

THE HISTORY OF THE PUBLIC LAND STRIP TO 1907

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ACTON POSTER

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## PREFACE

The Public Land Strip, now referred to as the Panhandle of Oklahoma, is a narrow neck of land extending 167 miles westward from the main body of the state to the eastern boundary of New Mexico, between Kansas and Colorado on the north and Texas on the south. This entire area is primarily a rolling plain drained by the Cimarron River along the northern border and by Beaver Creek running practically the full length of the Panhandle. It was from this creek that No Man's Land received the name of Beaver County in 1890.

This strip of land seemingly had been overlooked in the scramble for state and territorial boundary lines. It was not until it became necessary to provide the people of this area with some legal status, that any attention was given to it by Congress. On May 2, 1890 this Public Land Strip became a part of Oklahoma Territory under the Organic Act.

The author's purpose in writing this thesis has been to depict the unique nature of the history of the Public Land Strip which resulted largely from four sources: (1) its many changes of ownership; (2) the troublesome days of disorder and confusion; (3) the educational developments; and (4) the convergence of the political interests of No Man's Land with Statehood upon the passage of the Enabling Act.

The author wishes to express his sincere appreciation to the Library Staff of Oklahoma A. and M. College and to the members of the History Department for timely and generous guidance.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface . . . . .	iii
Chapter I An Orphan Seeks A Home . . . . .	1
Chapter II The Squatters Make A Stand . . . . .	11
Chapter III A Dream Comes True . . . . .	37
Bibliography . . . . .	48

## Chapter I

### AN ORPHAN SEEKS A HOME

The Public Land Strip or No Man's Land is truly a remnant of imperial land adjustments. It has been a part of many territorial cessions, and kings and consuls have tossed it about here and there over a period of many years.

The trails of the early explorer, trapper, and trader crossed this historical tract of prairie land. These vanguards told many tales of hardship and adventure, which form a part of the romantic history of No Man's Land.

The three countries that vied in the eighteenth century for positions in the New World were Spain, France, and England. The United States, which seemed, at first, to be only a sporadic growth, was soon to be found riding quite contentedly in the American colonization saddle.

Spain, France, and England made very elaborate claims to certain portions of the New World. Their explorers and traders were all trying to "get the jump" on their neighbors by claiming great and vast tracts of land. Many times these claims overlapped.<sup>1</sup>

Cortez, by conquering Mexico in the years 1519-21, gave the Spanish a good foothold on the continent of North America from which

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<sup>1</sup> 54 Cong. 2 sess., "The Causes of the Coronado Expedition", Fourteenth Annual Report of Bureau of Ethnology, 1892-3, Part I, p. 345.

to send out exploring parties. It was on one of these expeditions that Meridoza sent Coronado, who for three years tramped over northern Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas.<sup>2</sup> On his return from the North to his base at Tiguex, he traveled in a southwesternly direction, crossing from central Kansas into the present Panhandle of Oklahoma.<sup>3</sup> There is, however, no way of knowing the exact point of his entrance or departure.<sup>4</sup>

It is to Spain that credit must go for the early explorations of the country that lies west of the Mississippi River, and from the work of these men in particular, the Spanish claims were made tangible. The territory now known as the Public Land Strip was within these claims.

Like her rival, Spain,<sup>5</sup> France also had a desire for riches, her primary motive being fur trade. Both countries, however, had their religious ideas which each attempted to instill into the hearts and minds of the American Indians.

The expedition of La Salle probably had more to do with the future history of Oklahoma than did the work of any other Frenchman.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 346.

<sup>3</sup> Morris L. Wardell, "The History of No Man's Land or Old Beaver County," Chronicles of Oklahoma, January 1921, I, 61.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 401.

<sup>5</sup> George Rainey, No Man's Land, Introduction.

La Salle, after exploring the Mississippi River, claimed for his sovereign all the land drained by this mighty "Father of Waters." This was the beginning of the claim of France upon the territory of Oklahoma, for in claiming the Mississippi, she also claimed all the lands drained by its tributaries.<sup>6</sup> The precise boundaries of this claim were very obscure.<sup>7</sup> We again find No Man's Land included within the realms of early day history.

This dual claim of territory by Spain and France could only bring about trouble. The first shifting of territory, however, was not brought about between these two nations but between France and England. This conflict in America is known as the French and Indian War.<sup>8</sup>

France, fearing that her American possessions might be lost to England, on the eve of the definitive treaty ceded the western Mississippi River valley to Spain by the Treaty of Fontainbleau, November 3, 1762.<sup>9</sup>

The boundaries of this territory were not carefully stated and were later to become a source of trouble. The Red River, being a part of the Mississippi River system, might be considered a part of the boundary.

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<sup>6</sup> 56 Cong., 1 sess., "The Louisiana Purchase," House Document No 708, p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> American State Papers, Miscellaneous, I, 344.

<sup>8</sup> R. G. Thwaites, The American Nation: A History, VII, 281.

<sup>9</sup> House Document No. 708, op. cit.



Seemingly, Spain had jurisdiction over this territory until October 1, 1800, when it was retroceded to France.<sup>10</sup> The extent of this territory, according to the retrocession, remained the same as in 1762 with the boundaries yet undetermined.<sup>11</sup>

The Public Land Strip of Oklahoma, next comes into focus with the purchase of Louisiana by the United States from France in 1803. This gave the United States her first claim to the present state of Oklahoma and to the future No Man's Land.<sup>12</sup> The treaty of St. Ildefonso by which the transfer was effected, gives evidence that it was the same territory that was retroceded literally, if not physically, to France in 1800. And with it at that went all its rights and privileges, in the same manner as it was originally conveyed.<sup>13</sup>

This description of the exact boundaries of Louisiana was very vague and unsatisfactory. Our envoys quite properly insisted upon a more specific boundary line, but in this particular their efforts were in vain. Did France actually and physically recover possession, in 1800, of the Louisiana it formerly owned? And if so, was not

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 27, 36.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>13</sup> Edward Everett Dale and Jesse Lee Rader, Readings in Oklahoma History, p. 53.

that Louisiana the same one ceded to the United States? It will be remembered that La Salle laid claim to all territory drained by the Mississippi River system,<sup>14</sup> which, of course, took in all the present state of Oklahoma. The question of boundaries to the south and west now lay before the state departments or the governments of the United States and Spain.

Our nation always claimed, as did France because of La Salle's settlement on the Del Norte River, that the Louisiana Purchase extended westward to the Rio Bravo. The United States relinquished this particular claim in 1819 in lieu of possession of the Floridas.<sup>15</sup>

The Treaty of Friendship in 1819 between the United States and Spain, supposedly settled two febrile questions.<sup>16</sup> It gave the Floridas to the United States and, by more or less definitely designating a boundary line between the two nations west of the Mississippi River, settled the Texas dispute between the participants. The boundary line between these two countries began on the Gulf of Mexico at the mouth of the Sabine River. It continued north along the western bank of the river until it reached the 32nd degree of latitude and then extended due north to the Rio Roxo, or Red River. It followed

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<sup>14</sup> Victor E. Harlow, Oklahoma Its Origin and Developments, p. 41.

