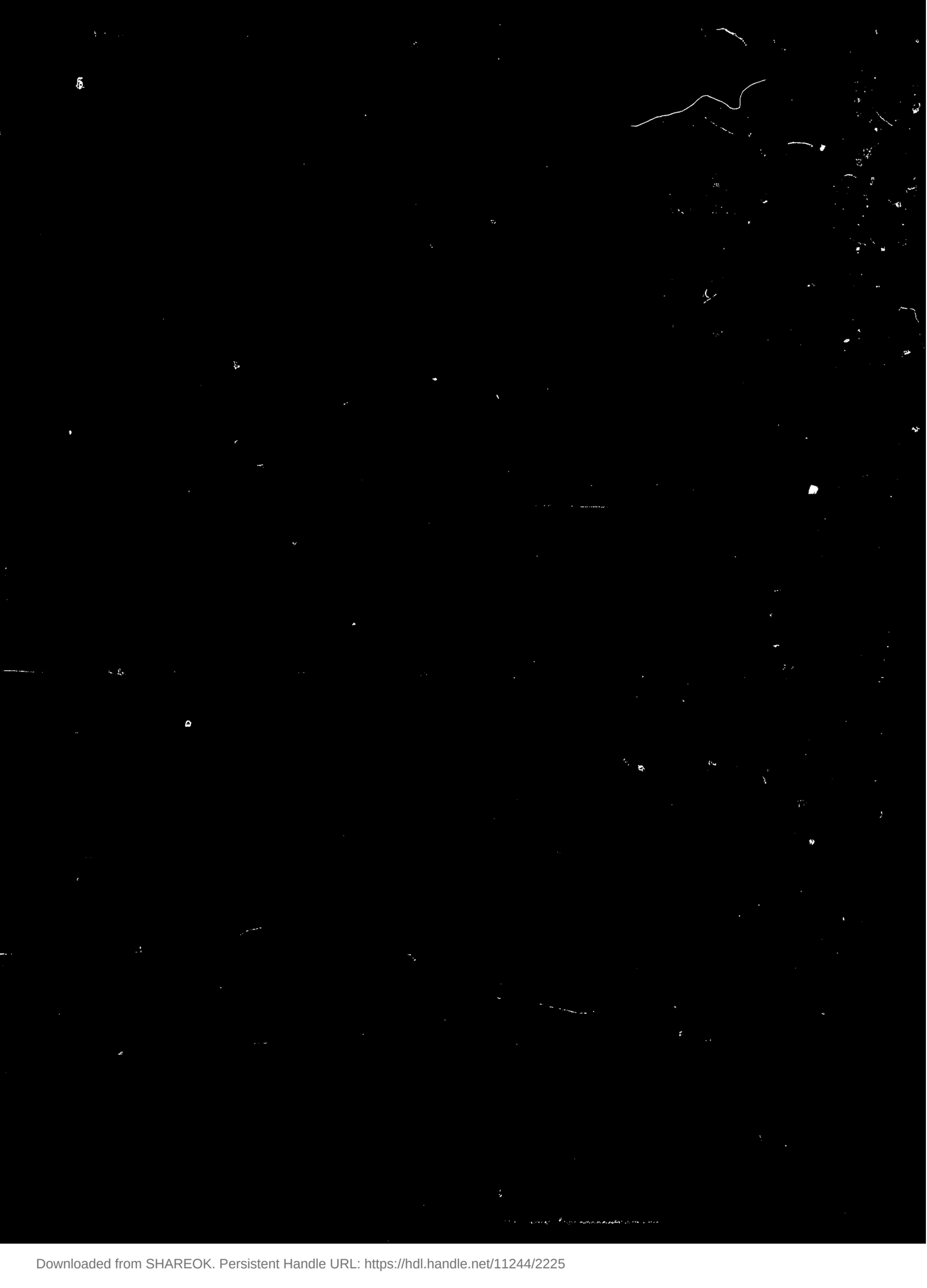

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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

SOME ASPECTS OF LIFE IN THE "LAND OF THE FAIR GOD": OKLAHOMA TERRITORY, 1889-1907

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

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degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

BOBBY HAROLD JOHNSON

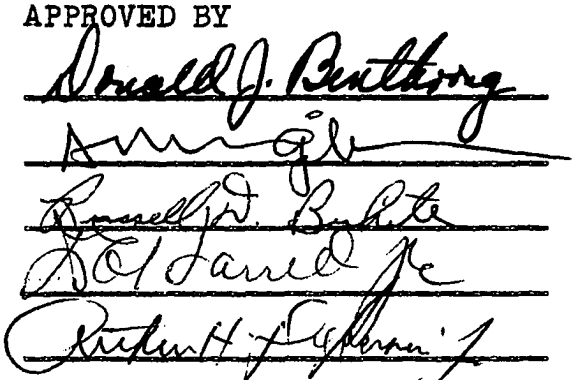
Norman, Oklahoma

1967

SOME ASPECTS OF LIFE IN THE "LAND OF THE FAIR GOD":

OKLAHOMA TERRITORY, 1889-1907

APPROVED BY



DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

If Jehovah delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it unto us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.

. . . Numbers 14:8

I am bound for the promised land,
I am bound for the promised land;
O who will come and go with me?
I am bound for the promised land.

. . . Samuel Stennett,
old gospel song

Our lot is cast in a goodly land and there is no land fairer than the Land of the Fair God.

. . . Milton W. Reynolds,
early Oklahoma pioneer

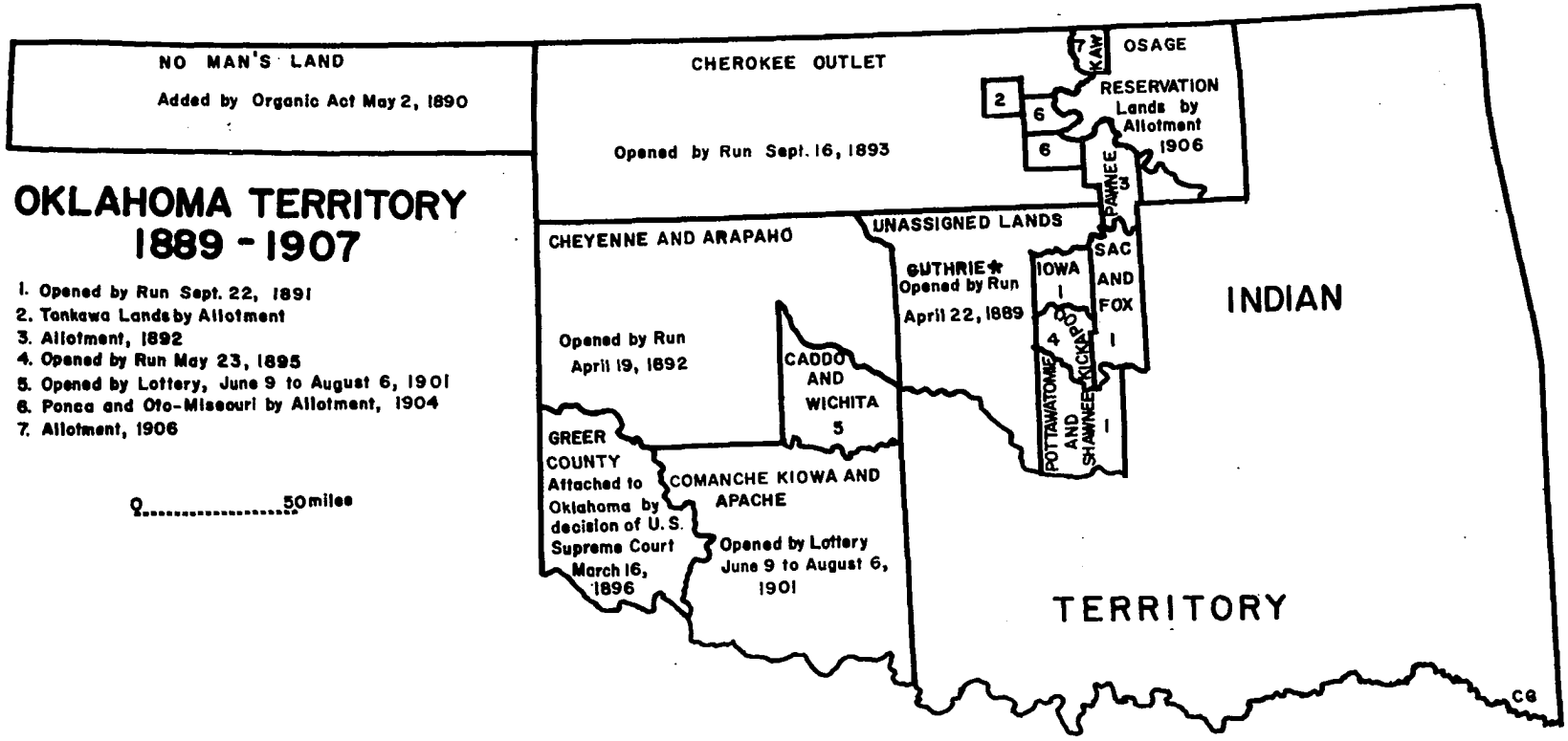
PREFACE

In December, 1892, the editor of the Oklahoma School Herald urged fellow Oklahomans to keep accurate records for the benefit of posterity. "There is a time coming, if the facts can be preserved," he noted, "when the pen of genius and eloquence will take hold of the various incidents connected with the settlement of what will then be the magnificent state of Oklahoma and weave them into a story that will verify the proverb that truth is more wonderful than fiction." While making no claim to genius or eloquence, I have attempted to fulfill the editor's dream by treating the Anglo-American settlement of Oklahoma Territory from 1889 to statehood in 1907, with emphasis upon social and cultural developments. It has been my purpose not only to describe everyday life but to show the role of churches, schools, and newspapers, as well as the rise of the medical and legal professions. My treatment of these salient aspects does not profess to tell the complete story of life in Oklahoma. Rather, I have tried to show a general cross section. In doing so, I have drawn on a wide variety of materials, including government reports, manuscripts, newspapers, early histories, and printed reminiscences, in addition to a considerable body of secondary works.

I am particularly endebted to Mrs. Alice Timmons and Mr. Jack Haley of the Phillips Collection and the Division of Manuscripts at the University of Oklahoma Library and to the staff at the Oklahoma Historical Society for assistance in locating material. Moreover, I deeply appreciate the guidance of Dr. W. Eugene Hollon, who devoted many hours to reading and editing this dissertation and who also offered encouragement throughout my studies at the University of Oklahoma. Further appreciation goes to Dr. Donald J. Berthrong, Dr. A. M. Gibson, Dr. Arthur H. DeRosier, Jr., and Dr. David F. Harrell of the History Department in the University of Oklahoma. In addition, my wife, Myrna, has offered constant encouragement and assistance in typing this dissertation, and to her I am grateful. Finally, I would like to pay belated respects to the late Dr. Donnell M. Owings, a true scholar and gentleman whose superb lectures and friendship will forever remain an inspiration.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	THE PROMISED LAND	1
II.	PILGRIMS ON THE PRAIRIE	29
III.	SOD HOUSE SCHOOLS	58
IV.	OLD TIME RELIGION	92
V.	FRONTIER CHURCHES	114
VI.	THE DEVIL'S PRINTERS	139
VII.	SINGING OKLAHOMA'S PRAISES	174
VIII.	DOCTORS AND LAWYERS	199
IX.	FROM DUGOUT TO OPERA HOUSE	232
EPILOGUE		260
BIBLIOGRAPHY		269



OKLAHOMA TERRITORY 1889 - 1907

1. Opened by Run Sept. 22, 1891
2. Tonkawa Lands by Allotment
3. Allotment, 1892
4. Opened by Run May 23, 1895
5. Opened by Lottery, June 9 to August 6, 1901
6. Ponca and Oto-Missouri by Allotment, 1904
7. Allotment, 1906

0 ..... 50 miles

SOME ASPECTS OF LIFE IN THE "LAND OF THE FAIR GOD": OKLAHOMA TERRITORY, 1889-1907

CHAPTER I

THE PROMISED LAND

The closing years of the nineteenth century witnessed the demise of one of the most significant forces in modern history--the American frontier as it applied to the continental United States. For three centuries in America there had been a vast area of free land on the edge of settlement. Years of expansion had gradually diminished this national domain until settlement was extended from coast to coast, and only pockets of less desirable or unexplored land remained unsettled.

Meanwhile, land-hungry whites focused their attention upon the Indian Territory between the states of Kansas and Texas. This general area had been set aside for the Five Civilized Tribes in the early decades of the nineteenth century, and a flourishing civilization sprang up in the eastern part of the present state of Oklahoma. Following the Civil War, the Civilized Tribes were forced to cede their lands in the western part of the territory so that

other tribes might be settled there. But the inexorable advance of railroads and cattlemen, coupled with the growing shortage of free land, stimulated so much interest in the Indian Territory that white settlement became inevitable. The rise of a vigorous "Boomer" movement merely hastened the process.[1]

The term "Oklahoma" was first applied to the Indian Territory in 1866 by the Choctaw statesman, Allen Wright. Although it was derived from Choctaw words meaning "red people,"[2] imaginative promoters later interpreted the name to mean both "fair god" and "beautiful land."[3] In 1889, Milton W. Reynolds, a romantic western newspaperman,

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[1]It is not the purpose of this study to dwell upon the intricate events surrounding the transfer of this area to the United States government and ultimately into the hands of the American homesteader. This task has been ably performed by Roy Gittinger in The Formation of the State of Oklahoma, 1803-1906 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1939) and by Grant Foreman in A History of Oklahoma (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1942). Rather, it is sufficient to note here that as a result of these developments millions of acres became available for settlement under the Homestead laws, beginning in 1889 with the opening of the Oklahoma District in the center of the present state. Also, see Solon J. Buck, "The Settlement of Oklahoma," Transactions, Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters, XV, Part 2, 1907, p. 326.

[2]Edwin C. McReynolds, Oklahoma: A History of the Sooner State (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), p. 234.

[3]O. C. Seely, Oklahoma Illustrated: A Book of Practical Information (Guthrie: The Leader Printing Co., 1894), p. 7.

referred to the area as "The Land of the Fair God."[4] A year later the phrase appeared as the sub-title to Marion Tuttle Rock's Illustrated History of Oklahoma. Indeed, it soon abounded in contemporary literature, ranging from newspapers and magazines to official government reports, and would later appear in the reminiscences of many early Oklahomans.

The comparison of Oklahoma to the biblical land of "milk and honey" drew a quick response from the agrarian-minded people who thronged to the new country in anticipation of a latter-day "shower of manna." Promoters further capitalized upon such allusions to attract still more immigrants, many of whom were convinced that Oklahoma was truly a promised land. Irving Geffs, the newspaperman who wrote an early history of Oklahoma City under the pen name of "Bunky," observed that Canaan lay before the waiting crowds on April 22, 1889.[5] Nor did this fervor subside once the country was opened. Frank Snapp, who came to the Kingfisher area in January, 1890, recalled that every

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[4]Carolyn Thomas Foreman, Oklahoma Imprints (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1936), p. 301. Reynolds reportedly used this phrase as he viewed the prairie on the morning after the first opening in 1889. Report of the Governor of Oklahoma Territory, 1904 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), p. 8.

[5]"Bunky" [Irving Geffs], The First Eight Months of Oklahoma City (Oklahoma City: McMaster Printing Company, 1890), p. 7.

one talked about "the wonderful land of promise."[6] Subsequent openings engendered similar feelings among later pilgrims, although many were misled by over-zealous propagandists. The Gage family of Wisconsin, for instance, chose to remain in Oklahoma even though they failed to get a claim in the widely publicized Kiowa-Comanche lottery of 1901. "To those grown weary battling against twenty below zero weather," remarked Ruth Gage, "this 'Promised Land' of Oklahoma beckoned us on to further adventure."[7] In view of such spirit, it is not surprising that the early Oklahoma historian, Luther B. Hill, considered his homeland "the last fruit of American expansion."[8]

Oklahoma Territory appeared on the map as a large geographic region between the parallels of 34 and 37 degrees north latitude and 96 and 103 degrees west longitude. Located in the physical region known as the Interior Plains, the Territory extended into the Central Lowlands on the east and the Great Plains on the west.[9]

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[6]"Experiences in Oklahoma and Early School System," Echoes of Eighty-Nine (Kingfisher: Kingfisher Times and Free Press, 1939), p. 132.

[7]Lucy Gage, "A Romance of Pioneering," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXIX (Autumn, 1951), p. 292.

[8]Luther B. Hill, A History of the State of Oklahoma, Vol. I (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1910), p. 7.

[9]John W. Morris and Edwin C. McReynolds, Historical Atlas of Oklahoma (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), Map No. 3.

The topography was marked by a gradual rise in altitude from 750 feet in the east to 4,000 feet in the west. When fully opened the area encompassed about 39,000 square miles, or 25,000,000 acres, and corresponded roughly in size to the state of Ohio.[10] While some of the land was too arid for farming, most of it was attractive for agricultural purposes.[11] Hence, Oklahoma represented a potential haven for pioneers otherwise denied a part of the national domain, but who wished to get a new start.

