., (July 5, 1907), p. 1; Ibid., (September 13, 1907), p. 1 Ibid., (September 20, 1907), p. 1.

[14]Ibid., (January 10, 1908), p. 2; Ibid., (January 17, 1908), p. 2; Ibid., (February 14, 1908), p. 4.

[15]Ibid., (February 14, 1908), p. 4; Ibid., (February 21, 1908), p. 4; Ibid., (March 6, 1908), p. 4; Interview with Fred Bowie, Canadian, Oklahoma (10 September 1975); Interview with Ada Baker, Canadian, Oklahoma (13 October 1975).

[16]Canadian Enterprise (April 17, 1908), p. 3.

[17]Interview with Walter Salmon, Canadian, Oklahoma (4 November 1972).

[18]First Annual Catalog of the Canadian High School, 1910, by order of Canadian High School Board (McAlester, 1910).

[19]Canadian Valley News (January 6, 1910), p. 1.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Canadian Valley News (November 11, 1910), p. 1; Ibid., (November 25, 1910), p. 3; Ibid., (December 9, 1910), p. 1.

[22]Ibid., (November 11, 1910), p. 1 Interview with Walter Salmon, Canadian, Oklahoma (12 October 1975).

[23]Canadian Valley News (December 9, 1910), p. 1.

[24]Ibid., (December 16, 1910), p. 1.

[25]Ibid., (December 23, 1910), p. 1.

[26]Ibid., (April 28, 1911), p. 1; Annual Report of the Commissioner of Patents for the year 1911, Patent Gazette (Washington, D.C., 1912), p. 423.

[27]Canadian Valley News (September 29, 1911), p. 4.

[28]Ibid., (May 5, 1911), p. 1; Ibid., (June 23, 1911), p. 3; Ibid., (July 14, 1911), p. 1.

[29]Fifteenth Census of the United States, Department of Commerce, 1930, Bureau of Census, Vol. III (Washington, D.C., 1933), p. 601.

CHAPTER X

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Though the community of Canadian, Oklahoma, has been of no major significance to the Nation, portions of the surrounding area have figured significantly as landmarks to early explorers and pioneers. The Gaines Creek-Canadian River confluence has played host to many of these trail-blazers as a convenient camping site. La Harpe and Long both used the site as a camp ground and entered interesting and significant reports into their journals at this point. One of the early Choctaw Nation settlements was located only three miles from present day Canadian. Marcy's California Route and the Texas Road which pass near Canadian, have figured most prominently in American history.

In the Post-Civil War era Canadian gained importance as the Katy Railroad made it a temporary southern terminus. During the period of outlawlessness which covered this time Canadian had at its beginning been known as an outlaw town. As the iron rails moved on, Canadian quickly changed from roughs making money with a gun to establishing itself as the commercial center of the region.

For many years Canadian continued its steady progress and display of city pride and hopefulness. Finally, and mostly by its own doing, Canadian began to decline. In a sense, that decline came as a result of popular democracy. The voters of the town had decried their town's future by failing to support the various bond issues that could have

made Canadian competitive with other towns for commercial interest.

Other factors also contributed to Canadian's fall. Fire and depression were chief among them. In a two year period the entire business section of town had been burned to the ground and only one-half of those businesses were secure enough to rebuild. The depression of the early 1890s had stunted Canadian's growth as did the recession following the end of World War I, and the "crash of 1929" sealed its fate. The "Great Depression" closed all but two of the Canadian cotton gins. The larger business houses remained open until the early 1930s but conducted only a fraction of the business they had formerly handled. In 1938 the school building Canadian residents had been so proud of met the fate of fire as had so many other local structures. All these events served to bring decline to Canadian but the chief reason for its descent has to be found in the lack of general community support for civil betterment; apathy on the part of Canadian's own people was the major cause for the failure of Canadian.

Canadian today experiences many of these same tendencies. Community projects are carried out slowly and often with considerable opposition but in the last fifteen years Canadian has witnessed a small increase in population. Several new enterprises have come into Canadian only to leave shortly when they too failed to gain general support. Because of the town's proximity to Lake Eufaula and Arrowhead State Lodge, it has potential. As yet that potential has only been scratched. It will be interesting to note Canadian's situation in another fifteen years, for if a concerted effort to progress is not made within that time, Canadian's potentiality will be taken over by neighboring towns and cities, and Canadian will have no chance of reclaiming its past status as a regional leader.

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