<sup>15</sup> 61 Cong., 1 sess., House Document No. 347, p. 48.

<sup>16</sup> William Mallory, Treaties, Conventions, International Acts, Protocols and Agreements, 1776-1909, I, 1651.

the course of this stream westward to the 100th degree of longitude where it crossed the Red River and ran due north to the Arkansas, From there it followed the southern bank of this river to the 42nd degree of latitude, where it turned westward to the Pacific Ocean.<sup>17</sup>

That part of Oklahoma lying west of the 100th meridian was consequently definitely separated by an ethereal line from the part to be considered within the Louisiana Purchase and established what is later to be the eastern boundary of No Man's Land. Because of this line of demarcation the Panhandle of Oklahoma remained a part of the Hispanic-American possessions until Mexico regained her freedom.<sup>18</sup>

The Mexicans had long chafed under the domination of the Spanish regime, and their revolutionary spirit was ever active, seeking always an opportunity to throw off the Spanish yoke. Many uprisings and revolts generally resulted in just more bloodshed, but the fire of freedom was unquenchable in the hearts of the Mexicans, and at last it burned through. It was on February 2, 1821, following the sting of many defeats that the keys of the city of Mexico were delivered to the revolutionary leader.<sup>19</sup> On September 27, 1821, Inturbide's army entered the capitol city and took possession.<sup>20</sup> Again the Public Land Strip changed hands.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 1652.

<sup>18</sup> Herbert Howe Bancroft, History of Mexico, XII, 119-128.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 732-3.

<sup>20</sup> William Manning, Early Diplomatic Relations Between the United States and Mexico, p. 12.

Some four weeks later, a Mr. Wilcox, a citizen of the United States then in Mexico, wrote Secretary of State John Quincy Adams concerning the friendly attitude of the new Mexican government toward the United States. Diplomatic relations were soon opened, although it was not until December 12, 1822 that the complete recognition of the new<sup>21</sup> Mexican government was formally acknowledged by the United States.<sup>22</sup> This delay was due in part to the lack of finance on the part of the new Mexican regime to support her representatives in Washington.

Possibly one of the very earliest matters to be considered between the new government of Mexico and that of the United States, was concerned with the opening of the Santa Fe Road. This road, or trail, in part crosses the present county of Cimarron which is the western-most county of the Public Land Strip.<sup>23</sup>

Just a short time before the Mexican Revolution, the province of Texas was but a wilderness inhabited by wandering tribes of Indians whose members frequently became excited by the injustices done them, and waged an intermittent and destructive war against their Spanish oppressors. Following the opening of the Mexican Revolution, the Spanish government, in order to end this trouble, created the province of Texas for settlement and invited foreigners with special qualifications

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 166.

to inhabit it. The inducement of the free land which was held out caused many Americans and other foreigners to accept the offer immediately.<sup>25</sup>

As a sequel to this rapid influx of aliens with various political ideas, another shift of ownership of the Public Land Strip of Oklahoma was made. As the Texans of old were refreshed by the new blood and buoyant spirits, strife and now bloodshed again became the custom. To them independence was now their goal. This was indeed quite an assignment, but with an indomitable spirit and fortuitous aid from at least some sympathizers to the north their reward was at least partially reached by the fall of 1835.<sup>26</sup> The Lone Star Republic remained as such for only ten years, when, after no little amount of play between her own diplomats and those of the United States, she was annexed by a joint resolution December 10, 1845.<sup>27</sup> This resolution was not approved, however, until it was signed by President Polk, December 29. Concurrently with this development the president of Texas, Anson Jones, some three months later surrendered the executive authority to the newly elected governor, J. Pickney Henderson.<sup>28</sup> The Public Land Strip of Oklahoma then being a part of Texas, according to the old survey of 1619, became for the first time an integral part of the United States.

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<sup>25</sup> J. Pickney Henderson, "Diplomatic Correspondence of the Republic of Texas," American Historical Association Report, 1911, II, 322.

<sup>26</sup> Manning, op. cit.

<sup>27</sup> 29 Cong., 1 sess., "Congressional Globe," XV, 39.

<sup>28</sup> Herbert Howe Bancroft, History of the North Mexican States and Texas, XVI, 383.

There had been a proposed territory called Territory of Chelokee. Even prior to this time, at least a certain part of this new addition had been fabricated into a somewhat nebulous territory entitled Chelokee. The individuals who were behind this movement had in mind the obtaining of outlets into the Rocky Mountain district where they could secure provinder and equipment to make their life more secure. Visionary as was this plan it did not fail to offer some constructive ideas for it was planned to include not only the country belonging to them but also the territory bound by the meridians of 100 degrees on the east and 103 degrees on the west with parallels 36 degrees and 30 minutes on the south and 37 degrees on the north.<sup>29</sup> This, of course, enclosed No Man's Land. Little evidence is extant that would indicate that Congress or any other official ever considered in a serious manner this suggestion.

The Public Land Strip was not long to remain a part of the Lone Star State for it was on September 9, 1850, that Texas agreed in lieu of certain financial payments to set her northern boundary at parallel 36 degrees and 30 minutes.<sup>30</sup> Since she was to be a slave state, and with an abundance of land at her disposal, the relinquishment of several hundred square miles of turain, sterile in appearance, unproductive, and unpopulated, to the United States Government in order to

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<sup>29</sup> Roy Gittinger, The Formation of the State of Oklahoma, p. 60.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

obtain not only a financial reward but a boundary that was secure and unjeopardized, but the taint associated with the Missouri Compromise of 1820.<sup>31</sup>

This incident made an orphan, figuratively speaking, of this strip of land which rightfully inherited the title of No Man's Land or the Public Land Strip.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter II

## THE SQUATTERS MAKE A STAND

No Man's Land contains many interesting features within its history. For many years converging upon its borders, numerous elements of American civilization met and bowed in and out, as the pioneer drama unfolded. Here, there was no law of the state nor rule of the church. There was no slave, no master, no ruler, and no citizenship.<sup>1</sup> Here under the common law of humanity, there were but few people of the type who abused charity and common decency. This was not, however, a very homogeneous group, because it was here that the West met the East and the North met the South. Yet, they met on a common level, mingled, communed, and neighbored.<sup>2</sup>

When the Texas soldiers returned from the Civil War in 1865, they found the plains teeming with fat cattle. Many of these ex-soldiers preempted grazing leases in the northern part of the district known as the Texas Panhandle. Fat cattle were in abundance, but there was no immediate market, and it was directly due to this that the so called "Northern Drive" was made. Tascosa, Texas, a town on the north bank of the South Canadian River, which saw its beginning when John Cane opened a cattleman's outfitting store there in 1879,<sup>3</sup> was the