The involved process that finally resulted in the opening of the "beautiful land" began with the pen of Elias C. Boudinot, a Cherokee citizen who served in Washington as clerk of the House Committee on Private Land Claims. Familiar with the Indian Territory, Boudinot wrote an article for the Chicago Times of February 17, 1879, in which he asserted that some 13,000,000 acres were available for settlement. He later prepared a map and other explanatory material to substantiate his claim, thereby

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[10]Early Oklahomans delighted in the fact that the Territory was larger than many older states. Buck, Transactions, pp. 325-26; Oklahoma and Indian Territory Along the Frisco (St. Louis: Woodward and Tiernan Printing Co., 1905), p. 11.

[11]Ibid., Map No. 4. Orville Smith, an early engineer who helped with the survey along the Salt Fork of the Red River in 1875, remarked in a letter to his sister that the country was "just fit to hold the world together." Smith to Mrs. A. Blesoft, February 16, 1875, Hatfield Collection, Box H-38, Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Library, Norman.

attracting still more attention.[12] Meanwhile, a number of adventurers were drawn to the Oklahoma border by Boudinot's allegations. Notable among them was C. C. Carpenter, a participant in the Black Hills invasion. Despite a presidential proclamation barring whites from the Indian country, several bands of intruders entered the territory and proceeded to stake out claims, but a military patrol from Fort Reno sent the whites back to Kansas.[13] These events in the spring of 1879 nevertheless centered national attention on the Indian Territory and suggested the need for a new policy. Indeed, the ensuing activities virtually forced a revision in the government's position.

The movement to open Oklahoma became closely associated with Captain David L. Payne after 1880. This former army officer and adventurer led a band of settlers into the heart of the Oklahoma District in May, 1880, and thereafter remained the leading Oklahoma Boomer until his death four years later.[14] Summarily arrested and discharged

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[12]Gittinger, Formation of Oklahoma, pp. 118-19. A fresh treatment of the familiar story of the opening of Oklahoma is available in A. M. Gibson's Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries (Norman: Harlow Publishing Corporation, 1965).

[13]Gittinger, Formation of Oklahoma, pp. 122-23.

[14]Ibid., p. 129. Payne's role is portrayed in Carl Coke Rister, Land Hunger: David L. Payne and the Oklahoma Boomers (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1942).

across the Kansas border, Payne led another raid in July, 1880. This time he was promptly arrested and turned over to the United States district court at Fort Smith. His case ultimately resulted in the court's decision that Oklahoma was still part of the Indian Territory.[15] Despite a penalty of $1,000, Payne continued his scheme to open the area by forming an Oklahoma Colony and selling memberships for $2 each. The fee allegedly guaranteed the buyer an uncontested claim if he carried out the prescribed government regulations under the Homestead Act of 1862. Payne reportedly raised several thousand dollars through this venture.[16]

The ultimate importance of the Boomer movement lay in the fact that it successfully publicized the area and rallied public support for the opening of Oklahoma, particularly in the Middle West. Following Payne's death in 1884, W. L. Couch assumed leadership of the campaign. Meanwhile, Congress took notice of the embroilment and on March 3, 1885, authorized negotiations for the purchase of unoccupied lands from the various Indian tribes.[17] Legislative and administrative haggling characterized the next

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[15] Gittinger, Formation of Oklahoma, p. 130.

[16] Colonel Edward Hatch, commander of the Oklahoma Military District, charged that Payne and his associates did not want Oklahoma opened because their activities were proving so profitable. Gittinger, Formation of Oklahoma, p. 134.

[17] Ibid., p. 137.

four years, much to the chagrin of the impatient Boomers, but by early March, 1889, the way was clear for the opening of the Oklahoma District. In 1887, the passage of Dawes Act which provided for the allotment of lands in severalty, assured the opening of surplus Indian lands.

These developments set the scene for a series of dramatic land openings that added another eventful chapter to Oklahoma's already colorful history. Historians generally consider the land rush the most striking feature of Oklahoma settlement. This was particularly true of the first rush in 1889. In early 1889, transactions with the Seminoles finally cleared some 1,887,800 acres for settlement in what became known as the Oklahoma District in the center of the present state. A presidential proclamation issued on March 23, 1889, provided for the opening of the area at noon on the following April 22.[18] Weeks before the prescribed date homeseekers from every section of the country and all levels of society made their way toward Oklahoma. According to one observer the majority could be grouped into two categories: those who had failed elsewhere--perhaps in Kansas or Texas--and young persons who were attempting to establish themselves for the first time.[19] The largest number of pioneers gathered on the

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[18] Ibid., pp. 184-85.

[19] Helen C. Candee, "Social Conditions in Our Newest Territory," The Forum, Vol. XXV (June, 1898), p. 428.

northern border near Caldwell or Arkansas City, Kansas. Milton W. Reynolds, an early witness to the scene, noted that the camp-fires of anxious emigrants were visible all along the southern Kansas line.[20] The settlers were permitted to cross the Cherokee Outlet to the Oklahoma border on April 18, and by the opening date some 20,000 persons were situated along the northern boundary of the Oklahoma District.[21] Among them was Lew F. Carroll, who kept a diary of the last few days before the run. On April 20, Carroll noted that about a hundred wagons were camped nearby. He was particularly impressed by a "genuine stag dance" meant to relieve the boredom of waiting for the opening. On the morning of April 22, Carroll remarked that he drove up the trail "to take part in Harrison's horse race," as the Boomers called it.[22] Another immigrant, James K. Hastings, further recalled the exciting event. "We awoke to a most gorgeous morning on the high prairie," he later wrote, "after sleeping like logs, only two weeks after the snow and ice of my old Ohio home."[23] Oklahoma represented a worthy prize for the

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[20]Marion Tuttle Rock, Illustrated History of Oklahoma (Topeka, Kansas: O. B. Hamilton & Son, 1890), p. 11.

[21]Buck, Transactions, p. 345.

[22]Lew F. Carroll, "An Eighty-Niner Who Pioneered the Cherokee Strip," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXIV (Spring, 1946), p. 93.

[23]James K. Hastings, "The Opening of Oklahoma," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXVII (Spring, 1949), p. 73.

for the hopeful boomers on the north.

Equally eager pioneers camped on the other borders. The main point of entry on the south was at Purcell, a little Chickasaw Nation town on the South Canadian River. Marion Tuttle Rock, an early historian, noted that the Pottawatomie country on the east--itself the object of a later rush--afforded another place of embarkation, as did the western line near Fort Reno. Since there were fewer patrols, these boundaries offered more opportunity for illegal entry before the appropriate time. Those who entered early--termed "sooners" by the law-abiding citizens--hid in the woods or in ravines and picked out their claims well in advance.[24]

Although the sooners doubtless enjoyed an unfair advantage, they nevertheless missed the excitement of one of the most memorable events in the history of the American West--the great rush for land. The thrill of inching up to the line as the clock moved toward noon must have been contagious. The rushers formed a motley crowd--some on horseback, others in wagons and carriages, and even a few afoot. Perhaps the easiest way of entering the Territory was aboard the Santa Fe trains that ran from both the northern and southern borders at a speed calculated to

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[24]Rock, Illustrated History, pp. 22-26. Some entered the area early on the advice of lawyers. Mrs. Rock maintains that the fault did not lie in the manner of opening Oklahoma but rather in the shameful way in which the law was violated. Ibid., p. 23.

keep the passengers from gaining an advantage over the runners. Finding a vacant spot on the train proved difficult, though, as F. A. Bonner discovered when he unsuccessfully tried to board the first train from the north. Bonner eventually managed to get a "hand holt" on the second train, despite a fifty-pound pack of food on his back, and later found an unclaimed lot in Guthrie. Many passengers chose to disembark and seek land along the route.[25] According to Frank K. Best, a telegrapher for the Santa Fe Railroad, the first train from the south left Purcell at about 9:00 A. M.--far in advance of the official time--and arrived in Guthrie at 12:30 P. M. The passengers held tickets for Arkansas City, but since nothing prevented them from unloading early, most got off at Norman, Oklahoma City, or Guthrie.[26]

Meanwhile, the "Boomers" awaited the big moment with increasing restlessness. At last the rush began! Those on swift horses lurched ahead, followed by the light carriages and more cumbersome wagons. Many had little knowledge of the topography and merely rushed with the crowd. Others, through careful study of maps or perhaps because of a prior visit, knew exactly where they wanted to settle and

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[25]F. A. Bonner Reminiscence, Wenner Collection, Box 1, Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Library, Norman.

[26]Fred L. Wenner, "Frank J. Best, Pioneer Railroader," Wenner Collection, Box 1.

consequently found their claims quite easily.[27] Whatever their situation, the runners were generally aware of why they were racing madly across the prairie. Land and opportunity beckoned the Oklahoma pioneers onward.

An intensely hectic drama was enacted at Guthrie, where thousands of rushers sought valuable property in the future capital. By mid-afternoon a veritable tent city was in existence. Marion Tuttle Rock vividly described the scene:

> Trains followed trains in such rapid succession that, before 3 o'clock on that afternoon, the beautiful plateau to the west of the Cottonwood [creek], as also the undulating prairie to the east, looked like a carpet of green in the distance, now presented all the colors of the rainbow. Tents of all colors, blankets of every shade, flags and streamers of every hue, coats, and in fact anything and everything that could be hoisted to the breeze, were brought into requisition. Some served as a shelter for their owners, yet the larger number were devices intended as a notice that the lots so marked were taken.[28]

Fred Wenner, an early newspaperman who entered Oklahoma on the first train, estimated that at least 20,000 persons camped on the hills of Guthrie that first night, although others generally put the figure somewhat less.[29] Among

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[27]Rock, Illustrated History, p. 21.

[28]Ibid., p. 27.

[29]Wenner Reminiscence, Wenner Collection, Box 1. Brigadier General Wesley Merritt, who commanded the troops at the first opening, placed the number at 3,000. He conservatively estimated that at the most only 12,000 persons entered Oklahoma, but the traditional figure is 50,000. Gittinger, Formation of Oklahoma, pp. 188-89.

the many tales concerning the opening of Guthrie is the story of a man who lost his mule and spent much of the first night wandering about the tent city calling him. A friend who joined in the search finally found the animal, and informed the owner, "Ho, Joe, here's yer mule," thus giving rise to a slogan heard at subsequent openings.[30]

Guthrie understandably experienced some difficulties during the first few days. Particularly vexing was the shortage of food as well as the lack of common conveniences. Although meals cost as much as five dollars, one tent restaurant served an overflowing crowd. Since water was scarce, the Santa Fe Railroad was forced to guard its water tank. A bold gambler from Chicago reportedly took charge of the only water pump in town on April 23 and sold the precious commodity at a nickel a drink until troops curtailed his business.[31] William H. Coyle relied on Cottonwood Creek for his water, but to his dismay he found several dogs wallowing in the stream. It seemed that everyone who came to Oklahoma brought a dog, Coyle remarked.[32] Long lines in front of the few pay toilets were proof of the opportunities open to imaginative

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[30]Rock, Illustrated History, pp. 30-31. Other writers trace this story to the Civil War.

[31]Buck, Transactions, pp. 348-50.

[32]William H. Coyle Reminiscence, Wenner Collection, Box 1.

entrepreneurs.[33]

In view of the problems that arose immediately after the opening, law-abiding citizens understandably sought to establish some order through provisional city governments. Disputed claims, for instance, were often submitted to extra-legal commissions whose decisions later became law. Since formal government was not established until May, 1890, these rules were dependent on the willingness of the people to accept them. Moreover, an unrealistic provision in the federal law limited townsites to 320 acres--an area much too small for a sizeable city. Consequently, the larger towns were often made up of two or more contiguous sites, as in the case of Guthrie, which included five different plots.[34] That such restrictions did not impede growth is indicated by Cosmopolitan magazine's report of four thousand permanent houses under construction in Guthrie within a hundred days after the opening. Other towns, including El Reno, Norman, and Kingfisher, enjoyed a similar but less dramatic growth.[35]

Once inside the promised land, the settler faced the problem of staking his claim to an unoccupied 160-acre plot or 25x140-foot city lot. The Homestead Law allowed any

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[33]W. Eugene Hollon, "Rushing for Land: Oklahoma 1889," The American West, Vol. III (Fall, 1966), p. 70.

[34]Gittinger, Formation of Oklahoma, pp. 189 ff.

[35]Buck, Transactions, p. 346.

person twenty-one years of age or the head of a family to enter a claim, provided he was a citizen or in the process of becoming one and had not previously exhausted his homestead rights. Widows could also acquire lands.[36] The Territory had already been surveyed into mile-square sections after the pattern established by the Land Ordinance of 1785. Corners were marked by stones or blazed trees.[37] A person usually asserted his claim by planting a stake with his name or initials on it, after which he located the corners to gain the surveyor's identification. The next step took him to the United States land office at either Guthrie or Kingfisher where he officially "entered" the land by making the necessary affidavits and paying a small fee.[38] Although the law allowed three months to complete this process, many chose to enter their lands immediately and thus encountered long lines. Such a minor inconvenience doubtless was the desirable alternative to a contested claim. The law further required the settler to establish a residence within six months from the date of entry and to begin visible improvements. Technically, a leave of absence was required for a person to absent himself from his land, but many violated this by returning to their families soon

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[36] U. S. Statutes at Large, Vol. XII, p. 392 ff. Seely, Oklahoma Illustrated, p. 41.

[37] Buck, Transactions, p. 346.

[38] Ibid.; McReynolds, Oklahoma, p. 289; Burlison interview, Hatfield Collection, Box H-10.

after staking claims. Finally, after living on the plot and cultivating it for five years, the homesteader could "prove up" and receive title to the land.[39] This scene was repeated countless times as numerous settlers acquired a share of the public domain.

Any mention of the opening of Oklahoma normally evokes impressions of the 1889 run, but a substantial portion of the Territory actually was added in subsequent land openings. In fact, the rush into the Cherokee Outlet and the Kiowa-Comanche lottery exceeded the 1889 event in magnitude. Other openings drew less attention but steadily increased the size of Oklahoma Territory. One feature that characterized all of these additions was the requirement that later settlers, unlike the pioneers of 1889, pay for their land. Following the original opening, Congress insisted that all land formerly belonging to the Indians be purchased at a minimum price of $1.25 an acre.[40] Efforts to amend this stipulation were begun quite early as local groups organized to apply political pressure. The Republican party supported a proposed Free Homes movement in 1894 and largely through the efforts of territorial Delegate Dennis Flynn succeeded in getting a bill through Congress in 1900. This action benefited settlers on the

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[39]Seely, Oklahoma Illustrated, pp. 42-3. This action could be delayed for seven years.

[40]Buck, Transactions, p. 349.

former Iowa, Sac and Fox, Pottawatomie, Shawnee, and Cheyenne and Arapaho reservations by providing that henceforth all unoccupied land in those areas could be entered free. At the same time it absolved unpaid balances on land already entered. This meant an estimated savings of $15,000,000 to Oklahoma's settlers.[41]

The first extension of Oklahoma came when the Public Land Strip, or panhandle area, was affixed to the Territory in May, 1890. This alone added some 3,681,000 acres as well as several hundred citizens who had settled there in the 1880's. Much of the area remained unsettled for years, however, because of its isolation and lack of rainfall.

Territorial boundaries were further enlarged on September 22, 1891, by a run into the former reservations of the Iowa, Sac and Fox, Pottawatomie, and Shawnee Indians east of the Oklahoma District. Some 1,120,000 acres, comprising roughly 7,000 claims, were invaded by an estimated 10,000 persons.[42] Two counties, first designated A and B but later Pottawatomie and Lincoln, were formed from the area.

An even larger region was made available when the government opened the Cheyenne-Arapaho reservation by run

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[41]Gittinger, Formation of Oklahoma, p. 210; Foreman, History of Oklahoma, p. 272; Buck, Transactions, pp. 364-65.

[42]Morris and McReynolds, Historical Atlas, p. 46; Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, 1891 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1891), p. 8. Another 200,000 acres gained from the Kickapoos would not be opened until May 23, 1895.

on April 19, 1892. Most of the 3,000,000 acres was far removed from railroads and therefore less desirable, and more than half of the area remained unsettled six months later.[43] Six counties were organized, tentatively identified by the letters "C" to "H" but a change in boundaries later reduced the number to five named Dewey, Day, Roger Mills, Custer, and Washita.

The next spectacular opening took place on September 16, 1893, when the Cherokee Outlet was settled. This vast expanse of more than 6,000,000 acres stretched westward from the ninty-sixth to the one hundredth meridian and extended sixty miles south from the Kansas line. The opening also took in the Pawnee and Tonkawa reservations.[44] Guidebooks prepared by enterprising printers proclaimed the virtues of the Outlet well ahead of the opening and provided interested persons with maps of the area and instructions explaining the surveyor's markings.[45]

In an effort to forestall sooners, the government required potential settlers to register at one of nine booths set up along the northern and southern boundaries

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[43]Gittinger, Formation of Oklahoma, p. 198.

[44]The Outlet was often erroneously called the "Cherokee Strip," a term more correctly applied to a small area of land in the state of Kansas.