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<sup>1</sup> George Rainey, No Man's Land, Introduction.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 139.



starting point. From this point to Dodge City, the nearest railroad point, the "Jones and Plummer Trail" was formed.<sup>4</sup>

Eighty miles southwest of Dodge City where this trail crossed Beaver Creek, a camping place was formed which became well known.<sup>5</sup>

A freighter by the name of Jim Lane, conceived the idea of establishing a supply store at this crossing for the accommodation of the freighters. In 1879, on the same date that John Cane opened his store, Lane constructed a "soddy" on the south bank of the Beaver in No Man's Land. The erection of this sod house was the "alpha" of Beaver City,<sup>6</sup> and with the coming of the omnipresent squatters, it was, within a year, honored by the title of "settlement".<sup>7</sup> The ordinary improvements on these squatter claims, as well as those of the homesteader a few years later, consisted only of a "soddy". Within this rather uninviting house dwelt the family. Most of the "soddies" were clean and tidy, especially when gypsum was used as a sort of whitewash on the inner walls. Walls brightened in this manner also improved the lighting in the dwelling as most of these

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> "Governor of Oklahoma Report", Annual Report Department of Interior, Miscellaneous Reports, Part II, p. 464.

early homes had but one door and often no windows.<sup>8</sup> On this prairie land where trees were few and shade in the summer was constantly sought but never found, these homes very effectively kept out the intense heat, and in the winter with the aid of buffalo chips for fuel, the cold was easily dissipated.<sup>9</sup>

No little degree of art was employed in the erection of a "soddy".<sup>10</sup> There were men who were builders of "soddies" just as we now have carpenters, brick layers, and masons. With a rather crude implement composed of a blade attached to two 2 inch by 6 inch pieces of wood set at a specified distance apart, the sod was cut, the thickness of which depended upon the depth of the furrow. Sod bricks were then cut into workable lengths with a spade.<sup>11</sup>

These sod blocks, bricks, or slabs, as they were indiscriminately called, were laid somewhat as ordinary bricks except no mortar was used. One end of the rafters was placed on a log ridge while the other end rested on a wall which was 16, 18, or 24 inches in width. When sod was used as roofing, it was fashioned into shingles of a crude thickness and covered over with a layer of gumbo or heavy clay.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Rainey, op. cit., p. 123.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

The "soddy" did not appear as often in the western part of No Man's Land as did the adobe or doby house. Other types of homes were the dugout, half-dugout, and a few picket or stockade homes constructed of cedar or pine logs.<sup>13</sup>

The economic condition of the country during the days of the "soddy", was an unusual one, possibly not being duplicated anywhere in the settlement of any part of the United States.<sup>14</sup> During the squatter history, as well as during the period of homesteading in this section, there was but little attempt to grow crops.<sup>15</sup> This, today, may appear strange, but the settlers were poor. Few were able to purchase machinery. There was no seed available to them and no market for their crops if raised. There was but little wild game as the deer and buffalo had long since vanished.

Most of the settlers lived from the meager savings they had brought with them. These were frequently supplemented by a few dollars earned by gathering bones which were sold for eleven dollars per load after being hauled to Dodge City.<sup>16</sup> Most of the freighting was done to and from this point, a distance of about eighty miles to the north, although there were no roads except the winding trails.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The writer has lived in practically every type of house mentioned above and attended school in an old "soddy".

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

The paternal head of the family would often "go back to the states" to work in the wheat harvest, and if the children were old enough to assume responsibilities, the family remained on the claim. The mother with the children were, however, sometimes loaded into the covered wagon and taken along where the wife often found employment as a cook during the harvest period. When the father found work for himself as well as his team, the over jet or wagon bows were set on the ground and a temporary home was established for the entire family.<sup>18</sup> Cooking, such as it was, was usually done outside on the ground.<sup>19</sup>

When the mother and children were left behind on the claim, the days, often filled with privations and sadness, were long and lonely for them. These were the days of hardships for such individuals. On many of the homesteads there was no cow, no chickens, no pigs, not even a cat or a dog.<sup>20</sup> The one team was often gone to help earn some money for the family needs.

Settlers were sometimes molested by those known in the early days as "road trotters". Later such intruders were more aptly called just plain "claim jumpers."<sup>21</sup> Sometimes, one of these outlaws would

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Elmer E. Brown, "No Man's Land," Chronicles of Oklahoma, June 1926, IV, 91.

<sup>21</sup> Harlow, op. cit., p. 247.

boldly ride up to the shack of a homesteader and assert that he had previously filed on the same claim. This procedure was generally done at the point of a six-gun. The poor homesteader not infrequently without documentary evidence or show of force in kind had no way of proving his point, especially on a moments notice and under such trying times. Compliance was usually the better part of valor so his acquiesce was usually confirmed when he paid the "claim jumper's" price.<sup>22</sup> These "claim jumpers" would often have several claims which were used as decoys, but generally in the end, they would be introduced to a rope and a limb by a self styled vigilant committee of settlers.

To us, today the life of this pioneer would seem almost unbearable, yet there was little complaint from those who experienced it. They were indeed a sturdy folk, inured to the hardships and to life filled with privations, looking forward with hope and longing for the time when conditions would be better, and they could own their own home in No Man's Land. It was for this privilege that they patiently awaited for the beneficence of the great American Congress. There were but few murmurings of discontent, no anarchists propaganda abroad, and little criticism. No thought of government relief or assistance existed. To stake a claim and make a living for themselves was all they asked.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Rainey, op. cit., p. 137.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

The squatter knew positively one fact—that he was on government land and believed the time would come when Congress would cause a survey to be completed of this land,<sup>24</sup> which would divide and subdivide it into sections and quarter sections just as previous survey had blocked it into townships of six miles square.<sup>25</sup> Assurance, whether tangible or intangible, in this belief increased his perseverance and the squatter held on.

On March 3, 1881 was initiated the first legislation relative to the Public Land Strip.<sup>26</sup> Out of this suggestion there came an appropriation of \$18,000 in order that the survey of No Man's Land might be completed by marking correction lines and guide meridians.<sup>27</sup> Under this same act of Congress (August 26, 1881) a contract was made by the Commissioner of the General Land Office with the two deputy surveyors, Chaney and Smith.<sup>28</sup> According to their survey the meridian of 103 degrees along the western end of this strip was designated as Cimarron Meridian. In the future this particular meridian is a line

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>25</sup> 43 Cong., 1 sess., "Revised Statutes of the United States," with Appendix, Title XXII, Section 2289, p. 422. U. S. Statutes at Large, XVIII, 1.

<sup>26</sup> The writer is indebted for the use of the private files of Dr. B. B. Chapman, Oklahoma A. and M. College. Findings made in the General Land Office and Office of Indian Affairs, Washington, D. C. Hereafter cited as Chapman, G L O or O A I, respectively.

<sup>27</sup> 47 Cong., 2 sess., "The Public Domain", United States Public Land Commission, 1879-1880, p. 1187.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

of demarcation from which, and to which, contiguous territory is described. This is particularly true when one refers to lands of the Oklahoma Panhandle. Out of the same general instructions a base line was established on 36 degree and 30 minutes which formed the southern boundary of the Public Land Strip.<sup>29</sup> As a convenience to those who were interested in the eastern and southern lines, markers made of zinc, usually referred to as "pot corners",<sup>30</sup> were placed at each congressional township corner.

On December 15, 1832, the Cherokee National Council authorized and directed the principal chief to lease, subject to the approval of the Secretary of the Interior, these lands. The lease was for grazing purposes only and was not to run for more than 20 years. Later this act was amended and agreements were entered into with several stockmen at Guthrie whereby they might drive, convoy, range, and feed horses, mules, and cattle on all the lands subsequently known as the Public Land Strip.<sup>31</sup>

Prior to 1837, the Public Land Strip was used almost entirely by cattlemen who wished to graze stock there. This antagonized the home seekers who felt that the government was shielding the cattlemen at their expense.<sup>32</sup> Many of those who complained about these cattle

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<sup>29</sup> Chapman, G L O.

<sup>30</sup> Rainey, op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>31</sup> 49 Cong., 1 sess., Congressional Records, XVII, p. 178.

<sup>32</sup> Chapman, O A I.

leases, were those associated with W. L. Couche's boomers. They, as a group, were determined folk imbued with the idea that an injustice was long perpetrated by those in authority and as a means of venting their feelings retired to this district in 1885 upon being ejected from the Oklahoma District.<sup>33</sup> Those already in No Man's Land were determined to remain until the government opened for settlement the territory to the east (Oklahoma District).<sup>34</sup> These squatters undoubtedly were sincere in making these solemn resolves, but with the news of lucrative employment and good working conditions on the Santa Fe railroad, their temporary abodes were vacated and No Man's Land saw an exodus of a contingent of questionable settlers.<sup>35</sup>

These squatters in No Man's Land were trying to get the government officials to agree that any land under the Public Domain could be homesteaded if it could be leased. This, of course, was not correct, for lands of the Public Domain could not be entered as lands for settlement, except under a specific act of Congress and then not until they had been properly surveyed.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, even though Bushyhead, the principal chief of the Cherokees, had leased this land to the cattlemen as a part of the Cherokee Outlet, Luther Harrison,

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<sup>33</sup> Dora Ann Stewart, Government and Development of Oklahoma Territory, p. 36.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> 50th Cong., 1 sess., House Document, XIX, p. 72.

<sup>36</sup> "The Public Domain", op. cit., p. 13.



Acting Commissioner of the Public Land Office, stated that the United States treaties with the Cherokee Indians<sup>37</sup> specifically stated that their lands extended only to the 100 degree meridian which is the eastern boundary of No Man's Land,<sup>38</sup> and that its attempt to extend its influence beyond this limit was an usurpation of authority.

Some of Couche's followers who remained behind, plus some new affiliates, called a meeting in an attempt to organize a temporary form of government. This meeting was held at Beaver on September 15, 1886. Out of this preliminary group there came a semblance of an organization that was determined to effect some form of constitutional organization. Sometime in November, thirty-four men and women of Beaver petitioned for another meeting to be held. At this meeting, over which Dr. O. G. Chase presided, attempts were made to organize No Man's Land into Cimarron Territory.<sup>39</sup> They elected delegates to Congress twice and passed several bills, but they were unable to enforce their laws, and their delegates were not recognized in Washington.<sup>40</sup> Apparently some good did effuse from this earnest attempt of the squatters in regard to a regular form of government because a majority report of the House Committee on Territories in 1888 stated that according to reliable sources a large number of

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<sup>37</sup> Treaties of 1828, 1833, 1835. Chapman, G L O.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> "Governor of Oklahoma Report", op. cit., p. 182.

<sup>40</sup> Harlow, op. cit.,

persons, estimated as high as 10,000 had recently settled upon the Public Land Strip. This estimate was extremely generous even if the informant had counted the immigrants who might have passed through in route to other "Promised Lands". (Probably a more reasonable estimate would be about 3500.) Many more were expected to come later, and the belief was expressed that if the lands were made ready for settlement by an act of Congress, the entire strip would be homesteaded within a year.<sup>41</sup>

Old Oklahoma was opened to settlement in 1889 causing many of the people from No Man's Land to drift east to the new land of promise, and ending all efforts to create Cimarron Territory. It was not, however, until May 2, 1890, that this strip of land was opened to homesteaders. This act, now known as the Organic Act, also provided for a territorial form of government for the Public Land Strip.<sup>42</sup> Section 18 of this act, provided that all actual and bonified settlers of these lands at the time of the passage of this act should be entitled to have preference to the lands upon which they had settled under the Homestead Laws, by virtue of their settlement and occupation. They also should be credited with the time they had actually occupied their homesteads not to exceed two years of the time required by law to perfect a homestead title.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> 51 Cong., 1 sess., House Reports, 1889-90, I, 6.

<sup>42</sup> Rainey, op. cit., p. 194.

<sup>43</sup> 51 Cong., 1 sess., "Recent Treaties and Executive Documents", Statutes of the United States of America, 1889-90, p. 90.

This part of the opening did not border the central district in Old Oklahoma, but it was designated as County Number Seven with Beaver as the county seat.<sup>44</sup> This territory, a part of the Public Domain, was previously an unorganized territory  $34\frac{1}{2}$  miles wide, 167 miles in length, and consisting of 3,684,000 acres.<sup>45</sup>

The Act of May 2, 1890, further made provisions for a governor, a secretary, who was also an attorney for the United States, and three judges who acted as a supreme court, all of whom were to be appointed by the president of the United States and approved by the senate.<sup>46</sup>

George W. Steele was appointed by the President of the United States as the first Territorial governor of Oklahoma. His first duties were to make appointments for legislative purposes, to define election districts, and to appoint election officers.<sup>47</sup>

On August 5, 1890, the first election was held for the first legislative assembly to the Territory.<sup>48</sup> The first session met at Guthrie, August 27, 1890, for a one hundred-twenty day session.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Stewart, op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>45</sup> Chapman, G L O.

<sup>46</sup> Harlow, op. cit., p. 257.

<sup>47</sup> 52 Cong., 1 sess., House Document, XVI, p. 450.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

They did well in the time allotted them, but the session was entirely too short to accomplish all the work that was expected. A nucleus, however, was formed and the leaven set to work.