[45]Angie Debo, Prairie City: The Story of an American Community (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1944), p. 42.

five days before the opening.[46] The scheme proved vulnerable, however, because registrants still entered the Outlet ahead of time. Whatever its shortcomings, the system did provide a reasonably accurate count, and it is likely that at least 100,000 persons took part in the run, thereby making it by far the largest in the history of the Territory.[47]

On September 8, the Hennessey Clipper noted that "large numbers" of people were gathering in Hennessey to await the opening. They reportedly came from such diverse states as New Mexico, Colorado, Nebraska, Missouri, Arkansas, and Texas.[48] Others waited on the Kansas line as long as a month before the event, living off of produce bought from local farmers.[49]

On the day of the opening, the high tension of the crowd matched the thermometer, which recorded 100 degrees. A correspondent for the Guthrie State Capital observed the settlers at Orlando as they prepared for the race. "The saloons," he reported, "were doing a rattling good

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[46]Gittinger, Formation of Oklahoma, pp. 201-202. Charles Hazelrigg, a Christian Church preacher who lived near Marshall, noted that he registered at a booth north of Hennessey. See Angie Debo (ed.), "The Diary of Charles Hazelrigg," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXV (Autumn, 1947), p. 269.

[47]Buck, Transactions, pp. 358-59.

[48]Hennessey Clipper, September 8, 1893.

[49]Seth K. Humphrey, "Rushing the Cherokee Strip," The Atlantic Monthly (May, 1931), p. 566.

business." Toward eleven o'clock everyone began to move toward the line--"pushing and crowding and cursing." Anxious faces bespoke inner turmoil. "Men on horseback chewed viciously and squirted it [tobacco juice] out from under their shaggy mustaches," he wrote, "as if they didn't care whose eyes they filled or whose garments they spattered."[50] On the northern border, the rushers lined up in four to seven tiers--a man to every foot of ground. Seth K. Humphrey, a spectator, viewed the crowd a few feet in front of the line, which was ragged in back but perfectly straight in front. The sight left a vivid impression of "an impending race with six thousand starters in sight."[51]

Several interesting sidelights also accompanied the "Strip" opening. One concerned Humphrey's unorthodox means of travel. Along with his brother, he ventured into the Outlet by bicycle. The pair was forced to carry the vehicles at times to avoid ruining the tires on the rough stubble left by prairie fires. Despite such precautions, they were able to cover only twenty miles the first day. Even more unorthodox was the scheme of a Mrs. Howard who reportedly had herself wrapped in a feather bed so her son could shove her out of his wagon without having to stop and thus jeopardize his own chances of getting a claim.

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[50]Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, September 23, 1893.

[51]Humphrey, "Rushing," Atlantic Monthly (May, 1931), pp. 570-72.

The plan worked and the woman got her claim, but the fate of her son is unknown. Soon after the opening, J. V. Conigham's temporary shack was stolen from his claim while he went to Hennessey to get his family.[52]

The "Land of the Fair God" certainly held no charm for some poor wayfaring strangers. Perhaps the most pathetic figure was the unidentified man whose hardluck tale was related in the State Capital:

> He started from Kansas for the strip and his little son dies on the way. At Orlando one of his mules died of colic and he was buncoed out of $65. He got to the Black Bear, where his bed clothing and tent were burned. Finally, he didn't get a claim. He is going back to Kansas by a roundabout way. He ought to.[53]

Those fortunate enough to get claims swelled the territorial population by an estimated 100,000. The Outlet also added eleven counties, bearing the familiar alphabetical designations from "K" to "Q."[54] Although their lot was not easy, especially during the first winter, settlers in the eastern part of the Outlet could take comfort in the fact that they had acquired good lands--some of which would become the richest wheatland in Oklahoma. As in the case of the Cheyenne-Arapaho lands,

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[52]Clara B. Kennan, "Neighbors in the Cherokee Strip," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXVII (Spring, 1949), p. 83.

[53]Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, October 7, 1893.

[54]They were later given the following names: Kay, Grant, Alfalfa, Woods, Harper, Woodward, Major, Enid, Noble, Pawnee, and Ellis.

much of the less attractive land in the western portion remained virtually unoccupied for several years until the supply was exhausted elsewhere.

With the exception of the Kickapoo country and Greer County, Oklahoma's boundaries were not extended between 1893 and 1901.[55] The Territory nevertheless grew remarkably during this period.[56]

The greatest opening in terms of the number of participants was yet to come. A new method--the lottery--was used to distribute lands in the former Kiowa-Comanche reservation in the southwestern part of the Territory.[57] Although the entire area covered 3,712,503 acres, some 3,000 Indians were allowed to claim quarter-sections and 480,000 acres were set aside for them as a "big pasture." This left a total of about 13,000 homesteads available for

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[55]The Kickapoo lands were opened in May, 1895. See Gittinger, Formation of Oklahoma, p. 208. On March 16, 1896, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the South Fork of the Red River was the correct boundary between Texas and Oklahoma, thereby taking Greer County away from Texas and placing it under the jurisdiction of Oklahoma Territory. Thus, some 732,666 acres became available for homestead settlement after prior residents exercised their preference rights. See Foreman, History of Oklahoma, p. 259.

[56]The population rose steadily from 150,000 in 1893 to 398,000 in the census of 1900. Gittinger, Formation of Oklahoma, pp. 204-205.

[57]Ibid., p. 209; William R. Draper, "The Forty-Sixth State," Munsey's Magazine (May, 1903), p. 224. Holdings of the Wichita-Caddo and other affiliated tribes were included.

white settlers.[58] Alexandre's Compendium, a guide-book to the area, described it as former buffalo land and therefore well-suited to cattle raising. Actually, much of the reservation was fertile farm land.[59] In addition, there were rumors of rich mineral deposits of silver and gold--a holdover, no doubt, from the short-lived gold rushes to the Wichita Mountains in the 1880's.[60]

Under the lottery system applicants were allowed to examine the area after registering at either Fort Sill or El Reno. Registration consisted of filing the necessary homestead affidavits and getting one's name in the barrel. The process, as described by William R. Draper, involved a clerk's stamping a number on the affidavits and placing the same number on a blue card, along with the registrant's name and address. This card eventually went into a large hollow wheel for the actual drawing, while a red card bearing similar information was given to the settler. Approximately 165,000 persons registered before the closing

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[58]Dora Ann Stewart, Government and Development of Oklahoma Territory (Oklahoma City: Harlow Publishing Company, 1933), p. 92; Charles Moreau Harger, "The Government's Gift of Homes," Outlook Vol. LXVIII (August 17, 1901), pp. 907-908.

[59]Philip L. Alexandre (comp.), Alexandre's Compendium (Oklahoma City: Times-Journal Publishing Co., 1901), p. 135; Stewart, Development of Oklahoma Territory, p. 92.

[60]Frank McMaster, "An '89'er, How We Rushed and What For," Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine, Vol. VIII (April, 1909), p. 45.

date of July 28, 1901.[61]

By far the larger number--135,416--applied at the El Reno office, thereby transforming the little town of 4,000 persons into a bustling city almost overnight.[62] El Reno was obviously unable to handle adequately the crowd. One eye-witness, E. H. Linzee, reported that food booths were set up in the streets and sleeping tents pitched on every available lot. Water barrels were placed at various spots and lemonade vendors hawked their beverage to the thirsty crowds. Those with stronger tastes faced a crisis when local saloons ran out of beer.[63]

Only 30,000 hopeful registrants were actually present when the drawings began at El Reno on July 29. William R. Draper reported the temperature so hot "that pitch oozed out of the pine boards on the platform." Large revolving cages held the registration cards, which were drawn out twenty-five at a time and then read to the crowd. John Woods of Weatherford drew the first claim, which he promptly located adjacent to the new town of Lawton. A Wichita telephone operator, Miss Mattie Beals,

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[61]William R. Draper, The Government Land Lottery (Girard, Kansas: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1946), p. 4.

[62]Buck, Transactions, p. 369.

[63]E. H. Linzee, "Registration and Drawing for Opening of Kiowa and Comanche Country, 1901," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXV (Autumn, 1947), pp. 289-91. One can imagine the amazement of St. Louis breweries when they received rush orders for a hundred car-loads of beer.

was the second winner.[64] The drawings continued until every card was removed, although only 13,000 claims were available. The long process of filing claims began on August 6 and continued at the rate of 125 a day in each district until the list was exhausted. Settlers paid $1.75 per acre.[65] Hence, the inequities of the run were alleviated by the lottery, which gave equal chance to speculator and settler alike.

Town lots in the county seats of Lawton, Anadarko, and Hobart were sold at public auction beginning on August 6. Great crowds also congregated for these events, especially at Lawton, where some 7,000 persons gathered in a cornfield that was to become the core of southwestern Oklahoma's largest city. That auction brought $414,845. Similar sales netted more than $150,000 at both Anadarko and Hobart, thereby providing the new counties with ample operating funds.[66] A shortage of accommodations at Anadarko posed a serious problem for Miss Lucy Gage and her mother until a thoughtful Methodist minister offered his small tent. During the night, they were joined by

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[64]Draper, Land Lottery, p. 5.

[65]Foreman, History of Oklahoma, p. 250.

[66]Draper, Land Lottery, pp. 6-7; Sara Brown Mitchell, "The Early Days of Anadarko," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXVIII (Winter, 1950-51), p. 394.

several other women, including two elderly sisters and a lonely bride.[67]

In addition to expanding the jurisdiction of Oklahoma, the Kiowa-Comanche opening indirectly contributed to the settlement of otherwise neglected lands in the northwestern part of the Territory. Many who failed to draw land in the lottery simply turned to the unoccupied parts of the Cheyenne and Arapaho area and the Cherokee Outlet, previously inhabited almost exclusively by ranchers. The country around Woodward, for instance, began to fill up rapidly in 1902.[68] As the public domain dwindled, even the poorest land grew more attractive

The last area opened to settlement was the so-called "Big Pasture" west of Lawton. Actually four separate plots totaling nearly half a million acres, these lands had been reserved for the Kiowas, but government efforts to lease the pastures to whites had proved unsuccessful. The government finally decided to open the region to settlement after making allotments to Indian children, and some 380,709 acres were eventually sold by sealed bid in

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[67] Gage, "Romance," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXIX (Autumn, 1951), pp. 292-93.

[68] F. P. Rose, "Early History of Catesby and Vicinty [sic]," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXIX (Summer, 1951), pp. 185, 191.

December, 1906.[69] Thus, the long and tedious process of opening Oklahoma was completed by late 1906. The next step would involve political union with the Indian Territory.

A corresponding growth in population accompanied the territorial expansion. A special census taken shortly after Governor George W. Steele's arrival in 1890 recorded 60,417 persons. Logan County, with 14,254 persons, had the largest number of inhabitants, followed by Oklahoma County with 12,794.[70] The territorial census of 1896 revealed a population of 275,000; four years later the decennial census of 1900 showed 398,000.[71] On the eve of statehood in 1907, Oklahoma Territory was inhabited by 681,115 persons--more than ten times the number first recorded in 1890.[72] Surely such growth confirmed Governor Thompson B. Ferguson's observation that there was no "race suicide" in Oklahoma, especially in view of the large number of babies and small children.[73]

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[69]Foreman, History of Oklahoma, pp. 249, 251; Gittinger, Formation of Oklahoma, p. 209.

[70]Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, 1893, p. 3. The remaining counties listed the following figures: Cleveland, 7,011; Canadian, 7,703; Kingfisher, 8,837; Payne, 6,836; and Beaver, 2,982.

[71]Gittinger, Formation of Oklahoma, p. 205; U. S., Bureau of the Census, Twelfth Census of the United States: 1900. Population, I, Part I, li.

[72]Edward E. Dale and Morris L. Wardell, History of Oklahoma (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1948), p. 550.

[73]Anonymous newspaper clipping, T. B. Ferguson

Subsequently it became apparent that the settler who staked his life on a government claim was truly building for the future. By 1902, Oklahoma was 82 per cent occupied, and[74] land values were increasing at a steady rate. In a national magazine article, Charles M. Harger asserted that the price of land in Oklahoma was as high as it was in Iowa and Illinois. Virtually unimproved claims sold for as much as $4,000, he disclosed.[75] M. G. Cunniff, another journalist, reported that land in Comanche County was selling for an average of nearly $15 an acre in 1905. One Kiowa County tract reportedly brought $23 an acre, and toward the end of the territorial period, the average value of farm land exceeded $15 per acre.[76] These developments tend to substantiate Solon J. Buck's belief that the frontier, with its lure of free land, had indeed disappeared with the settlement of Oklahoma.[77] But settlement alone does not complete the story of Oklahoma Territory. The development of civilization is equally important, and it is this process that now merits further investigation.

Collection, Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Library, Norman.

[74]Buck, Transactions, p. 362.

[75]Charles Moreau Harger, "Oklahoma and the Indian Territory as They Are Today," The American Monthly Review of Reviews (February, 1902), pp. 177-78.

[76]M. G. Cunniff, "The New State of Oklahoma," Worlds Work, (June, 1906), pp. 7603-7619.

[77]Buck, Transactions, p. 363.

CHAPTER II

PILGRIMS ON THE PRAIRIE

Oklahoma came to life with a lusty beginning that would not soon be forgotten. But once the dust had settled, there emerged a calmer view of this so-called mythical land beyond the 96th meridian. The background of the people foreshadowed to a considerable extent the civilization that was to appear--both rural and urban. Since people tend to reproduce the society of their original environment, the origin of the Oklahoma settlers therefore is of particular importance.

While the widespread publicity given to Oklahoma drew immigrants from throughout the nation, the majority came from neighboring states.[1] Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas, and Texas, for example, furnished more than 42 per cent of the population. According to the census of 1900, native Kansans alone made up nearly 16 per cent of the total, Missourians a little more than 12 per cent, and Texans

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[1]Helen C. Candee, "Social Conditions in Our Newest Territory," The Forum Vol. XXV (June, 1898), pp. 430-31.

approximately 9 per cent.[2] The high rate of immigration from midwestern states, particularly Illinois, Iowa, and Indiana, would make early Oklahoma predominantly northern in population rather than southern.[3]

The settlement of Oklahoma Territory, moreover, was almost exclusively a white, native American venture. Such persons made up more than 96 per cent of the population in 1900.[4] Aside from the Indians, the only significant non-white group was the Negro. Unfortunately, most Negroes were quickly relegated to second-class citizenship in keeping with the national trend toward "Jim Crowism."[5] There were several all-Negro communities that offered the colored man greater opportunity. Notable among these was Langston in Logan County.[6] A few Negro homesteaders, such

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[2]Solon J. Buck, "The Settlement of Oklahoma," Transactions, Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters, XV, Part 2, 1907, pp. 372-74.

[3]Ibid., p. 373. Kansas obviously made the greatest impact. L. G. Adams, who moved to El Reno from Seward County, Kansas, estimated that 90 per cent of the people in that area were driven to Oklahoma by severe drought and grasshopper plagues. L. G. Adams interview, "Indian-Pioneer Papers," Vol. I, p. 200.

[4]Buck, Transactions, p. 372.

[5]C. Vann Woodward traces the national development of segregation in The Strange Career of Jim Crow (2d rev. ed; New York: Oxford University Press, 1966).

[6]Candee, "Social Conditions," The Forum (June, 1898), p. 437; "Logan County Project," Wenner Collection, Box 1, Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Library, Norman.

as Albert C. Davis of Garfield County, were able to obtain land, but the Negro generally met white resistance and prejudice. In 1892, the El Reno Democrat rejoiced that "but few of the sons of Ham have taken up their abode among us."[7] Negroes nevertheless accounted for 8.3 per cent of the state's population in 1910.[8]

Pockets of "foreign" settlers were also scattered about the Territory. Foremost were the Germans, most of whom were from Lutheran or Mennonite colonies in Kansas. German settlers were especially evident in the community of Okarche, near El Reno. The Mennonites, some of German-Russian origin, settled farther west in the vicinity of Korn.[9] Later, the town of Prague and the surrounding area in Lincoln County were settled by Bohemian immigrants. Because of language and cultural barriers, these peoples tended to keep to themselves, thus engendering a reciprocal

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[7]Anonymous manuscript, Hatfield Collection, Box H-10, Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Library, Norman; El Reno Democrat, February 6, 1892. The Guthrie State Capital exhibited a different outlook, however, when it called for elimination of the color line, "copper or black." See Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, March 10, 1894.

[8]U. S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910, Vol. III, Population (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1913), p. 459. The Negro population of 137,612 included the former Indian Territory, so the number of Negroes in Oklahoma Territory proper was smaller.

[9]Roy Temple House, "The Mennonites in Oklahoma," Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine, Vol. IX (October, 1909), p. 53. Korn later became "Corn" in the anti-German days of World War I.

aloofness on the part of other settlers.[10]

Regardless of origin, most Oklahoma pioneers shared an attachment to the soil.[11] Not only was the literature of the period overtly agrarian in outlook but the whole tenor of life seemed to revolve around crop condition. Editors repeatedly referred to the prospects of certain commodities as if talk would make their dreams come true, and husbandmen everywhere forsook social events toward harvest time. Preachers even closed revivals early and children missed school in deference to farm work.[12] The prevalence of agriculture was further indicated by the farmer's efforts to learn more efficient methods. This often took the form of organized institutes, the first of which was held at El Reno in the fall of 1893. Within ten years some twenty-three counties could boast of similar programs.[13] While many settlers were unsuccessful in farm ventures, other neophytes withstood trying periods of apprenticeship and ultimately became succcessful farmers.[14]

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[10]Angie Debo, Prairie City: The Story of an American Community (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1944), p. 104.