The year of 1890 was exceptionally dry, and the entire southwestern part of the United States suffered from this climatic condition. Many of the settlers of the Public Land Strip had come from Texas and western Kansas where they had been driven out by the drouth. Others, who had been compelled to wait at the border before entering No Man's Land, were in destitute condition.<sup>50</sup>

George Steele wrote in his report to the Department of Interior on October 9, 1891, that there was so much suffering among these settlers that he was forced to call on Congress for help. This appeal met with generous response from Congress and with a great deal of assistance from the railroads leading into the Territory. With this help the people of No Man's Land were able to get along until another crop season.<sup>51</sup>

Despite the prominent difficulties of these early settlers, there was also fun, frolic, and amusement during these days of pioneering in No Man's Land.<sup>52</sup> There were occasions, especially

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Rainey, op. cit., p. 167.

after communities such as Beaver, Hardesty, Kenton and others had been well established, when all would assemble for a picnic. Such dates as the Fourth of July, Christmas, and Thanksgiving were nearly always terminated with a "hop" or a dance.<sup>53</sup> When one occasion would hardly be over, the next social, though many weeks away, was planned and discussed, especially by the younger set.

The ladies, on such occasions as the dance, wore dresses cut high in the neck and fashioned of materials varying from expensive silk to inexpensive calico, the latter predominating. The gentlemen wore dress coats, which some left in the checking room with their big hats and guns. A few of the more meticulous dressers had polished high heeled boots.<sup>54</sup> Generally, the lower ends of the trousers were stuffed inside the high topped boots. Music was furnished gratuitously, usually by three fiddles and an organ, guitar, or banjo.

It was customary at that time to sell numbers for twenty-five cents each to all men or boys. Instead of all dancing every time or whenever the desire came, certain numbers were called. Most of the dances were quadrilles and in announcing a square dance, the floor manager would call out, "Partners for a square; numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 get your ladies."<sup>55</sup> The size of the hall or house would determine the amount of numbers called.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

When a dance was called, the gentlemen "rustled" a partner and with the others took their places on the floor according to the order in which the numbers were called. The "lead" fiddler would then give a long drawn out pull of his bow, followed by a fast tune such as "Money Musk," "The Devil's Dream," "Arkansas Traveler," "Speed the Plow" or some other favorite. Some fellow with a loud clear voice would call out, "Honor your partners, circle left", and the dance was on. As the gentlemen, in shirt sleeves, cracked their high heeled boots hard on the floor while the ladies curtsied with "allemande left," the word "sprightliness" would be tame indeed as an attempt to describe their caperings.<sup>56</sup> This sort of routine would often continue until the sun was well on its way for another day's travels.

Such occasions were generally preceded by a community dinner if the occasion was Christmas or Thanksgiving, and on the Fourth of July a program was generally offered in the afternoon including foot-racing, horse racing, potato racing, and often, wild horse riding.

There were but few means of communication in those days, and the old community gatherings served a dual purpose by bringing neighbors and friends together for visitation and for discussing some of the more immediate issues of the day. Some leader would often give a talk concerning matters which were of interest to all.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

Newspapers, however, followed close on the heels of the homesteader. As early as 1890, No Man's Land had three separate towns that supported a weekly newspaper: Kenton in the northwest corner near the Colorado and New Mexico lines; Hardesty a mile from the mouth of Coldwater Creek and southeast of the present town of Guymon in Texas county; and Beaver on the south bank of Beaver Creek about thirty miles from the east line.<sup>57</sup>

After the establishment of Oklahoma Territory, and for ten or twelve years following, a great rush of homesteaders began, which was increased by the building of the Rock Island railroad from Liberal, Kansas, to Dalhart, Texas.<sup>58</sup> Newspapers, in numbers quite out of proportion to the population, were established in many towns due to the rather sudden influx of immigrants. These papers were four page issues, published once each week. The inside pages contained such items as land patents, contest proceedings, filings, and some news of the outside world.<sup>59</sup> The press used at Hardesty was the oldest one in No Man's Land. It was actually an old Bronstrup hand press.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Elsie Cody Gleason, "The Newspapers of the Panhandle of Oklahoma," Chronicles of Oklahoma, June 1941, XIX, 141.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Formerly made by Frederick Bronstrup, the successor of Adam Ramage, the first press maker in America, who began business in Philadelphia in 1800. Ibid. This same press is now on display at the Historical Museum located at the Panhandle Oklahoma A. and M. College, Goodwell, Oklahoma.

These early day papers kept their columns filled with matters concerning homestead and settler rights as against those of the cattlemen. There was also constant and bitter bickering between the publication which won the county printing job and those which lost.<sup>61</sup>

The Cimarron News, then printed at Kenton but now at Boise City, kept out of these quarrels but spoke for the rights of the cattlemen. This particular editor thought it was a very grave mistake to use the semi-arid land for small farms.<sup>62</sup> It would be well to weigh this argument even today, especially since the era of the Dust Bowl. When No Man's Land was opened to settlement, those Land Commissioners who owned newspapers really prospered as they could control the legal printing.<sup>63</sup>

When the Rock Island Railway Company built southwest from Liberal, Kansas, the bulk of the population of No Man's Land, shifted to a line following the general course of the new road.<sup>64</sup> It had been known for some time that the Rock Island line would not go through Hardesty, so Dick Quinn loaded his printing press into his wagon and moved to the switch on the new railroad called Sanford. He started printing the Sanford Herald, but the officials of the railroad asked that the name

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.



of the location be changed to Guymon, to honor E. T. Guymon of Liberal. The name of Mr. Quinn's paper was then changed to Guymon Herald.<sup>65</sup>

Another problem at this time which confronted both the officials at Washington as well as the settlers, was that of locating a land office. According to Section 19 of the Organic Act, No Man's Land was declared a Public Land District and the President of the United States was empowered to locate a land office in the district and to appoint a registrar and a receiver of the land office.<sup>66</sup>

In a letter of April 30, 1890, Acting Commissioner W. M. Stone stated that the only reliable data from which the location of towns could be determined was the Post Route map of Kansas and Nebraska. This data showed that the town of Buffalo was situated nearest the geographic center of the lands of the Public Land Strip, and it seemed to present a requisite advantage of location for a land office. The town of Buffalo (not the present county seat of Harper county) however, was not in such direct and immediate connection with other points as was the town of Beaver, some forty miles farther east.<sup>67</sup>

Secretary Stone thought that the establishment of the land office at Buffalo would lead to early connections by railroad line then extending westward toward Tyrone. Petitions were filed, signed by a

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> 51 Cong., 1 sess., "Recent Treaties and Executive Proclamations," United States Statutes At Large, 1889-1890, p. 81.

<sup>67</sup> Chapman, G L O

large number of persons, asking that Beaver be designated as the site of the land office. The greater portion of the settlers and towns were in this section of the Public Land Strip in which lands would first be put under contract.<sup>68</sup>

Lewis A. Groff, on May 23, 1890, suggested that Beaver, being more centrally located, would probably be the most eligible and convenient point for the location of the land office of the district, and would best serve the interest of the most people at that time.<sup>69</sup> On June 3, 1890, President Harrison issued an executive order designating Buffalo as the location of the land office. Stone, on June 7, 1890, issued a notice of this order by the President.<sup>70</sup> Two days later Secretary Noble directed the Commissioner of the General Land Office to send a special agent to investigate and examine the sites of Buffalo, Beaver, Hardesty, and other settlements which might be in the community.<sup>71</sup> He was to make any suggestions he might have upon all places.

Special Agent, George D. Orner, was designated to examine the report of Stone upon the various points suggested for the location of the land office. Orner's report sustained the opinion that Beaver was the most suitable place for the office. By an executive order of September 11, 1890, Harrison revoked the order of June 3, and Beaver

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

was designated as the place of location for the land office.<sup>72</sup> Commissioner Groff issued a notice to this effect September 1, 1890.

Even after surveys had been completed, land offices established, and filing begun, settlement was comparatively slow for some time which proved discouraging to the hopes and expectations of many. It has already been shown that because of long hardships with little prospect for a brighter future and because of the opening of Old Oklahoma, many of the squatters in No Man's Land left their habitation in 1889. Later, the occurrence of other openings of more desirable land to settlement in different parts of Oklahoma, especially the Cherokee Strip, caused still others to leave. In 1892, the population of No Man's Land seemingly had reached its height, at least for a time. In this year there were 2,982 people living in the Public Land Strip.<sup>73</sup> Just how many of these were cattlemen it is not easy to determine. But with the departure of most of the squatters, the cattlemen were left comparatively free from all molestation for almost another decade.

We find in the governor's report of October 1, 1892, that he had authorized the establishment of quarantine lines to prevent the spread of Texas fever among the cattle of Oklahoma Territory.<sup>74</sup> He further stated that since they were practically surrounded by range cattle, he

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> 52 Cong., 2 sess., House Document, XIV, 469.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 473.

felt it his duty to make this precautinary move, since there were no better grazing lands in this country than those found in the western part of Oklahoma Territory, and that many Texas cattle were drifting to it.<sup>75</sup>

In a similar report of November 3, 1893, Governor Renfrow stated, that with the exception of one year, the seasons had been excellent for agricultural purposes all over the Territory. He wrote in 1895 that wheat made an average of 20 bushels per acre with many sections reporting 40 to 62 bushel yields; that grass in the Panhandle was exceptionally good that season; that the farmers had but little indebtness; and that they would be therefore in excellent financial condition by the close of the year.<sup>76</sup>

The people of Oklahoma were of the stable American type, who, for the most part were seeking a means to improve their own condition and they were willing to sacrifice some of the advantages of the present for a more substantial and equitable home in the future. Governor William H. Renfrow reported on June 30, 1896, that the people of Oklahoma Territory were largely American by birth and probably more distinctly so than any in other part of the United States.<sup>77</sup> This was particularly true of Beaver County according to

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 473.

<sup>76</sup> 53 Cong., 2 sess., House Documents, XV, 457.

<sup>77</sup> Report of the Governor of Oklahoma to the Department of Interior, 1895 (Pamphlet), p. 3.

the Bureau of Census, especially in regard to negroes.

The settlers of this strip were thrifty, industrious, and economical and were of the type to overcome the difficulties and discouragements connected with the settling and developing of a new country. Bank deposits made in 1896, showed a considerable decrease, with an increase of cash on hand. There was also a decrease in the amount of securities, as well as in loans and discounts, held by banks. This all pointed toward a more prosperous and contented community.<sup>79</sup>

In 1897, Oklahoma Territory was but seven years old, yet it was the most "talked about" and "read about" portion of the United States. Within these seven years it showed more progress than most commonwealths had made in three times that length of time.<sup>80</sup> At the fall election in 1896, 53,000 votes were cast, 11,000 more than in Florida and 22,000 more than in Delaware. Also, the Territory outranked a dozen different states in population.<sup>81</sup>

Beaver County at this time had a population of 4778 as against an average per county over the Oklahoma Territory of approximately three times that number, yet as to taxable property only four counties surpassed it.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Only eighteen negroes were living in this area in 1890. Department of Commerce Bureau of Census, "Negro Population, 1790-1915," Table II, p. 786.

<sup>79</sup> Report of the Governor, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>80</sup> Report of the Governor of Oklahoma to Department of Interior, 1897 (Pamphlet), p. 3.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

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Oklahoma Territory was becoming more prosperous each year, and many who visited the new commonwealth were agreeably surprised at its progress. After a visit to this Territory, the editor of the Iola Kansas Register stated, "One of the most surprising things to one who has been visiting Oklahoma . . . is the rapidity with which the country yields to civilization." Further, he stated that just now Oklahoma was harvesting one of the greatest wheat crops both in acreage and yield, that had been known in her history. The governor described the Strip as ". . . one wheat field, and one could drive all day without losing the pleasant hum of binders or the pleasing sight of acres of shocks of billowing grain."<sup>83</sup>

The people were intensely interested in developing their new homeland and but little time was needed to take care of the unfortunate side of society. William E. Curtis, a well known newspaper correspondent, stated in one of his articles at that time, that the people of Oklahoma had been too busy building school houses and churches to have any time to build courthouses and jails.<sup>84</sup> This typifies to a great extent the people who settled this Territory and explains their motive in doing so.

By the turn of the century much of the desirable land elsewhere in Oklahoma had been settled, so it was necessary for prospective

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<sup>83</sup> Report of the Governor of Oklahoma to the Department of Interior, 1899 (Pamphlet), p. 5.

<sup>84</sup> Report of the Governor of Oklahoma to the Department of Interior, 1900 (Pamphlet), p. 7.

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homesteaders to look with favor on Beaver County, as the Public Land Strip was then called.

The most densely populated section of this settlement was in the central portion of this strip. This is due in the most part to the extension of the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railway which was built diagonally across the central country of the Public Land Strip. Along this line the towns of Tyrone, Hooker, Optima, Guymon, Goodwell, and Texhoma immediately sprang up. Some of these slightly preceded the building of the railroad, but their growth was greatly enhanced by its coming. Farmers no longer were compelled to use the freight wagon to market their products. The coming of the railroad to this section of No Man's Land brought with it, opportunities for businessmen to open stores, shops, wagon yards, and elevators.

Due, possibly, to the coming of this railroad and to a series of good crops, a second homesteading rush was begun partly through the efforts of some advertisers. In 1900, "locaters," men who knew the country or were supposed to know it, promoted a campaign by advertising in eastern papers about the land of Beaver County being the land of opportunity.<sup>85</sup> Soon, farmers began flocking into several towns in Beaver County. Many were tired of renting and were longing for a home of their own of 160 acres of this fine prairie land which had been so elaborately advertised. In 1901, most of the filings of

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<sup>85</sup> The Daily Oklahoman, April 19, 1925. Oklahoma City. (Special Sunday Edition).

the eastern part of the county were made at Guymon under R. B. Quinn, while those of the extreme western portion were made at old Mineral City before John Skelly, Sr. These two old timers, Quinn and Skelly, were very anxious to keep land numbers straight on the filing papers. Some of the "locaters", however, were not so particular and often would show a prospective homesteader a nice level 160 acres of land and represent it as of a fictitious number.<sup>86</sup> The homesteaders from the east were also often disillusioned by the climatical condition, having been told that it seldom got very cold, and that therefore the stock was never sheltered. Some built cheap lumber houses from one-inch plank boards, which proved inadequate later. Water was scarce and often had to be hauled in barrels from a well or windmill which had formerly supplied water for some ranchman's cattle.<sup>87</sup>

Thus the pioneers of No Man's Land suffered many hardships which would have caused a weaker group of individuals to turn back. The true pioneers came to stay, to develop, and to build. Many pages have been written about the wild and rowdy life of the western pioneers. This is untrue, for the most part, even though it may be material for a "racy" novel.