[11]The 1897 governor's report offered statistical evidence when it revealed that some 108 of the 170 students in the Territorial University that year came from farm homes. Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, 1897 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1897), p. 7.

[12]Angie Debo, (ed.), "The Diary of Charles Hazelrigg," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXV (Autumn, 1947), p. 231.

[13]First Report of the Territorial Board of Agriculture (Guthrie: State Capital Company, 1905), pp. 21-22, 195-97.

[14]Candee, "Social Conditions," The Forum (June, 1898),

Once a settler arrived, he faced the age-old task of providing his family with the immediate necessities of shelter, food, water, and clothing. Financial and personal hardship often characterized this critical period during which the pioneer either won or lost his "bet with the government."[15] Most settlers were sustained by timely social contacts and the knowledge that others shared their plight, but many left after finding themselves unable to cope with the hardships of life on the prairie.

As noted earlier, large numbers of homeseekers rushed to Oklahoma by various means. Wives and children often accompanied their husband and fathers to the border and waited until a claim was secured. Mrs. Thompson B. Ferguson, who moved to the Cheyenne-Arapaho country in 1893, observed that while the ordeal was taxing, the thrill of going to a new land somehow cushioned the jolts of the wagon.[16]

William and Albert Dunn chartered a railway "immigrant car" for their trip from Nebraska in December, 1889. These

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p. 429. James K. Hastings, who got a claim six miles from Mulhall in 1889, was forced to supplement his farm income by working on the Guthrie streets for fifteen cents an hour. See James K. Hastings, "The Opening of Oklahoma," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXVII (Spring, 1949), p. 75.

[15]A common saying held that a homesteader was betting five years of his life against a government claim.

[16]Mrs. Thompson B. Ferguson Manuscript, Ferguson Collection, unprocessed, Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Library, Norman.

brothers loaded farm implements and sacks of corn in one end of the car and furniture in the other. Four horses and a cow were stabled in the center. William legally rode in the car to tend the livestock, while his brother hid away to avoid paying fare.[17]

A vivid account of a family's pilgrimage to Oklahoma is found in the personal journal of Levena Huff Stansberry, who, along with her husband and parents, journeyed from Missouri to the Oklahoma panhandle in the spring of 1906. The group passed through Chetopa, Coffeyville, and Arkansas City, Kansas, and later dipped in and out of Oklahoma Territory until they reached their destination. Even at that late date the hardships of travel were common as a variety of calamities beset the wayfaring Missourians in traditional frontier fashion. On one occasion the mules ran away, causing considerable delay and frustration. Rainy weather set in as the group approached Arkansas City. Everyone had the "blues" as well as wet clothes, wrote Mrs. Stansberry. A few days later she reported her father in better spirits after he "got him a jug." Her entry for May 27 reveals that bad luck had not yet run its course:

> We are all well this evening[.] only had too accidents today[.] stoped for dinner[.] took the mules in a creak to drink and it was quick sand [.] they went in to their Bellies (stomach I mean)[.] we sure thought he never would get out, and I was

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[17]William Dunn interview, "Indian-Pioneer Papers," Vol. XXVI, pp. 309-310. There is no mention of their families.

> cooking dinner my dress caught fire and was in big flaim before I knew it and if mother had not been there guess I would have burned up [.][18]

Still later on that same day she wrote: "I feel like a new person now since we crossed the line over in Oklahoma Territory." Her premature enthusiasm was somewhat dimmed by a sand storm near Alva, which put her father "out of sorts" again. Sickness, characterized by "hard shakes," kept her away from her diary for the next few days, and when she was finally able to write, Mrs. Stansberry mournfully described her illness and the forlorn feeling of being "so faraway from anywhere."[19] Such were the tribulations of Oklahoma pioneers.

Nor did problems cease once they reached their destination. Since the most immediate concern was housing, settlers generally lived in tents or covered wagon boxes until more permanent quarters were built.[20] Those fortunate enough to have access to timber built wooden houses. A. J. Bateman recalled helping his father haul lumber from Hunnewell, Kansas, to the Cherokee Outlet in February, 1894--a process that required two trips across the frozen surface of the Salt Fork of the Arkansas.[21] A few settlers

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[18]Personal journal of Levena Huff Stansberry, p. 8. Copy in author's possession.

[19]Ibid., p. 12.

[20]Martha Ann Andrews interview, "Indian-Pioneer Papers," Vol. XX, pp. 405-406.

[21]A. J. Bateman reminiscence, Hatfield Collection, Box H-10.

used brick and native stone, while those in wooded portions of the Territory generally built log cabins.[22]

Far more common were the dugout and the sod house. The dugout was literally what its name implied--a hole dug in the ground or into a bank with a log or pole roof covered with straw or sod. A variation was the half-dugout, with sod walls extending above a three-foot excavation. While the thought of living in a cave, as the structures were frequently called, was repugnant to some people, the dugout nevertheless proved a functional shelter. Sizes varied according to a family's needs, but dugouts usually measured from 12x14 feet to 16x18 feet. Many schools first met in such a place. Sustained periods of rainfall could bring discomfort to the inhabitants, as C. W. Allen learned soon after he completed his dugout near Elk City in western Oklahoma. Similarly, Mort Adkins of near Putnam recalled that it was necessary to dip out water after a rain. Even more distressing--especially to the women--were the snakes that sometimes crawled in, along with spiders and bugs. Adkins once found three snakes in his dugout at the same time. Despite their many disadvantages, dugouts sometimes served families for several years.[23] With a little

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[22]William E. Biggs interview, "Indian-Pioneer Papers," Vol. VIII, p. 55; James K. Hastings, "Log-Cabin Days in Oklahoma," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXVIII (Summer, 1950), p. 145.

[23]Everett Dick, author of The Sod-House Frontier, 1854-1890 (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1937),

imagination and the aid of gunny sack carpets, they could be made quite liveable. To M. W. Abernathy near Altus, dugouts fulfilled the primary maxim of acceptable shelter: "cool in the summer and warm in the winter."[24] Most settlers nevertheless moved into more suitable quarters as soon as possible.

The sod house offered a more desirable type of dwelling at minimum expense. Tough prairie sod, held together by long buffalo grass roots, was a natural building material. Once it was cut and turned up with a special plow, the sod was trimmed into uniform slabs several inches thick, a foot wide, and from two to three feet in length. The builder then stacked the sod in brick form, leaving open places for windows and doors which were framed with wood. The roof was particularly important. Since most sod houses had gabled roofs, it was necessary to build the end walls to a peak and then run a ridge pole from the top of one wall to the other. This in turn supported pieces of lumber or poles that extended down over the side walls. A covering of tar paper and sod completed the roof; therefore, it was not uncommon to see cornflowers and weeds sprouting from the top of a sod house. Settlers sometimes plastered inside

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recalls that dugouts and sod houses were still in use when he crossed the former Cherokee Outlet with his parents in 1907. Personal interview, El Paso, Texas, October 13, 1966.

[24] C. W. Allen interview, "Indian-Pioneer Papers," Vol. II, p. 117; Mort Adkins interview, Ibid., Vol. I, p. 274; M. W. Abernathy interview, Ibid., Vol. I, p. 63.

walls with mud and even whitewashed them for a more home-like effect.[25]

The key to successful sod house construction was good sod and proper building techniques. Otherwise, the elements would eat away the sod and eventually cause the house to collapse. At best, an average roof lasted only a few years. The roof once fell in on the D. B. Burckhalter family north of Elk City and broke a bed slat, but several children asleep on the bed miraculously escaped injury. No wonder Mrs. Burckhalter described life in a sod house as "almost unbearable."[26] In most cases the sod house served as a cheap yet practical form of habitation and thus stood out as a symbol of the "resourcefulness, fortitude, and adaptability" of Oklahoma's early settlers.[27]

A noticeable lack of furnishings characterized most early homes. Conditions were not conducive to elaborate furniture--even if the settlers could have afforded it. Dirt floors and roofs that dripped mud were incongruous with finery, but the Oklahoma housewife usually tried to

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[25]Mary Bobbitt Brown, "The Good Earth, or, Sod Houses and Dugouts," Hatfield Collection, Box H-10. One of the best descriptions of sod houses is Charles S. Reed, "Life in a Nebraska Soddy: A Reminiscence," Nebraska History, Vol. XXXIX (March, 1958), pp. 57-73. It essentially agrees with the Oklahoma reminiscences.

[26]Mrs. D. B. Burckhalter interview, "Indian-Pioneer Papers," Vol. XIII, pp. 218-19.

[27]Grant Foreman, A History of Oklahoma (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1942), p. 265.

make her home as comfortable as possible with rag carpets and curtains. Daniel Lee McCoy, who settled near Perry in the Cherokee Outlet in the mid-1890's, listed the following pieces of furniture in his possession: one bedstead, a $10 stove, a walnut table, five second-hand chairs worth twenty-five cents each, one old-fashioned cane bottom chair, and a dry goods box for a cupboard.[28] Another Outlet pioneer--A. M. Thomas--made a bedstead of pine boards for his dugout near Tonkawa and used a straw-filled tick for a mattress. Lighting came from a kerosene lantern.[29] Helen C. Candee estimated that the average pioneer's household belongings were worth about $7.50.[30]

Once he had acquired some form of shelter, the settler could turn his attention to the all-important matters of fuel and water. Pioneers in the eastern part of the Territory did not experience the hardships common to settlement in the western areas, where both of these items were scarce. The treeless prairies of the west offered little in the way of fuel, except for sunflowers and tall grass,

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[28]Daniel Lee McCoy interview, Hatfield Collection, Box H-10.

[29]A. M. Thomas to Mrs. Miles North, April 30, 1930, Tonkawa Public Library Collection, Box T-3, Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Library, Norman. Thomas was rather affluent in owning a lantern since many settlers could afford only candles. See Dr. J. T. Frizzell interview, "Indian-Pioneer Papers," Vol. XXXIII, p. 322.

[30]Candee, "Social Conditions," The Forum (June, 1898), p. 430.

along with cow chips left over from the days of the rancher. Consequently, any combustible substance was welcome when the harsh winds of winter set in. Taking wood from government land was against the law, but this did not deter the practice. Settlers commonly referred to "getting wood on section 37"--a fictitious name for the reserved lands.[31] Prior to the opening of the Kiowa Reservation in 1901, homesteaders living nearby often journeyed into the area in search of mesquite wood. Schoolmaster Thomas A. Edwards estimated that a thousand loads went by his school near the border during one three-month term.[32] F. P. Rose made similar forays for cow chips into the Texas panhandle from his homestead west of Woodward. By attaching sideboards to his wagon he could fill it to capacity with dried manure picked off the prairie.[33]

An adequate supply of drinking water was equally important. Indeed, the availability of water was one of the first considerations in choosing a plot of land. Fortunate was the homesteader who could sink a well and find good water. Many were forced to rely on cisterns to catch rainwater--a rather undependable source in much of

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[31]James K. Hastings, "Log-Cabin Days in Oklahoma," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXVIII (Summer, 1950), p. 144.

[32]Thomas A. Edwards, "Early Days in the C & A," Ibid., Vol. XXVII (Summer, 1949), p. 153.

[33]F. P. Rose, "Early History of Catesby and Vicinty [sic]," Ibid., Vol. XXIX (Summer, 1951), pp. 196-97.

Oklahoma. Moreover, the water in some areas was impregnated with minerals and therefore virtually undrinkable. The public well at Cloudcroft, for instance, was so full of gypsum that it had a purgative effect on most people. Many were the tales of unwary travelers and their first encounter with "gyp" water.[34] The editor of the Arapaho Arrow boasted about his town's water supply when well-diggers struck good water at a depth of about forty-five feet.[35]

Equally crucial was the problem of providing sufficient food. For the early settler it was a matter of bringing enough, since the long process of tilling the land made home-grown commodities impossible for awhile. Hence it was common for settlers to bring enough food, along with the usual cows, chickens, and pigs, to tide them through the first winter. At best the pioneer's diet was unbalanced, and one family in the Cherokee Outlet reportedly made it through a winter on Kaffir corn mush and milk.[36]

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[34]Edwards, "Early Days in the C & A," Ibid., Vol. XXVII (Summer, 1949), p. 154.

[35]Arapaho Arrow, May 6, 1892.

[36]Jennie Quillin Porter reminiscence, Hatfield Collection, Box H-10. In sharp contrast to the poor fare of early settlers was the food served at the inaugural banquet of Governor Cassius M. Barnes in May 1897. The gala affair, held at the Capitol Hotel in Guthrie, featured the following items: roast Muscovy duck, baked turkey, roast beef, ham, baked Guinea fowl, baked spring chicken, salmon, lobster a la Newburg, hickorynut cake, strawberry cake,

As the country began to take shape, general stores appeared at strategic locations to furnish settlers with a limited stock of staple items. Mrs. Ella M. Rose, for example, opened a store west of Woodward soon after the turn of the century. Her original inventory included several sacks of Honey Bee flour made in Alva, potatoes, sugar, syrup, navy beans, canned tomatoes, the familiar Arbuckle coffee, a few plugs of Star and Horseshoe chewing tobacco, and Bull Durham and Granger Twist smoking tobacco. The store, located in the family sod house, also served as a postoffice--a common arrangement in territorial days.[37] Most of the items came in bulk quantities, packed either in barrels or large wooden boxes. Crackers were available in either six-pound tins or twenty-pound wooden boxes.[38] Prices were cheap by modern standards, as indicated by these figures from the Tonkawa Weekly for April 6, 1895: dry salt meat, eight cents a pound; salmon, fifteen cents a can; flour, $1.40 per hundredweight; granulated sugar, five cents a pound; beans, four cents a pound; and dried fruit, ten cents a pound. The latter item was especially

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Cuban pineapples, Florida bananas, California oranges, and champagne. See copy of inaugural banquet menu, Wenner Collection, Box 2, Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Library, Norman.

[37]F. P. Rose, "Early History of Catesby," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXIX (Summer, 1951), p. 190.

[38]Ida Roberts reminiscence, Hatfield Collection, Box H-10.

popular in the early years before local orchards began to bear, although wild sand plums were sometimes found along river and creek bottoms.[39]

Settlers were largely left to their own ingenuity concerning the preparation of food. Women often made the yeast which in turn provided the leavening for homemade bread. The cream was separated from fresh milk which had been strained into earthen crocks and later churned into butter.[40] Bread pudding with plenty of raisins or gingerbread provided an occasional Sunday treat and a bit of relief from an otherwise monotonous diet.[41] Seasonal foods were preserved in fruit jars, so most families enjoyed "canned" blackberries, tomatoes, beets, and green beans in the middle of the winter.[42] Watermelon rind preserves and pickles also were plentiful, as was corn, both canned and dried. Homemade cheese sometimes served as a substitute for meat. Of course, wild game such as rabbits, prairie chickens, deer, and antelope was readily

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[39]In 1893 the Guthrie State Capital reported that radishes, lettuce, and onions could be grown in Oklahoma throughout the winter, presumably under some type of cover. Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, December 2, 1893.

[40]Mrs. Mabel Warner Barrick reminiscence, Hatfield Collection, Box H-10.

[41]Iva May Corbin reminiscence, Hatfield Collection, Box H-34.

[42]An advertisement in the July, 1909, issue of Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine urged readers to buy Mason's fruit jars.

available in the early days.[43] When meat supplies ran short, there was always gravy made of bacon grease, flour, salt, and water. On occasions pioneer settlers simply went to bed hungry.

Photographs from the period reveal that the average settler wore plain dress. Since most women made their clothes at first, blue calico dresses were common.[44] Children often appear in over-sized garments--doubtless hand-me-downs from older brothers or sisters. Times were too hard for extensive wardrobes. Except for church and rare social functions, there was little need for elaborate clothing. In keeping with the social mores of the period, the floor-length dresses were usually full-skirted and long-sleeved. Women also wore high-top shoes over cotton hose that cost ten cents a pair. Mrs. Jennie Clark of Garfield County believed that a white calico dress with small flowers and a white sunbonnet made a well-dressed woman.[45] Men needed only substantial overalls and jumpers and outing shirts to insure protection from the elements, along with the customary brimmed hat. Clever wives could

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[43]Debo, Prairie City, pp. 9-10. The author relates a story of a young woman who brooded over food until she finally dismembered her infant and attempted to prepare the body as fried chicken.

[44]Mrs. Jennie Clark interview, Hatfield Collection, Box H-10.