Much has been written and many reels have been unwound at amusement centers depicting the lawlessness and the cold-blooded acts in

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.



the pioneer's life of No Man's Land. This type of advertisement caused a very biased picture of the true life of the Public Land Strip to be drawn. Elmer E. Brown, a journalist of local prominence, has well said, ". . . justice cannot be done these settlers until Daredevil Pete, Broncho Busting Dick and Six Gun Mex are dethroned as the chief citizens of that community."

Often a volume of history will be devoted to a year of war and only a few pages to a hundred years of peace. This same idea seems to have stimulated the minds of most writers of No Man's Land. They seem to see only the rough and unlawful while the true nature of events go entirely forgotten. The days of No Man's Land were profoundly peaceful.

## Chapter III

## A DREAM COMES TRUE

The people of No Man's Land have accomplished a great deal since the establishment of civil law within this territory.<sup>1</sup> The story of the achievements of these pioneers, whose energy, industry, true Americanism, and progress made in the short period of time have hardly been equable and never surpassed, reads almost like a fairy tale.<sup>2</sup> The results of their efforts and attainments can only be realized today by one who familiarizes himself with the deeds accomplished.<sup>3</sup>

For the most part the early homesteader was in earnest about securing a home for himself and his family. True to the traditional spirit of America, these sturdy pioneers of No Man's Land had hardly completed their dugout or "soddies" when they began to dream of educational institutions that would make the lot of their progeny far better than their own.

In the absence of school buildings and the financial means with which to erect them, the people heroically went to work and established schools by subscription.<sup>4</sup> Teachers, as well as school equipment,

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<sup>1</sup> "Report of the Governor of Oklahoma", Annual Report Department of Interior, Miscellaneous Report, 1901, Part II, p. 320.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> 53 Cong., 3 sess., "Report of the Governor of Oklahoma", 1894, House Document, XVI, p. 440.

were scarce. When a teacher could be secured she would be compelled to take a pig, calf, or some type of farm produce in pay for her services.<sup>5</sup>

This situation was alleviated when Congress passed the Organic Act in 1890, in which Section 26 provided for the appropriation of \$50,000 for the support of the public schools in Oklahoma Territory. This money was to be expended by the governor as temporary support for the schools of the Territory upon the establishment of a satisfactory system of education.<sup>6</sup>

The school question was preceded by the more pressing issues when the first legislature met for only a 120 day session in 1890.<sup>7</sup> It was, therefore, too late in the season for many of the schools to open that year, although some ran for a few weeks.<sup>8</sup>

The public school system for the Territory was placed under the general supervision of the Territorial Superintendent of Public Instruction, who, with the Territorial Board of Education, molded the policy and directed the educational interests of the schools.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>6</sup> 52 Cong., 1 sess., "Report of the Governor of Oklahoma", 1891, House Document, XVI, p. 452.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Report of the Governor of Oklahoma to the Department of Interior, 1899 (Pamphlet), p. 8.

Certain sections of land were designated as school lands, and the only financial support which the public schools received after the first year was the money derived from the leasing of these school lands.<sup>10</sup> This money was apportioned to the counties according to school population<sup>11</sup>, which put but little money in the school treasury of No Man's Land because of its low scholastic census.

The first legislature in Oklahoma, aside from creating a common school system, established a State University at Norman, a Normal School at Edmond, and an Agricultural and Mechanical College at Stillwater.<sup>12</sup> It was the function of these institutions to provide for the higher education of all Oklahoma Territory. The President's proclamation, opening the Cherokee Outlet, reserved section thirteen for the benefit and support of these three colleges.<sup>13</sup>

The first State Normal School for the northwestern part of Oklahoma Territory was located at Alva.<sup>14</sup> Governor C. M. Barnes stated in his report in 1897 that it was perhaps established more as

<sup>10</sup> House Document, op. cit., p. 443.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Report of the Governor of Oklahoma to the Department of Interior, 1897 (Pamphlet), p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> 53 Cong., 2 sess., "Report of the Governor of Oklahoma", 1893, House Document, XV, p. 457.

<sup>14</sup> Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, 1897, op. cit., p. 9.

as a desire of the legislature to recognize the political importance and claims of the west side of the Cherokee Strip than for any immediate need for educational purposes.<sup>15</sup> Regardless of the primary intent of the founders, this location brought an institution of higher learning much closer to the youth of No Man's Land which at this time had forty-four organized school districts.<sup>16</sup>

In an attempt to assist teachers to better qualify themselves, a law was enacted creating an annual normal institute to be held in each county. The general management in this institute was under the supervision of the Territorial Board of Education,<sup>17</sup> who prepared a manual or course of study to be used as a guide for the institute.<sup>18</sup> These schools ran from two to six weeks, and completion of the institute did not establish formal credits.<sup>19</sup> Aside from their pedagogical nature they were very beneficial from a social viewpoint, for it was here that the teachers met and exchanged ideas.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Report of the Governor of Oklahoma to the Department of Interior, 1898 (Pamphlet), p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> "Governor of Oklahoma Report", Annual Report Department of Interior, Miscellaneous Reports, op. cit., p. 341.

It has long been the boast of the people of Oklahoma Territory, wrote Governor C. M. Barnes, that their first bonded indebtedness was for the erection of a public school building. He also stated that the people of Oklahoma had managed without a penitentiary and jails; that the people were slow in building poorhouses, but that school houses were everywhere, nearly 2000 of them capping the hill tops or dotting the valleys of the Territory of Oklahoma.<sup>20</sup>

It was not until about 1900 that many school districts in the Panhandle, began taking advantage of a law passed by the third legislature which authorized two or more districts to unite, and to establish and maintain a high school.<sup>21</sup> As more high schools appeared, the demand for better qualified teachers increased. In 1902, approximately 2,500 students, potential teachers, attended these institutions for higher learning.<sup>22</sup> This was an increase of more than 2,000 since the erection of the first college building in Oklahoma Territory.

Teachers' salaries at that time were quite low in comparison to those of today, but living costs were also very low. In Stillwater in 1902, board and room could be secured for \$2.75 per week while the cost of text books would average from \$3.00 to \$4.00

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> Report of Governor of Oklahoma to Department of Interior, 1900, (Pamphlet), p. 10.

<sup>22</sup> "Governor of Oklahoma Report", Annual Report Department of Interior, Miscellaneous Reports, op. cit., pp. 415-424.

per term.<sup>23</sup>

The qualifications for teachers in the common schools of the Territory were similar to those of the states. Examinations for teaching certificates were held quarterly under the direction of a county examining board consisting of the county superintendent and two assistants who were appointed by the county commissioners.<sup>24</sup> Three classifications of county certificates were issued—first, second, and third grades. The first grade was good for three years, the second for two years, and the third for one year.<sup>25</sup> In 1903, teachers were paid on an average of \$45.00 per month for first grade certificates, \$37.00 for second grade, and \$32.00 for third grade with an average school term of about four and a half months.<sup>26</sup> The districts were small, in general being about three miles square and in many instances having a very low evaluation. This fact, coupled with a lack of appreciation of the teachers' financial problems on the part of many school boards, brought about the low salary.

Since the school district was under the direct supervision of a local school board of three members, elected by its patrons consecutively for a term of three years, they felt it their duty to

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 418.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 341.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> "Report of Governor of Oklahoma," 1903, Annual Report Department of Interior, Miscellaneous Reports, Part II, p. 461.

keep expenses at a very low minimum. The public school at this time was financially supported by a district tax, levied by the patrons in their annual school meeting which was held each year in July. This fund was supplemented by a county fund, levied by the board of county commissioners, and revenue accruing from the leasing of school land.<sup>27</sup>

L. W. Baxter, Territorial superintendent in 1904, wrote that as the Territory grew older, school conditions became more stable, improvements became more permanent, salaries were increased, and a better qualified body of teachers were employed.<sup>28</sup> He further stated that a course of study had been arranged whereby a pupil might begin his education in the most distant district school of the Territory and after completion would be qualified to enter any State institution. A graduate of the University of Oklahoma at this time, after having taught six months in the schools of Oklahoma and passing successfully certain examinations, might have his or her diploma endorsed as a certificate to teach.<sup>29</sup>

Along with the rapid development of the school system of Oklahoma Territory, many other improvements had, indeed, kept in step with this

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<sup>27</sup> "Report of Governor of Oklahoma", 1902, Annual Report Department of Interior, Miscellaneous Reports, Part II, p. 407.

<sup>28</sup> "Report of Governor of Oklahoma", 1904, Annual Report Department of Interior, Miscellaneous Reports, Part II, p. 572.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 574.



march of progress. Better means of communication and transportation had been developed over the entire Territory.<sup>30</sup> Thousands of dollars of outside capital had been invested, which not only stimulated local interest but made possible many new and large enterprises.

No Man's Land had kept in time with this progressive territorial rhythm and the evaluation of the country had grown from around five thousand dollars in 1892 to nearly two million in 1904. One of the outstanding examples of improvement and growth in No Man's Land during this short period was the amount of increase in the school apportionment fund, primarily coming from the leasing of schools lands. In the beginning, No Man's Land received only \$701.73 from this fund, while ten years later, according to the governor's report, the amount was five times that figure.<sup>31</sup>

Development of the live stock interests throughout Oklahoma Territory was keeping pace with agriculture. Stockmen in general, however, were suffering from low prices and high freight rates. These conditions not only affected the herdsman but the farmers as well.<sup>32</sup> Although the Oklahoma Live Stock Association had been functioning for several years, it had spent the greater part of its efforts toward

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<sup>30</sup> 59 Cong., 1 sess., "Report of the Governor of Oklahoma," 1905, House Document, XXI, p. 338.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 323.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 324.

improving the type of stock and but little with the marketing side of the stockmen's problems. The branding iron had largely given way to the pedigree book and most of the larger ranches had disappeared.<sup>33</sup> There was need for a home market and soon the association turned its attention to this problem with a great deal of success.<sup>34</sup>

The political phase of Oklahoma's progress was not overlooked and the people in general were anxious to become full fledged members of the union of states. This agitation had been present ever since the establishment of the Oklahoma Territory.<sup>35</sup> The principal issue concerning this subject was that of single or double statehood. Those who favored single statehood wished Oklahoma Territory and the land lying adjacent to the east known as Indian Territory to become a single state, while those of the opposing view were asking for each Territory to be joined to the Union as two separate states.

The people of Oklahoma Territory had come from every part of the United States. They represented the best energies and the highest possibilities of citizenship peculiar to any and all of the states of the American Republic.<sup>36</sup> For years it had been the opinion of the

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 325.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Stewart, op. cit., p. 327.

<sup>36</sup> House Document, op. cit., p. 309.

statehood promoters that Oklahoma and Indian Territories would be included in the area of one state. They knew that the proposed state would be very rich in natural resources and would have many possibilities along all lines of development.

Those opposing single statehood did so primarily on account of the Indian question of the eastern section of the proposed single state. They complained that those living in Indian Territory were unable to maintain a stable form of government, while others pointed out that the people of Indian Territory had already demonstrated, even under difficulties, a great capacity for progress.<sup>37</sup> Many of the leaders of the Indian tribes realized that the inevitable was at hand and the sooner their people learned that "old things have passed away", the better it would be for all concerned.<sup>38</sup>

When Congress met in 1906, the question of statehood for Oklahoma and Indian Territories was at once given consideration.<sup>39</sup> President T. R. Roosevelt favored single statehood. A bill was introduced in the House on January 22, 1906 known as the Omnibus Statehood Bill, which, after being shifted back and forth for several months between the two branches of Congress, was finally accepted by the Senate, June 13, and by the House, June 14. Thus,

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 310.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Stewart, op. cit., p. 383.

the Omnibus Statehood Bill became an Enabling Act for Oklahoma and Indian Territories.<sup>40</sup> This bill was signed by President Theodore Roosevelt on June 16, thereby adding another star to the flag of the United States.<sup>41</sup>

This act of Congress was, indeed, the answer to the prayers and labors of the pioneers of No Man's Land. It is also a testimonial to their perserverance and cooperation with their neighbors. This act was as oil poured upon the troubled waters of a stormy sea which had been disturbed for a period of many years. Thus, No Man's Land (Old Beaver County) following the date, June 16, 1907, was subdivided into what is now Cimarron, Texas, and Beaver Counties, each with its respective county seat.

Never were the settlers of any territory more deserving of success, born through long suffering, than were the pioneers of No Man's Land. Many of the more determined boosters of statehood showed their appreciation and approval by making the long tiresome journey of some four hundred miles to Guthrie to witness the final ceremonies of a successful campaign. This closing scene was in the form of a pageant, where, before four thousand spectators, Miss Indian Territory was wedded to Mr. Oklahoma Territory. The people of No Man's Land saw in this pageant a successful climax of their efforts for equal legislative opportunities with those of their neighbors.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 384.

<sup>41</sup> 59 Cong., 2 sess., "Report of the Governor of Oklahoma," 1907, House Document, XVI, p. 304.

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TYPIST: Robertellen Garrett