[45]Ibid.; Mrs. Hattie Holladay reminiscence, Hatfield Collection, Box H-10.

even salvage enough material from worn-out garments to make children's shoes. Several thicknesses of overalls reportedly made a substantial sole.[46]

If a family could afford an occasional trip to Guthrie, they shopped for bargains at such stores as Ramsey Brothers, which billed itself as "the greatest store in Oklahoma Territory." There women could buy trimmed felt hats for $1.25, jackets for $5, and children's caps for twenty-five cents. Men's natural wool underwear sold for seventy-five cents a suit in 1894--a necessary clothing item on cold winter days in the prairie country of western Oklahoma.[47]

Helen C. Candee, a contemporary journalist, concluded that Oklahoma was basically a land of poverty in which the people were drawn together by the "freemasonry" of hard times and isolation.[48] Nor did the "Land of the Fair God" always experience favorable weather conditions, especially in the 1890's when settlers desperately needed adequate crops in order to survive. Both Old Oklahoma, as the first settlement area was known, and the Cherokee Outlet suffered from devastating droughts. In fact, these early years almost proved disastrous to thousands of homesteaders, many

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[46]Clara B. Kennan, "Neighbors in the Cherokee Strip," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXVII (Spring, 1949), p. 80.

[47]Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, October 20, 1894.

[48]Candee, "Social Conditions," The Forum, Vol. XXV (June, 1898), p. 430.

of whom had already been "burned out" in Kansas and Texas.[49] W. R. King, a missionary for the Presbyterian Synod of Indian Territory, portrayed the forlorn conditions in 1895 in the following report to his brethren:

> All that was said about 'hard times' last year can be said three times as strong this year without exaggeration. In some parts of our Synod the people are absolutely destitute, especially in the newer sections of Oklahoma. In the 'strip country' the people have had a hard struggle for existence; I am told that there have been a few actual deaths from starvation. Seasons have not been good since the country opened up, and the people have raised nothing; discouraged and penniless, they are leaving the country by scores; some parts are almost depopulated.[50]

Other settlers have left similar accounts of this trying period. Nora Hernden of Garfield County recalled that her family literally went from one meal to the next without knowing when they would eat again. She further remembered the joy of receiving only meager amounts of fruit at Christmas--as well as the discomfort of going barefoot in cold weather.[51] Lew F. Carroll, a pioneer farmer in the Outlet, reported that he could use his horses only half a day in the spring of 1894 because they were too weak from lack of food. Consequently, he would plow about an acre in the morning and plant corn by hand

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[49]Buck, Transactions, pp. 354-55.

[50]Minutes of the Ninth Annual Meeting of the Synod of Indian Territory, 1895 (South McAlester: Capital Printing Company, 1896), p. 7.

[51]Nora Hernden reminiscence, Hatfield Collection, Box H-38.

in the afternoon. The next year proved equally bad: "We had no money to buy clothes so we wore the rags of what we brought with us, went barefoot in the warm weather, the children wearing moccasins made of old clothing." Carroll even wore pieces of burlap in place of shoes while plowing his wheat crop.[52] Such conditions still plagued parts of the Territory even after the turn of the century. F. P. Rose, who settled near Alva in 1901, later reflected that "people were heartsick and discouraged, and we could have secured about any of the present fine farms west of Alva for a song."[53] Evil times had indeed fallen upon the promised land.

In September, 1890, Congress responded to the territorial hardship with $50,000 in relief funds.[54] In addition, the Rock Island and Santa Fe railroads furnished wheat seed at cost to the hapless settlers, and church groups in other states were implored to help the "Oklahoma sufferers."[55] A territorial board of relief used the government funds to buy commodities for distribution by county and township boards. J. A. Farguharson, who served

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[52]Lew F. Carroll, "An Eighty-Niner Who Pioneered the Cherokee Strip," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXIV (Spring, 1946), pp. 95-96.

[53]Rose, "Early History of Catesby," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXIX (Summer, 1951), p. 178.

[54]Debo, Prairie City, p. 17.

[55]Ibid., p. 61.

on the Lawrie Township committee in Logan County, recalled that many recipients were so humiliated that they waited for the cover of night to pick up their commodities.[56] The application of a Daniel Downing is illustrative. Married and the father of four children, one of whom was ailing, Downing found himself desperately in need of staple food. This was despite the fact that he had a 160-acre claim, two horses, a cow, and seven pigs. Upon making his mark (x), he received twenty-five pounds of flour and meal, ten pounds of bacon and beans, and five pounds of salt. Thus he and his family avoided starvation in a potential land of plenty.[57]

Union veterans drew some aid in the form of quarterly pension checks. Even though the payments were small--usually from $8 to $12--the money was eagerly anticipated by both the recipients and local merchants. In fact, these funds furnished much of the money in many early communities.[58]

Conditions improved noticeably within a few years.

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[56] J. A. Farguharson reminiscence, Wenner Collection, Box 4. No one receiving welfare could serve on the committee.

[57] Daniel Downing relief application, Wenner Collection, Box 3.

[58] W. H. Matthews, an early notary public at Mulhall, assisted about fifty area veterans with their vouchers, which were sent to Topeka for payment. W. H. Matthews to Fred L. Wenner, March 13, 1929. Wenner Collection, Box 2. Debo, Prairie City, p. 62. Miss Candee further reveals that a lack of coin necessitated a great deal of barter. Candee, "Social Conditions," The Forum (June, 1898), p. 432.

This was especially evident in the Outlet by 1897, where a good wheat crop brought a relative measure of prosperity. Settlers generally displayed their good fortune by constructing better houses and barns. Charlie S. Long of Garfield County observed that he was "down but not out" most of the time until 1897.[59] As settlers gained title to the land, they frequently mortgaged it to improve their holdings. Handled by such firms as the Deming Investment Company of Oswego, Kansas (later Oklahoma City), these loans usually ran for five years at interest rates ranging from 8 to 12 per cent and averaged from two to three hundred dollars per quarter section.[60] The Oklahoma Review proclaimed that the days of pioneer hardship had passed by 1898, and obviously the second decade of life in the Territory was easier than the first.

But better times never completely erased the scars of those early years. This was particularly true in the realm of human suffering and sorrow, culminating so often in the death of a child, parent, or mate. One of the most touching examples is found in the diary of Charles Hazelrigg, a Christian Church preacher who settled north of Guthrie in 1891. Accustomed to tragedy, Hazelrigg often preached

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[59]Flora Meece Riley and Charlie S. Long reminiscences, Hatfield Collection, Box H-10. Long was proud of the fact that he was still on his original claim in the mid-1930's.

[60]Debo, Prairie City, pp. 62-64.

funeral sermons and assisted other settlers in "laying their loved ones to rest." Returning from a funeral, he found his own eleven-year-old son seriously ill with a swollen throat and pains in his stomach. The child's condition steadily deteriorated, leading the minister to make the following observation on August 21, 1892: "Little Paul is so sick and I fear the worse [sic], although I try to banish these fears from me." His apprehensions were soon confirmed, for the child died before a doctor could be resummoned. The grief-stricken father later recorded this poignant comment:

> The worst has come. On last Monday morning just after sunrise the spirit of our darling Paul took its flight to Heavenly climes. Oh, how hard it was to give him up, but we have to bow to the will of Him who always knows best. We have passed through trials and have had sorrows but this is the greatest of all. Oh, why could we not have kept our little boy for we needed him so much. His mama was almost prostrated with grief, but she is bearing up under the burden like a brave woman. The burial took place at sundown Monday in the cemetery at Sheridan.[61]

Like many prairie pioneers, Hazelrigg relied upon his religion to tide him through a period of sorrow. Less than a year later, he reflected upon his son's birthday with thanks in his heart "for the religion of Jesus Christ, with its blessed promises." His simple faith, portrayed in the belief that "our little boy is not dead but has simply left us to live in a better world," doubtless resolved

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[61]Debo, "The Diary of Charles Hazelrigg," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXV (Autumn, 1947), pp. 254-55.

considerable anxiety.[62] Similarly, Mrs. Thompson B. Ferguson, who lost several children herself, expressed the pathos of death when she noted that "a part of the richness of this Oklahoma soil must be derived from the sweet bodies of our babies who lie buried there."[63]

Death knew no age limit, although it seemed to seek out the young and the old. Equally pathetic were the numerous cases involving the death of a mother with young children.[64] Even the bliss of newly-weds was not immune to sorrow. In July, 1893, the Oklahoma School Herald reported that Superintendent of Schools A. E. Newman of Blaine County had been married while visiting in Ohio. Three months later the paper carried his bride's obituary, following her death--likely from typhoid fever. "Death is a relentless messenger whom tears cannot move nor the pleadings of love persuade," the editor concluded.[65]

Frontier conditions often required community participation in building caskets, preparing bodies, and digging graves. Eli Race of the Dayton District in the Cherokee Outlet made coffins by softening boards with hot water and bending them to the required shape. Neighborhood

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[62] Ibid., p. 265.

[63] Mrs. Walter Ferguson manuscript, p. 24, Ferguson Collection.

[64] Mrs. Edna Hatfield reminiscence, Hatfield Collection, Box H-10.

[65] Oklahoma School Herald, Vol. I (July, 1893), p. 7.

ladies then trimmed the crude boxes with white muslin.[66] Numerous advertisements indicate that furniture and hardware establishments provided undertaking services in the towns.[67] Each community eventually faced the problem of finding a place to bury the dead. In 1892 the Kingfisher Free Press listed a cemetery as "one of the crying needs of this city." During the first three years of settlement the town used a section of school land west of the townsite, to the chagrin of government officials.[68] Elsewhere, individual settlers donated parcels of land for such purposes, or the county undertook the task of plotting cemeteries.

The uncertainty of life on the prairie further inclined the settler toward neighborliness. Despite the fierce contest for land, the settlement of Oklahoma was generally characterized by a spirit of concern for fellow sufferers. Many a settler fell victim to "the blues" and his meager social contacts thus became cherished interludes of therapeutic value.[69] This doubtless helps account

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[66]Arthur L. Baird interview, Hatfield Collection, Box H-10.

[67]Dr. F. C. Holmes, an early dentist in southwestern Oklahoma, told of an undertaker who advertised "Cold Drinks and Coffins." See J. Stanley Clark, Open Wider, Please: The Story of Dentistry in Oklahoma (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955), p. 24.

[68]Kingfisher Free Press, June 16, 1892.

[69]Miss Clara B. Kennan recalled that her "good-natured" mother was regarded as a cure for the "blues"

for the popularity of protracted meetings and other church functions.

Reminiscent of early New England, many thankful Oklahoma settlers began their own Thanksgiving picnics in the summer of 1891. These celebrations, which normally coincided with the harvests, were marked by scripture readings, patriotic songs, and orations. Unfortunately, the return of hard times in 1893 arrested this tradition before it became well established.[70] Christmas was too important to neglect, however, even though it sometimes appeared that "Santa Claus" had forgotten Oklahoma Territory. Children eagerly looked forward to the community celebrations held in church buildings and schoolhouses, complete with Christmas trees and strings of popcorn and cranberries.[71]

The literary society offered further relief from the drab routine of everyday life on an isolated claim. Held at regular intervals in schoolhouses or individual homes, these events included singing, recitations, and debates.

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during the early days southeast of Enid. Kennan, "Neighbors," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXVII (Spring, 1949), p. 77.

[70]Debo, "The Diary of Charles Hazelrigg," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXV (Autumn, 1947), p. 232. An invitation for Governor Thompson B. Ferguson to attend the Old Settler's Celebration at Enid in September, 1902, indicates a revival of the custom.

[71]Jennie Quillin Porter reminiscence, Hatfield Collection, Box H-10; Goldie Ridenour Gilbert reminiscence, Hatfield Collection, Box H-38. Peach trees were often substituted for the traditional fir or cedar.

The latter were particularly important because they allowed would-be politicians or preachers to exercise their powers of persuasion on current topics or purely nonsensical propositions. One popular question, for instance, concerned the relative destructive powers of fire and water, while another asserted that man would do more for love of woman than for love of money. More serious topics dealt with woman suffrage and the money trust.[72] Young people took equal pains in arranging square dances that featured such traditional tunes as "Turkey in the Straw," "Buffalo Girls," "Zip Coon," and "Cotton-Eyed Joe." Play parties--which substituted group songs for the fiddler and caller--were introduced by those who opposed the dance on religious grounds.[73] Later, baseball games and horse races became important community activities. In 1896, a territorial baseball league was formed with clubs from Perry, Guthrie, Oklahoma City, El Reno, Shawnee, Ponca City, Ardmore, and Purcell.[74] As roads improved and settlers grew more

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[72]Herman Bolenback interview, "Indian-Pioneer Papers," Vol. IX, pp. 188-89; Debo, Prairie City, p. 25.

[73]John Bringham interview, Ibid., Vol. XI, p. 241; Robert L. Hancock to Fred Wenner, January 31, 1936, Wenner Collection, Box 2; Rister, Southern Plainsmen, p. 140.

[74]Edward H. Teachman reminiscence, Hatfield Collection, Box H-10; Guthrie Daily Leader, July 24, 1896. The Okarche Times for May 22, 1903, boasted that the Okarche team was the only one in the Territory to travel in "their own special train." As cited in W. A. Willibrand, "In Bilingual Old Okarche," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXIX (Autumn, 1951), p. 346.

prosperous, the isolation barrier gradually disappeared; but for most early Oklahomans the memory of lonely days and nights remained quite vivid.

Just as he cherished his periods of fellowship with fellow human beings, the pioneer settler awaited the arrival of mail with equal anticipation. Any interruption in mail service inevitably resulted in disappointment. Once, when no mail arrived on the stage from Kingfisher, the Watonga Republican remarked that there was "much disappointment manifested by those who were expecting letters.[75] Young William Dunn, who carried the mail from Okarche to nearby Racine, could never forget the disappointed expressions of those who failed to receive mail.[76]

As noted earlier, country stores often served as post offices before the establishment of rural mail routes. Prior to 1890, Oklahoma post offices were listed under Indian Territory, but with the coming of territorial government the area gained its own listing.[77] Mail service nevertheless remained crude. In some communities persons were engaged to carry the mail from the county seat or railroad towns. One early carrier, Lee Polin, got fifty

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[75]As cited in Mrs. Walter Ferguson manuscript, Ferguson Collection.

[76]William Dunn interview, "Indian-Pioneer Papers," Vol. XXVI, p. 313.

[77]George H. Shirk, "First Post Offices Within the Boundaries of Oklahoma," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXX (Spring, 1952), p. 38.

cents a trip for transporting the mail twenty-nine miles from Catesby to Gage in northwestern Oklahoma.[78] Other neighborhoods petitioned for rural mail routes, as in the case of settlers living west of El Reno in 1896.[79] Special star routes eventually served those towns beyond the railroads, thereby enabling country folk to maintain their contact with the outside world.[80]

Concern over such matters may strike modern readers as both amusing and indicative of the agrarian outlook that characterized Oklahoma Territory. The plight of the Oklahoma pioneer was somewhat pathetic, and yet the settler endured, largely because he learned to depend upon averages for an equitable balance between good years and bad. Furthermore, he could take heart in the fact that most of his peers were experiencing similar difficulties. In a sense, the hardship of the land itself bred its own solution. The

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[78]Violet Polin Igou, "Pioneer Days in Ellis County," Ibid., Vol. XXX (Autumn, 1952), p. 264.

[79]Charles Brandley interview, "Indian-Pioneer Papers," Vol. X, p. 293. Brandley noted that he opposed the petition because he felt it was foolish to hire a mail-carrier.

[80]Mrs. Thompson B. Ferguson, They Carried the Torch (Kansas City: Burton Publishing Company, 1937), p. 19.

spirit of the pioneers was aptly conveyed by M. F. Porter when he noted that they enjoyed "a bond of natural dependence brought about by common necessity."[81]

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[81] M. F. Porter reminiscence, Hatfield Collection, Box H-10. Porter later left Oklahoma and moved to Washington state where he became a lawyer.

CHAPTER III

SOD HOUSE SCHOOLS

The quest for public education is an integral part of American history. It began on the New England frontier and later spread to the Middle West in the early years of the nineteenth century. This tradition subsequently followed the pioneers westward beyond the Mississippi River, until virtually every community had its "apostles of education."[1]

Although late in the national movement, the settlement of Oklahoma Territory vividly illustrates the value placed on learning. Professor Frank Terry, Guthrie's first school superintendent, marveled at the "noble spirit" exhibited by early Oklahomans in their efforts to establish public schools. Many persons considered education as vital as food and clothing, he explained, but they often faced seemingly insurmountable obstacles in their attempts to achieve it.[2] The Oklahoma School Herald, an early educational journal, voiced similar feelings about

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[1]Carl Coke Rister, Southern Plainsmen (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1938), p. 246.

[2]Marion Tuttle Rock, Illustrated History of Oklahoma Territory (Topeka, Kansas: O. B. Hamilton & Son, 1890), p. 153.

the importance of schools when it noted that children "must have the advantages of education at once or lose their chance forever." Steam and electricity--the twin threats to rural serenity--had brought people closer to the complex social conditions of older communities, the editor warned. Indeed, the historian Edward E. Dale, himself a product of frontier schools, described this yearning for knowledge as "little short of pathetic."[3]

Still other factors encouraged the establishment of schools. Much of the incentive for early tuition schools may be attributed to would-be teachers.[4] Even more obvious were the efforts of boosters who cited schools as an attraction for more settlers. The Kingfisher Free Press, for instance, considered community schools reassuring to potential residents, and the Hennessey Clipper observed that the absence of a schoolhouse could hurt a town. "Vote to issue bonds for building a good schoolhouse," the editor urged, "and you thus issue an invitation for good citizens to locate here."[5] The School Herald agreed when it stressed the necessity of keeping pace with neighboring

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[3]Oklahoma School Herald, Vol. I (July, 1893), p. 6, hereafter cited as School Herald. This journal was published at Norman beginning in 1892. E. E. Dale, "Teaching on the Prairie Plains," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, Vol. XXXIII (September, 1946), p. 294.

[4]E. Sherman Nunn, "A History of Education in Oklahoma Territory," (unpublished Ed. D. dissertation, Department of Education, University of Oklahoma, 1941), p. 24.

[5]Hennessey Clipper, July 14, 1893.

states in school construction. That more bona fide promoters used the school issue is evident in the Frisco Railroad's boast that Oklahoma's public education system rivaled those in many of the older states.[6] Since education enjoyed a ready-made constituency, its implementation was only a matter of time and money.

The people immediately took notice of this problem. According to David Ross Boyd, nearly every community had placed a school in operation by the time the territorial government was officially established in May, 1890.[7] Many settlers paid a dollar a month to send their children to crude subscription schools in dugouts or sod houses. Some places even incurred debts for buildings, furnishings, and teachers' salaries, to be assumed later by organized school districts. The people of Edmond purportedly built the first school house in the Territory by raising funds from local residents. One of the best examples of early educational enterprise was Stillwater, where a four-month term began in the fall of 1889.[8]

Early Guthrie schools were even more impressive.

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[6]Frisco Railroad, Oklahoma and Indian Territory Along the Frisco (St. Louis: Woodward and Tiernan Printing Co., 1905), p. 22.

[7]Luther B. Hill, A History of the State of Oklahoma, Vol. I (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1910), p. 389. Professor Boyd served as president of the University of Oklahoma throughout the territorial period.

[8]Rock, Illustrated History of Oklahoma, pp. 153-54.

Guthrie was actually made up of four townsites of 320 acres each: Guthrie proper, East Guthrie, West Guthrie, and Capitol Hill. Since the charters of these towns provided for school systems, a consolidated board of education seemed advisable. Dr. E. O. Barker, an early member of the board, recalled that this group levied a property tax of $1 for each $100 of valuation, despite the absence of legal sanction for such action. Those who planned to be permanent settlers usually paid the tax, while drifters avoided it. Nevertheless such a haphazard system worked, and the school opened on October 11, 1889, with a staff of ten teachers. Some 700 children were enrolled before the term ended in April, 1890.[9]

Such measures were only temporary, for with the establishment of the territorial government in May, 1890, came authorization for public schools. A committee of the Oklahoma Teachers' Association met at Edmond in July of that year to prepare a proposal that served as the basis of the first education act adopted by the Territorial Assembly in 1890.[10] It provided that each township was to establish at least four schools and every town was required to set up a sufficient number of graded schools. A county superin-

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[9]Nunn, "A History of Education in Oklahoma Territory," pp. 25-26; "Indian-Pioneer Papers," Vol. V, pp. 217-19; Rock, Illustrated History, pp. 154-55.

[10]Nunn, "A History of Education in Oklahoma Territory," p. 50.

tendent would supervise these common schools, although towns of more than 2,500 population were to have their own superintendents. A district was required to offer at least nine months of common or graded school[11] before establishing a high school. School townships were similar to survey townships, except that the east and west lines were a half mile north of the survey lines and the north-south lines a half mile east. Each township was further divided into four districts under a single board of education composed of one representative from each district and a president. Towns of more than 3,000 persons formed independent districts of four wards.[12]

Territorial schools initially opened under the new system in January, 1891. First year statistics proved disappointing, as officials reported only 9,395 students enrolled in 400 organized districts--less than half the school population of 21,335. Moreover, school terms ranged from only twelve and one-half to fourteen weeks.[13]

While the over-all picture remained rather bleak in 1892, the school story was considerably brighter in

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[11] Oklahoma Territory, Statutes (1890), c. 79, art. 1, secs. 1-5. The law required the following courses: orthography, penmanship, reading, arithmetic, geography, English, United States history and constitution, physiology and hygiene.

[12] Ibid., c. 79, art. 14, secs. 1-4.

[13] First Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Territory of Oklahoma (Guthrie: State Capital Publishing Co., 1893), pp. 12-14.

individual towns. Oklahoma City, for example, reported an enrollment of 1,003 pupils in early October. Guthrie's system continued to function smoothly, as some 1,250 children registered there. A staff of twenty-two teachers guided the students through three 12-week terms. In return, the Guthrie teachers were guaranteed at least ninety cents on the dollar for their warrants by the Capital National Bank.[14] By the fall of 1893 most territorial towns were able to open schools.

The law that allowed this progress was generally well-regarded but not perfect. One defect was the township system with its rigid boundaries. The assembly remedied this in 1893 by initiating a new district system, based on existing topographical and physical conditions instead of the township's artificial lines. The county superintendent was now free to divide the county into a convenient number of school districts with a minimum of eight children for each district. The law further provided that no district was to exceed three square miles, except in the sparsely-settled regions of Beaver County and the Cheyenne and Arapaho Reservation. Two years later the territorial superintendent reported the system generally successful, except for a few problems concerning debts incurred by the old townships. Since it encompassed only one neighborhood, the district was considered more wieldy than the old

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[14] School Herald, Vol. I (November, 1892), pp. 10-11.

township, which had often cut across several communities. More important, schools were free of political battles that had beset the township school boards.[15]

Meanwhile, the newly-opened areas followed the pattern of earlier settlements. Blaine County in the Cheyenne-Arapaho country managed to hold thirty schools in the first year of settlement, 1892-1893. Washita County organized only five schools that year, but the educational situation improved as more people moved into the area.[16] Settlers in the Cherokee Outlet were forced to depend upon the old subscription system when Congress failed to provide special aid in 1893. Several communities were nevertheless reported planning schools only a few months after the run. "This seems marvelous," exclaimed the School Herald, "and to the eastern plodder would seem incredible."[17]

Aside from enthusiasm, school conditions were poor in the Outlet. For example, early Tonkawa students went to school in a building so full of cracks that classes were restricted to warm weather, and Mrs. Effie Roberts Pilburn told of attending school in a bachelor's dugout in Grant

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[15]Second Biennial Report of the Territorial Superintendent of Public Instruction (Guthrie: [Guthrie Daily Leader], 1895), p. 8; Hill, History, p. 390. Under the old system, five members were elected at large, thereby giving the district with two members undue superiority.

[16]Nunn, "A History of Education in Oklahoma Territory," pp. 111-12.

[17]School Herald, Vol. I (October, 1893), p. 1.

County.[18] Other communities progressed to sod schoolhouses with homemade furnishings. Districts were organized as soon as possible, usually through the efforts of the county superintendent and responsible local citizens, who saw to the technicalities of calling an election and choosing a school board.

Some structure obviously was necessary on both the territorial and local level. The leading educational figure was the territorial superintendent of public instruction, appointed by the governor for a two-year term. He also served on the territorial board of education, acted as ex-officio president of the normal school regents, and filled the post of territorial auditor. Moreover, he was required by law to visit every county at least once a year and to file a biennial report with the governor preceding each session of the legislature. His salary was $1,200 a year.[19]

Territorial superintendents generally were well-qualified.[20] J. H. Lawhead, who served from the summer of 1890 until his death in August, 1892, had been state superintendent in Kansas for four years.[21] Stuart N. Hopkins,

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[18]Mrs. Eli V. Blake and Mrs. W. W. Gregory reminiscences, Hatfield Collection, Box H-10, Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Library, Norman.

[19]Oklahoma Territory, Statutes (1890), c. 79, art. 5. The superintendent also served as territorial auditor.

[20]The following men occupied this important post: J. H. Lawhead, J. H. Parker, E. D. Cameron, A. O. Nichols, S. N. Hopkins, L. W. Baxter, and J. E. Dyche.

[21]School Herald, Vol. I (November, 1892), p. 2.

named to the post in September, 1897, was superintendent of the El Reno schools at the time of his appointment. His choice was particularly gratifying to teachers since he was president of the Territorial Teachers' Association.[22] The superintendent did not escape the snares of the spoils system, as the case of J. H. Parker so poignantly illustrated. Appointed superintendent following Lawhead's death, Parker was later reappointed by Republican Governor A. J. Seay, a fellow Kingfisher resident. Governor W. C. Renfrow asked Parker to resign following the return of the Democrats to power in 1893, apparently hoping to name a member of his own party to the job. But Parker refused to vacate the office, mainly because Democratic "friends of education" advised him to remain. The Guthrie State Capital hailed Parker's action as correct and further declared that the office was not created "to satiate democratic greed."[23]

The superintendent's duties included visiting schools in each county. His additional duties as territorial auditor took an undue amount of time, as Superintendent A. O. Nichols complained to the governor in 1897.[24] Furthermore, the failure of many county superintendents to

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[22]Ibid., Vol. V (September, 1897), p. 4.

[23]Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, June 17, 1893.

[24]Third Biennial Report of the Territorial Superintendent of Public Instruction of Oklahoma (Guthrie: The Daily Leader, 1897), p. 8.

submit statistics for the biennial report compounded the territorial officer's worries.

A second level of leadership resided in the Territorial Board of Education. As noted earlier, the superintendent headed this advisory group originally composed of the county superintendents. It was evident that this body would become too unwieldy as the number of counties increased. The assembly, accordingly, altered its membership in 1893 to include, in addition to the territorial superintendent, the presidents of the normal school and the university, one county superintendent, and one city superintendent. The activities of this board were closely related to forming general policies and conducting teachers' examinations.[25]

County superintendents elected to two-year terms were responsible for local administration. These officers were required to visit each county school twice a year--a gigantic task, especially in the larger counties. The superintendent's visit was a major event for the isolated schools as both teachers and students sought to make favorable impressions. Teachers particularly wanted to impress the superintendent since he issued their certificates and oversaw the county normal institutes. Towns of

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[25]Nunn, "A History of Education in Oklahoma Territory," p. 54.

less than 2,500 population also came under county supervision, while those exceeding that figure were entitled to their own superintendent, chosen by the city school board for a one-year term.[26]

The grass roots level of administration belonged to the district school board, made up of three members elected for three-year terms.[27] Local people characteristically accorded it considerable importance because the board's decisions concerning teachers, buildings, and tax levies often affected the entire community. "Men of character and good horse sense are good men to fill these positions," urged the Kingfisher Free Press as the 1892 school election drew near.[28] On occasions, school board elections brought a flurry to local politics as opposing sides traded accusations. Guthrie experienced such a fight in 1894 when the old and new boards vied for public support. Unable to muster quorums, they sat, in the words of the State Capital, "as useless as teats on a non-procreative mule." The controversy concerned the relocation of schools. The new board, it was charged, wanted to place a building near a board member's property. The Guthrie paper clearly backed the old panel when it concluded that the new board

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[26] Ibid., p. 59.

[27] Oklahoma Territory, Revised Statutes (1893), c.73, art. 3, sec. 1.

[28] Kingfisher Free Press, March 17, 1892.

president was determined "to carry out his crack-brained, cranky ideas, no matter who is hurt--and himself benefitted."[29]

As the school system grew increasingly complex, it became evident that more public support would be necessary. Subscription schools had served the Territory well, but they were only emergency measures. The organic act creating a territorial government provided $50,000 for schools, thus establishing an early precedent for federal aid to education in Oklahoma. But most of this fund was used for teachers' salaries in the Oklahoma District and the Cheyenne and Arapaho country. The situation was further complicated by the limited amount of taxable property. Since land did not become subject to taxation until patents were issued, or in the vernacular of the settler, until he "proved up," little could be gained in this manner. Personal property thus provided most of the financial support for Oklahoma's schools in the early years of settlement, thereby explaining the short terms, poor facilities, and low salaries. Total reported expenditures for 1891 and 1892 combined amounted to less than $100,000.[30]

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[29]Guthrie State Capital, April 10, 1894.

[30]First Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1893, pp. 5, 20-21. There was a great deal of sentiment for further government assistance, either through direct appropriations or proceeds from the sale of public lands, as the El Reno Democrat suggested in late 1891.

The financial outlook brightened in March, 1891, when Congress approved the leasing of school lands. Theretofore, the reserved land in sections 16 and 36 had either remained vacant or was occupied by squatters. But under the new act, it was possible to lease a quarter section for three years for a minimum fee of $16. Some 584 quarter sections were leased by sealed bid in 1891.[31] Governor Steele predicted that the white man's plow would now rejuvenate the land in a manner unknown to the Indian.

The school lands provided a growing source of income as new areas were opened to settlement. The Kiowa-Comanche reservation alone added 159,940 acres. In addition to the two sections already set aside, sections 13 and 33 of each township were reserved for higher education and public buildings in the Outlet and later openings. A total of 2,050,876 acres had been reserved by 1904, nearly all of which was under lease to approximately 8,000 lessees. Receipts in 1904 amounted to $412,759.[32] The responsibility for leasing these lands rested in a special board composed of the governor, the territorial secretary, the territorial superintendent, and an appointed secretary. Fred L. Wenner, an early Guthrie editor, filled the latter post for several

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[31] Ibid., pp. 29-30, 36.

[32] Philip L. Alexandre (comp.), Alexandre's Compendium (Oklahoma City: Times-Journal Publishing Co., 1901), p. 137; Fifth Biennial Report of the Secretary of the Board for Leasing Territorial Lands (Kingfisher: Free Press, 1904), pp. 6-7.

years and courageously withstood the pressure to sell the lands and apply the lump sum to the schools.[33]

The fiscal picture remained bleak despite the land rentals. Funds were spread so thin in 1898 that districts received only $1.34 per child.[34] Consequently, schools were forced to depend first upon local taxation and later on bond issues for the majority of their support. Since the first assembly made no provision for voting bonds to construct buildings, it was necessary to continue the old subscription system in many places until the 1893 assembly authorized such bonds.[35] Several communities quickly took advantage of the new law, particularly Oklahoma City and Guthrie, where citizens approved large bond issues in 1893.[36]

The steady influx of new settlers and the increase in taxable lands boosted school income to about $750,000 by the turn of the century. Schools received $1,816,000 in 1906, but with the increase in funds came a corresponding growth in the number of children and communities to be served.[37]

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[33]Oscar W. Davison, "Education at Statehood," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXVIII (Spring, 1950), p. 65.

[34]Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, 1898, p. 25.

[35]Oklahoma Territory, Revised Statutes (1893), c. 9, art. 6, sec. 1.

[36]School Herald, Vol. I (June, 1893), p. 7.

[37]Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, 1900, p. 13; Ibid., 1906, p. 49.

Suitable buildings took a sizeable share of funds. Early schools temporarily met in tents, dugouts, and sod houses until more permanent quarters could be built--a task that early drew the attention of school patrons. Superintendent Parker's first report nevertheless gave the entire Territory bad marks on the subject of buildings, particularly outhouses. "Decency and good morals require suitable outhouses," he declared. Parker reported only 109 school buildings in 1891, no doubt an incomplete figure since several counties failed to submit records. The situation was improved by 1895 when officials listed 622 buildings valued at nearly $200,000. By 1906 the Territory claimed 3,144 schoolhouses worth $2,500,000.

In the early days local people usually constructed their own schoolhouses at little expense to the district. Building costs ranged from a minimum of a few dollars in the case of sod houses to a few hundred dollars for wooden buildings. Logan County, for instance, built thirteen rural schoolrooms in 1893 at an average cost of $400 each. Tecumseh, on the other hand, chose to use costlier brick in a six-room building that was hailed as "the finest public schoolhouse in the Territory."[38] The term "public" aptly described the nature of these buildings, for they often served as community halls and church houses in addition to their school functions.

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[38] School Herald, Vol. V (December, 1893), p. 11; Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, September 30, 1893.

Territorial schools were characteristically marked by simplicity of construction and furnishing. Most country buildings were box-like frame structures, perhaps 20x30 feet and sometimes capped by a bell tower. A stove usually sat in the middle of the room, ready to consume precious fuel on frigid winter days. Fuel was so scarce, in fact, that one school had to burn the cottonwood blocks used for stools after exhausting its regular supply.[39] The crudely-furnished schoolroom usually contained a table and chair for the teacher and several rows of benches or homemade desks, along with a blackboard and any additional equipment the school could afford. Many schools eventually improved their appearance and utility with regular desks made by the familiar firm of Thos. Kane & Co.[40]

Equally important to the school movement was the individual teacher. Poorly-prepared, underpaid, and overworked, the pioneer pedagogue still represented the spirit of early education, as this tribute from the School Herald indicates:

> In ill constructed houses, with almost no appliances, in districts which are able to give them nothing but promises of a scanty remuneration at an uncertain and distant date, they are heroically giving themselves to the work and availing them-

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[39] "Prairie Center District," Hatfield Collection, Box H-10.

[40] School Herald, Vol. I (November, 1892), p. 15. As indicated by an advertisement, Jasper Sipes of Oklahoma City served as the firm's agent.

> selves of every opportunity to keep up with the rapidly advancing progress of educational thought.[41]

Another paper portrayed the true roles of the teacher by noting that "she must be able to build fires, adjust fallen stove pipes, fix window panes, sweep, dust, split kindling, drive a horse, keep out of neighborhood quarrels, know how and when to whip a boy, etc."[42]

In the face of such hardships, it was remarkable that anyone chose to teach. Angie Debo concludes that most teachers were either middle-aged incompetents or bright youngsters from the rural schools.[43] Other sources indicate that some persons took up teaching after failing to get claims, as in the case of Miss Lee Burcham in the Cherokee Outlet. Finally, there was the married woman who taught only when her family needed money--a common situation in the 1890's. Whatever their motivation, teachers usually furnished the community's intellectual force and were accordingly respected for their knowledge. Indeed, the crowning accolade for a male teacher was to gain the title of "professor."[44]

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[41] Ibid., Vol. I (July, 1893), p. 6.

[42] Grant County News, August 16, 1900, as quoted in Nunn, "A History of Education in Oklahoma Territory," p. 251.

[43] Angie Debo, Prairie City (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1944), p. 80.

[44] Nunn, "A History of Education in Oklahoma Territory," p. 193.

The training of territorial instructors was "inadequate" at best. Since few early teachers had college degrees or even normal school training, most qualified through certificates issued by the county boards of education. Quarterly examinations allowed these boards to award certificates on three levels: first class, good for three years; second class, two years; and third class, one year and renewable only once. The latter--by far the most common--required proficiency in teaching orthography, geography, and arithmetic. Certificates were supposedly valid only in the county in which they were issued, although the superintendent could endorse those gained elsewhere. The law further provided for annual county normals or training sessions to prepare would-be teachers for the examinations and to offer instruction in the art of teaching. Several counties sometimes held joint institutes, such as the one offered by Oklahoma, Pottawatomie, and Cleveland counties in July 1893. College teachers usually conducted these four-week sessions at the county seats. Some one hundred persons attended a normal at Guthrie in the summer of 1893.[45] By the end of the territorial period, most of Oklahoma's 3,000 teachers received some training through such institutes. These standards were indeed low, but, as Dr. Dale has observed, this was necessary to

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[45] School Herald, Vol. I (June, 1893), p. 8; Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, July 8, 1893.

insure a sufficient number of teachers.[46]

Territorial and county teachers' associations were another aspect of professional training. The Oklahoma Teachers' Association, founded at Guthrie in October, 1889, laid the groundwork for this type of activity.[47] This group subsequently met in various towns, generally during the last week of December, to hear talks by educational authorities and to participate in discussions pertinent to school problems. County teachers' organizations supplemented the work of the territorial group through separate meetings. One 1894 session featured a vital address on "Best Methods of Preventing Whispering in School." Teachers shunned the sessions when possible, leading one county superintendent to chide his faculty for poor attendance in 1892.[48] In 1906 the Oklahoma Teachers' Association was reported planning a merger with its Indian Territory counterpart.[49]

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[46]Nunn, "A History of Education in Oklahoma Territory," p. 278; Dale, "Teaching," MVHR, Vol. XXXIII (September, 1946), p. 296.

[47]Rock, Illustrated History, p. 156; Oscar W. Davison, "Early History of the Oklahoma Education Association," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXIX (Spring, 1951), p. 43. The Oklahoma School Herald, launched in late 1892 by William N. Rice and Ed P. Ingle of Norman, became the official organ of the Oklahoma Teachers' Association.

[48]Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, November 17, 1894; School Herald, Vol. I (November, 1892), p. 8.

[49]Report of the Governor of Oklahoma to the Secretary of the Interior, 1906 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906), p. 90.

Teachers' salaries, like their training, left much to be desired. In 1891 pay scales ranged from $25.92 to $46.91 per month, depending upon experience and education. Most teachers received about $25 a month, the normal amount for those holding third grade certificates. Warrants from the Prairie Center district reveal that M. F. Porter got that amount on December 20, 1897, and again on January 24, 1898.[50] Thomas A. Edwards received a similar salary for his work in Washita County. The pay for those with first grade certificates averaged $50.44 in 1906--considerably better but still inadequate. Teachers obviously did not flock to Oklahoma because of the pay. In fact, Superintendent Parker wondered why any chose to settle in the Territory when the most common question was "Where can I sell my school warrants?" Many teachers simply gave up and went elsewhere. For example, Miss Nannie White of Norman moved as far as Montana for a higher salary. Speaking before a county teachers' group at Alva in 1899, civic leader Jesse J. Dunn blamed the teachers themselves for not demanding more money.[51]

While low salaries doubtless contributed to the

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[50] First Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1893, p. 14; Hatfield Collection, Box H-10.

[51] First Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1893, p. 17; School Herald, Vol. I (October, 1893), p. 7; Jesse J. Dunn manuscript, Ferguson Collection, (unprocessed), Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Library, Norman.

turnover, other reasons accounted for the many vacancies each year. The Prairie Center school in the Outlet had fifteen different teachers from 1894 to 1907. Then, as now, schools lost many female teachers through matrimony. Moreover, there were the inevitable political firings. Such occasions only reminded the School Herald that "there is something radically wrong in any system which so nearly connects the cause of education with politics."[52]

Despite its growing pains, Oklahoma Territory still managed to offer at least eight years of schooling to most young people and opportunity for further study to those who actively sought it. While graded schools were required by law in the towns, the one-room school remained the basic unit of education in the country. There the teacher faced the difficult task of bringing order out of chaos while at the same time imparting the fundamentals of knowledge. Thomas A. Edwards recalled that he taught everything from the ABC's to high school subjects in one Washita County school.[53] It was often necessary to place one bench near the front of the room so that recitation would not disturb the other pupils. Younger students normally recited first, since their memory spans were shorter.

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[52] School Herald, Vol. V (November, 1896), p. 11.

[53] Thomas A. Edwards, "Early Days in the C & A," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXVII (Summer, 1949), p. 153. He had about thirty students.

Textbooks were as varied as the curriculum. Since children frequently used their parents' books, virtually every textbook firm in the nation was represented in Oklahoma classrooms. From the beginning school officials urged the government to furnish free books, but a shortage of funds apparently forestalled this practice. The Territorial assembly nevertheless required the board of education to adopt a uniform series of textbooks every five years. The first contract, negotiated with the American Book Company in September, 1892, included the following adoptions: McGuffey's Revised Spellers, McGuffey's Readers, Steele's Physics, Ray's New Elementary Arithmetic, and Harvey's Revised English Grammar.[54] This agreement was renewed in 1896.

The vital element of discipline varied according to circumstances. "Running out the teacher" was a sport in some places, especially among older students who sometimes surpassed the teacher in years and experience. Thus, the need for order often called for harsh measures. Some teachers preferred psychology to corporal punishment, however, in the hope that moral suasion would prove more effective than whipping. D. S. Briggs of Mulhall once vowed that he would "quit the place rather than resort to the 'club'."[55]

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[54] School Herald, Vol. I (February, 1893), p. 11.

[55] Ibid., Vol. I (April, 1893), p. 12.

A school day began at eight or nine o'clock in the morning and lasted until mid-afternoon, broken by two 15-minute recesses and a full hour for lunch. The latter provided ample time for playground games as well as a lunch of biscuits, sausage, boiled eggs, and molasses from the traditional "lunch bucket," so-called because lard cans were used. Periodic special events relieved the boredom of multiplication tables and verb forms. Among these activities were visits by the county superintendent and Friday afternoon programs complete with spelling bees, recitations, and songs. Pupils especially looked forward to the last day of school, not only because it meant the end of studies but because it was celebrated in gay fashion with a big dinner attended by parents and students alike.[56]

Once the difficult days of the early nineties were past, schools throughout the Territory experienced remarkable progress. There were nearly 80,000 children of school age in 1894, or nearly four times the 1891 count. Much of this growth was due to the opening of the Cherokee Outlet. Some 67,679 students were enrolled in 1,640 schools by 1896, leading Superintendent A. O. Nichols to declare that

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[56]Dale, "Teaching," MVHR, Vol. XXXIII (September, 1946), p. 301; "Flower Valley School District," Hatfield Collection, Box H-10. This brief note from Guthrie suggests that territorial school days were not unlike those of later times: "Mumps have gone the rounds in our schools and chickenpox is following in the wake." School Herald, Vol. I (February, 1893), p. 11

Oklahoma education was no longer an experiment.[57] Logan County, which listed 113 school buildings and 135 teachers in 1900, probably had the best county system in Oklahoma. Guthrie also boasted one of the best city systems in the Territory at the turn of the century. In addition to the regular subjects, Guthrie grade schools offered instruction in nature study, literature, drawing, and music, while high school students could study such specialized courses as Latin, German, algebra, geometry, chemistry, and physics.[58]

The introduction of the graded system in 1895 greatly enriched the quality of rural education. Prior to that time, teachers treated students individually and with little regard for grades or orderly progress. Under the new system the first eight grades were carefully divided into levels of difficulty. A formal graduation from the eighth grade, the first of which occurred in 1896, offered more incentive to rural students.[59]

This event unfortunately spelled the end of formal education for most Oklahoma students, primarily because

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[57] Second Biennial Report of the Territorial Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1895, p. 5.

[58] State Capital Art Edition, May 26, 1900.

[59] Third Biennial Report of the Territorial Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1897, p. 82; Fourth Biennial Report of the Territorial Superintendent of Public Instruction of Oklahoma (Guthrie: Leader Printing Co., 1898), pp. 6-7.

high school facilities were so limited. The original education act prohibited the establishment of high schools until funds for nine months of common school were guaranteed. In effect, high schools were barred until the community gained some degree of affluence. In 1901 the assembly provided for central high schools in those counties with a population of 6,000 or more, expressly "for the purpose of affording better educational facilities for pupils more advanced than those attending district schools." The act called for an election when one-third of the electors petitioned the board of county commissioners. Even then progress was slow because rural people generally opposed schools located miles away from home. This was the case in 1905 when Lincoln County voters turned down by a four-to-one margin a proposal for a county high school at Chandler.[60] Only Logan and Woods counties had established such schools by 1906. Elsewhere, only seventy-five high schools offered advanced work, leaving an estimated 75 to 80 per cent without the benefits of such study.[61]

Negro children were frequently deprived of educational opportunity on all levels. The law allowed county option

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[60] Oklahoma Territory, Session Laws of 1901, c. 28, art. 1; Prague Patriot, October 19, 1905.

[61] Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, 1906, p. 88; Hill, History, I, 391.

on the matter of segregated schools, and within a few years the people had indicated their preference for separation of whites and Negroes, thus making two systems necessary. While the law required a tax levy for Negro schools, it did not make provision for dispensing the funds. The effect was to deprive Negro children of schools, although many continued to attend white schools for several years.[62] Relief came in 1897 when the assembly passed legislation authorizing separate schools if as many as eight Negro children lived in a district. Otherwise, the Negroes were to be transported to school. Doubtless the governor took an exceptionally rosy view in 1897 when he reported that colored children enjoyed the same advantages as whites, but the Territory had at last become aware of the need to educate its minority citizens.

Despite their deficiencies and inequalities, common schools at least brought the rudiments of learning to thousands of children. By 1906 some 158,322 students were enrolled in more than 3,000 school districts. These figures were more than mere statistics to superintendent L. W. Baxter, who viewed territorial schools as a sign of Oklahoma's leadership in educational matters--an understandably provincial opinion, to say the least.

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[62] Second Biennial Report of the Territorial Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1895, p. 9.

Oklahoma colleges provided opportunity for those interested in higher education. They were often sub-college by modern standards, for their work largely involved preparatory instruction, but several offered college-level work and granted degrees in a variety of fields.[63] Progressive towns generally sought colleges as a boon to the community and an additional inducement for refined settlers. Several towns, for instance, attempted to gain the Congregationalist school finally located at Kingfisher, while others, such as Norman, Stillwater, and Alva, actually raised funds and donated land to secure territorial schools. Indeed, the competition for schools became so great that Governor Thompson B. Ferguson finally condemned the entire movement as a means of promoting the ambitions of a few men at territorial expense. In his opinion the Territory needed only one good university, one normal school, and one agricultural and mechanical college. Frank McMaster, an oft-disgruntled Democrat editor, further charged that educational institutions were "tax-eating schemes."[64]

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[63] In fact one territorial school was founded to offer only preparatory work. Most academies were church-affiliated. Among them were St. Joseph's and Sacred Heart academies, both Catholic schools; Kingfisher and Southwest academies, operated by the Congregationalists; Oklahoma Presbyterian Academy; Southwest Baptist College; and a Friends' academy at Stella.

[64] Thompson B. Ferguson to D. T. Flynn, Guthrie, January 24, 1903, T. B. Ferguson Collection, Box 1, Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Library, Norman; McMaster's Magazine, Vol. XI (August, 1899), p. 336.

The Territory was supporting seven educational institutions at the time of statehood, three of which had been established as a result of the original school act. The Territorial Normal School at Edmond opened on November 9, 1891, with a three-year program designed to prepare public school teachers.[65] The Agricultural and Mechanical College began at Stillwater in December of the same year as a result of a political bargain between Oklahoma and Payne counties. Stillwater successfully battled for the school by raising $10,000 and the necessary land. Eight years later some 365 students were enrolled there in various areas of study, several of which led to the B. S. degree. This school received $30,000 a year in federal Morrill funds since it was the land grant college.[66]

The Territorial University at Norman did not open its doors until September, 1892. As the capstone of the public school system, the University became a center of culture and academic attainment under the leadership of President David Ross Boyd, who served throughout the territorial era. Necessity forced the school to concentrate on preparatory work at first, but toward the end of the decade the University began issuing the bachelor's degree.[67] One

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[65] School Herald, Vol. I (December, 1892), p. 2.

[66] Freeman E. Miller, The Founding of Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College ([Stillwater]: Hinkel & Sons, Printers, 1928), pp. 5-10.

[67] Two pharmaceutical chemistry degrees were granted

of the early faculty members was Vernon L. Parrington, who later gained fame as author of the Pulitzer prize-winning work, Main Currents in American Thought. Parrington served as the school's first football coach, in addition to his duties as professor of English literature.[68] The University suffered the customary growing pains, including faculty changes and disastrous fires, but by the end of the territorial period it was the academic home of some 600 young Oklahomans and the alma mater of many more.

The remaining territorial schools resulted largely from political considerations. Governor Barnes frankly described the Northwestern Normal School at Alva as an effort to appease the Outlet. It opened in the fall of 1897, as did the Colored Agricultural and Mechanical College at Langston, another political expedient. Two additional schools were authorized by the assembly in 1901--the University Preparatory School at Tonkawa and the Southwestern Normal School, eventually located at Weatherford.

Religiously-affiliated colleges were likewise

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in 1896; the first bachelor's degrees were issued two years later. See Roy Gittinger, The University of Oklahoma, 1892-1942 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1942), pp. 23-24.

[68] Ibid., p. 25. Political problems forced Parrington out of the University in 1908, along with President Boyd and several other faculty members. Henry Steele Commager noted that a "political cyclone" blew Parrington to the Pacific coast. See Henry Steele Commager, The American Mind (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), p. 298.

plentiful. Easily the most notable was Kingfisher College, a Congregationalist school founded in 1894. Several other towns, particularly El Reno and Guthrie, sought the school before it was finally located at Kingfisher, largely through the influence of the Reverend J. H. Parker, the Congregationalist missionary who also served as the second territorial superintendent of public instruction.[69] Fortunately, the school had more to offer than the booster who marveled that it was "the only institution of higher education on the Rock Island road in Oklahoma."[70] The school attempted to be, in the words of President J. T. House, "a broad-gauged, thoro champion of the college idea--that of liberal training for the sake of character development." This philosophy led the college to sponsor a work plan so that students with meager support might finance their own education. Further financial assistance came from private benefactors, many of whom lived in New England. Kingfisher College had an enrollment of 200 and a faculty of twelve in 1906.[71] Financial difficulties forced the school to close in 1922.

Epworth University opened in 1904 as the result of a joint venture by the Methodist Episcopal Church and the

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[69]Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, July 28, 1894. The paper urged local citizens to seek the school because of the added money that it would bring to town.

[70]Oklahoma Review, Vol. I (April 15, 1898).

[71]Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, 1906, p. 72.

Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The two churches amassed a substantial plant at Oklahoma City with the assistance of the Commercial Club. By 1904 the school was advertised as "the best endowed institution for Christian education in the twin territories." Students could enroll in four departments: college, medical, fine arts, and academy.[72] Bickering between church factions eventually led officials to close the school in 1911, but it later emerged as Oklahoma City University.

Two more denominations opened schools during the territorial period.[73] Oklahoma Baptist College was established at Blackwell in 1902, only to experience a few shaky years before its demise in 1913. Meanwhile, the state convention chartered Oklahoma Baptist University at Shawnee in 1910, although it did not open permanently until 1915.[74] The large number of Disciples in both Oklahoma and Indian territories also stimulated the desire for a Christian college, especially since Garfield University at Wichita had closed its doors. The efforts of Ely Vaughn Zollars of Texas Christian University and the money of

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[72] Oklahoma Annual Conference Minutes, 1902, p. 37; Ibid., 1904, advertising section.

[73] The Presbyterian Church operated Henry Kendall College at Muskogee in Indian Territory.

[74] J. M. Gaskin, "Editor's Notes," Oklahoma Baptist Chronicle, Vol. III (Spring, 1960), p. 4; Eunice Short, "A Short History of Oklahoma Baptist University," Ibid., pp. 10-11.

Thomas W. Phillips of Pennsylvania finally resulted in the establishment of Oklahoma Christian University at Enid in October, 1907. This school later became Phillips University.[75]

Several business colleges offered practical training, the most notable being the Capital City Business Colleges, with branches in both Guthrie and Oklahoma City. These schools promised a useful rather than an ornamental education--all for $110. Fifty to a hundred new students were expected to enroll in January, 1899.[76]

College students doubtless enjoyed school life much as modern students do. The territorial student operated in a more formal manner, however, in keeping with the mores of the late Victorian period. Particularly was this evident in the activities of the literary society, a loose predecessor of modern social clubs and fraternities. These groups met regularly for debates, recitations, and musical entertainment, all marked by a spirit of competition and intense loyalty, since student bodies were equally divided and participation compulsory. Every school had several societies, each suitably fitted with names such as Lyceum, Pierian, and Forum. The campus magazine

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[75] I. N. McCash, "History of Phillips University," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXV (Autumn, 1947), pp. 181-82.

[76] State Capital Art Edition, May 26, 1900; State Capital, January 5, 1899.

provided a similar outlet for those inclined toward literature. Among the early journals were the University Umpire, sponsored by Vernon L. Parrington, and the Mukwisto, edited by students at Southwestern Normal.[77] Less formal were the athletic events and outings, which somehow proved to be fun in spite of the long skirts and stiff collars portrayed in contemporary photographs. Finally, college life was often characterized by an enforced devotion to religion through mandatory daily chapel services led by faculty members. One nevertheless receives the impression that college life was a unique and enjoyable experience in Oklahoma Territory.

Territorial schools on the eve of statehood bore little resemblance to those crude seats of learning thrown up in the first few months of settlement. In the meantime nearly two decades had transformed the one-room school into a graded and well-disciplined organization often employing several teachers. Schools everywhere endured their orphan days and eventually moved into permanent quarters, ready at last to impart the blessings of knowledge amidst more conducive surroundings. As the common schools improved, territorial colleges would lessen their emphasis on preparatory work and look forward to greater service. But

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[77]Copies of these publications are available in the Phillips Collection at the University of Oklahoma Library.

the memory of sod house schools and struggling teachers would long remain in the minds of thousands whose common experience brought greater meaning to education on the Oklahoma frontier.

CHAPTER IV

OLD TIME RELIGION

The establishment of religion in Oklahoma Territory stemmed from natural causes. Virtually every settler brought some form of religious tie--as a reminder of home and loved ones, if not for salvation. Moreover, the hardship and isolation of a new country often turned the mind inward. Most denominations were represented in the opening of Oklahoma, either by missionaries or zealous laymen. It was no surprise, then, that services were held under hastily-arranged conditions during the first weeks of settlement, or that Sunday schools and churches were soon functioning in dugouts and schoolhouses. However meager, these efforts led to the more formal organizations of later territorial days, when church life in Oklahoma was no different from that of other areas.

Statistics offer some indication of the impact of religion in Oklahoma Territory. The 1906 religious census placed total church membership in both Oklahoma and Indian territories at 257,000.[1] The governor's report for 1906

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[1] U. S. Census Bureau, Special Reports, Religious Bodies: 1906. Vol. I, Part I, Summary and General Tables (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910), pp. 252-53.

listed 143,581 church members in Oklahoma Territory alone, based on figures supplied by the various groups. Several denominations, including Lutherans, Mennonites, and United Brethren, were not listed, however, so that total church membership probably exceeded 150,000, or nearly 20 per cent of the population. Among the leading groups were the Methodists, Catholics, Baptists, Disciples of Christ, and Presbyterians. A host of smaller denominations were also represented.

Despite its apparent strength, religion was sometimes shallow. In fact, the Reverend Franklin Smith, a pioneer Episcopal priest, detected an agnostic tone in much of the territory. He speculated that this attitude was nurtured in part by the popular Brann's Iconoclast, a Texas journal that delighted in pointing out the inconsistencies of organized religion and Christian doctrine. Numerous itinerant preachers often cheapened religion through excessive emotionalism or gaudy techniques. Among them were self-styled Indian and cowboy preachers, such as "Noah of Today," Cowboy G. R. McKinney, and a Negro who called himself "Sin-killer Griffin."[2] The Reverend W. R. King, a Presbyterian missionary, sensed a tide of wickedness and ungodliness that he explained in this manner:

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[2]The Rev. Franklin Smith, "Pioneer Beginnings at Emmanuel, Shawnee," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXIV (Spring, 1946), p. 7.

> The people who have come to Oklahoma and Indian Territories are, in a great measure, people who have lost fortunes to retrieve. The country is filled up with unfortunates. The majority of them have left behind all restraining influences; family ties have been broken; the home has been disorganized; the family altar has been abolished, and their religion is reduced to a piece of writing and carefully laid away in the bottom of the trunk.[3]

Similarly, as late as 1898 the Reverend J. F. Young, a Baptist missionary, termed Oklahoma a "destitute field."[4] The Perry Congregational church humorously portrayed the situation (perhaps unwittingly) when it engaged a photographer to take a picture of the congregation and thereby furnish pictorial proof of church attendance for anxious wives and mothers back home.[5]

In addition to a general apathy, several other factors account for a lack of pervasive religious support in Oklahoma Territory. Since the populace was spread over a wide area, ministers often found it difficult to serve their charges effectively. W. R. King complained that his church had only one man working exclusively in rural areas.[6] The bulk of church work in that denomination therefore fell

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[3] Minutes of the Eighth Annual Meeting of the Synod of Indian Territory (Muskogee: E. H. Hubbard & Co., 1895), pp. 8-9.

[4] J. F. Young, "Indian Territory--Ardmore," The Baptist Home Missionary Monthly, Vol. XX (January, 1898), p. 36.

[5] Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, October 7, 1893.

[6] Minutes of the Eighth Annual Meeting of the Synod of Indian Territory, 1895, p. 7.

on urban ministers who kept rural appointments on Sunday afternoons and weekdays. The distance between congregations also tended to weaken church organization, reported the American Baptist Year-book in 1897.[7] Bishop Francis Key Brooke of the Episcopal Church stated yet another common problem when he noted that more women than men were active in church work. Many "irreligious" men, Brooke complained, refused to allow their women to support the church financially unless the preacher suited them.[8] The bishop also found less religious enthusiasm in later immigrants than in those who came to Oklahoma during the hard days of the early 1890's,[9] perhaps because prosperity dulled the religious instinct.

It is evident, then, that Oklahoma Territory was no religious retreat--despite a considerable percentage of church membership. Many settlers were unchurched or at best only faintly interested in spiritual matters. Furthermore, the "sinful" conditions depicted by numerous saloons and gambling houses disenchanted many an idealistic

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[7] American Baptist Year-Book (Philadelphia: The American Publication Society, 1897), p. 72.

[8] Journal of the Fifth Annual Convocation of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Missionary District of Oklahoma and Indian Territory, 1899 (Guthrie: State Capital Printing Co., 1899), p. 11.

[9] "Annual Report of the Missionary Bishop of Oklahoma and Indian Territory," The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America (New York: Church Missions House, 1900), p. 124.

pioneer and even prompted some to flee the Territory. Thompson B. Ferguson of the Watonga Republican nevertheless was perplexed when people spoke of "losing their religion" in Oklahoma. "It seems that any one who run the Devil's gauntlet in Kansas or Missouri should get along all right in progressive Oklahoma," he remarked.[10]

But for those who had been uplifted by its power, religion (which in Oklahoma was synonymous with Christianity) provided the framework of civilization. Commenting on the dedication of a new Congregational building in 1893, the editor of the Arapaho Bee praised the role of Christianity in early territorial days. "Instead of passing beyond the bounds of enlightenment," he observed, "we find that a noble host of God-fearing men and women have carried all the ennobling elements of the Christian religion with them into this new land and the seeds of that glorious Kingdom are growing here in all its luxuriant beauty."[11] To the Ridenour family in the Cherokee Outlet, church services offered a refreshing break from the monotonous grind of pioneer life, as this childhood memory so vividly indicates:

> Sunday! That was the day. For our parents did not forget that our little souls needed training if we were to grow into good citizens, and after a week of their trials, worries, and labor of the pioneer, they, too, felt the need of God and the uplift of the Bible. So for that spring and summer

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[10]Watonga Republican, February 13, 1895.

[11]Arapaho Bee, May 11, 1893.

> of 1894, in our best home-made starched dresses, with a frill or two and a cherished ribbon, we set out across the buffalo grass to a grove of scrub oak on the Dunkin place. There to sit on a board or on the grass and listen to a sermon by the Rev. John Snavely and to hold Sunday school.[12]

Following a tour of the Territory in 1895, a worker for the Congregational Home Missionary Society reported an unequalled yearning for the gospel: "Women wept--and so did strong men--as the old hymns were sung and fond memories came up of home and mother."[13] Obviously, early religion appealed to social and emotional instincts as well as to spiritual longings; therefore, even the most rudimentary forms of religious activity assuaged these feelings.

The Sunday school was one of the first signs of organized religion. Communities often established union Sunday schools long before churches came into existence. Open to all, these schools provided a continuity that was lacking in the sporadic activities of the various denominations. The spontaneous nature of these programs is demonstrated by the efforts of R. L. Imel to organize a school at his home in Grant County in 1894. Although he had been converted only a few months, Imel offered his half-dugout as a meeting place and served as a leader. The improvised services left

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[12]Goldie Ridenour Gilbert reminiscence, Hatfield Collection, Box H-10, Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Library, Norman.

[13]W. G. Puddefoot, "An Oklahoma Trip," Home Missionary, LXVIII (1895), 288-91, as quoted in Colin Brummit Goodykoontz, Home Missions on the American Frontier (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, 1939), p. 351.

such a deep impression on Imel that he feared their collapse when he returned to Kansas that fall. "I still remember the last Sunday," he later wrote. "I went down along the draw and knelt there in the tall grass and with tears in my eyes I prayed that God would take care of the work and nourish the seed that had been sown."[14]

Joint Sunday school ventures continued even after churches were established. For instance, the Methodist and Congregationalist churches sponsored a union school near Cashion in Logan County as late as 1900. Each denomination supplied half the teachers and officers.[15] These arrangements, although generally satisfactory, were occasionally torn by denominational prejudice. The Baptists once charged that a Sunday school in the Banner schoolhouse near Marshall was a "Campbellite concern" and subsequently started another school.[16]

Individual congregations formed their own Sunday school departments as soon as possible. Inexperienced persons sometimes found themselves in charge of such programs, with little precedent and few funds in the treasury. Fred L. Wenner, a Guthrie newspaperman, faced this situation in

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[14]R. L. Imel reminiscence, Hatfield Collection, Box H-10.

[15]"History of Methodism in Logan County, 1889-1933," The Pioneer, Vol. II (May 5, 1933), pp. 37-38.

[16]Angie Debo (ed.), "The Diary of Charles Hazelrigg," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXV (Autumn, 1947), p. 250.

1891 when he was appointed superintendent at the Guthrie Presbyterian Church. Admittedly frightened by the prospects, Wenner recalled that he used trial and error methods and eventually surpassed his goals. Although plagued by poor attendance, a teacher shortage, and poor facilities, the program ultimately provided religious training for more than 200 children.[17]

Sunday schools were even to gain their own organization--the Territorial Sunday School Association, founded at Oklahoma City in 1894. This interdenominational venture hoped to unite all Christians in reaching the "unsaved," variously estimated at more than a hundred thousand in 1896. The territorial unit was an auxiliary to the international association, which circulated prepared lessons and provided leadership for Sunday schools around the world. In 1896 corresponding secretary Fred L. Wenner reported some 700 active schools, which in turn boasted 5,600 teachers and 30,000 scholars.[18] In addition, the Association issued its own publication, the Oklahoma Sunday School Worker, edited by Wenner. The highlight came each year when workers from throughout the Territory gathered for an annual convention, complete with inspirational talks and

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[17]Wenner manuscript, Wenner Collection, Box 1, Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Library, Norman.

[18]Oklahoma Sunday School Worker, Vol. II (November, 1896).

appropriate music. At the El Reno session in 1896, President L. H. Buxton indicated the spirit behind such a movement when he observed: "Tall churches, immense crowds and a full treasury are not ours, but the foundation that the faithful are laying in the name of the Master in Oklahoma, may be blessed, let us say in faith, will be blessed of God, until countless people in years to come shall be saved by our feeble efforts."[19] He concluded with an appeal for a special campaign to reach the estimated 60,000 children who did not attend Sunday school. Famous guests attended the conventions from time to time. Professor E. O. Excell, a well-known convention singer and composer, was scheduled to direct the music at the 1897 meeting in Oklahoma City, and Carrie Nation once visited a meeting at Perry to warn of the evils of cigaret smoking.[20]

With the idea of regular meetings thus implanted by Sunday schools, congregations representing many denominations ultimately appeared in both town and country. One of the first considerations was a meeting place. Churches met under make-shift conditions. R. T. Marlow, an early Congregationalist preacher, spoke from a street corner in Perry before his brethren in the states sent a large tent, which was promptly blown down. In pleasant weather,

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[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., Vol. II (October, 1897); anonymous clipping, Wenner Collection, Box 7. Among Excell's songs was "Count Your Blessings."

groves such as the one used for a camp meeting near Seward in 1894 proved quite satisfactory. Brush arbors, which provided welcome shade, were another variation of the outdoor meeting place.

Schoolhouses were by far the most common meeting places prior to the erection of church buildings. Since volunteer labor usually built the schools, it was understood that these structures would double as community buildings. The first territorial assembly even provided legal sanction in 1890 when it authorized local school boards to grant the temporary use of schoolhouses for religious and social meetings. This arrangement sometimes continued for several years. The Tonkawa Methodist Church, for instance, met in a local school building for four years after its founding in 1896.[21]

While struggling congregations doubtless appreciated these facilities, every church dreamed of its own home. Finding sufficient funds often proved difficult, even though a simple frame building could be constructed for about $1,200.[22] Liberal members and volunteer labor

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[21]"Early Religious Activity in Tonkawa," Hatfield Collection, Box H-10. The first religious service in Watonga was held in an empty store building. Mrs. Thompson B. Ferguson manuscript, Ferguson Collection. (unprocessed), Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Library, Norman.

[22]"Early Religious Activity in Tonkawa," Hatfield Collection, Box H-10.

alleviated the situation to an extent, but some cash was still necessary. It was raised in various ways, the most frequent being assistance from brethren in other states. Bishop Brooke made several eastern "begging tours" in search of money, and a Brother Boggess of the Christian Church traveled into Kansas in an effort to secure funds for a building at Guthrie.[23] Ladies' groups also aided in fund-raising. For example, the Willing Workers of the Mulhall Presbyterian Church raised $92 for a new edifice in 1893, and the Ladies' Aid Society of the First Methodist Episcopal Church in Oklahoma City actually began that church's building fund.[24] These examples were repeated throughout the Territory's history until by 1902 some 801 church buildings were reported in Oklahoma.[25]

The spirit of co-operation--so vital in Sunday school work--also extended to meeting houses. It was common for churches to share facilities and even to postpone their own services if another group were holding a "protracted meeting." Beginning in July, 1896, the Marshall Baptist Church allowed the Methodist Church to use its building

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[23] Journal of the Fifth Annual Convocation, 1899 (Guthrie: State Capital Company, 1899), p. 9; Debo, "The Diary of Charles Hazelrigg," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXV (Autumn, 1947), p. 235.

[24] First Methodist Episcopal Church, Golden Anniversary (Oklahoma City, 1939), p. 30.

[25] Oklahoma and Indian Territory Along the Frisco (St. Louis: Woodward & Tiernan Printing Co., 1905), p. 24.

every Sunday at 2:00 P. M. and every third Sunday at 11:00 A. M.[26] When the meeting place was a public building, churches followed the practice of "giving way" to revival services, usually attended by all religiously-inclined persons.

The struggle to maintain places of worship would have floundered in many communities without the leadership of dedicated ministers. Indeed, the pioneer preacher was the very backbone of early religion. His presence bound the people together and gave direction to their religious quests. He was also subjected to the hardships of frontier life, for which he received little pay. The Guthrie State Capital aptly summarized the role of the preacher with these comments on a departing Methodist minister:

> He came here when he found a plank board church edifice and only a few lonely, shivering lambs for a congregation. He leaves after having built a noble edifice, one that is a credit to the church and the city, and [a] congregation of good people, who are able to support the the church.[27]

The life of the urban minister differed somewhat from that of his rural colleague. Although both worked under adverse conditions at first, the former eventually settled into a relatively normal routine. He held services at regular intervals, enjoyed the relative comforts of a substantial building and perhaps a parsonage, and received

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[26] The Pioneer, Vol. II (May 5, 1933), p. 30.

[27] Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, December 23, 1893.

a more or less steady income. To the contrary, his country brother could claim none of these. Rather, he preached by appointment--in one community this week, in another the next. His pulpits were crude, and when he received any pay, it was frequently in kind. In fact, the returns were so slight that many rural preachers were merely laymen who spoke on Sunday and spent the rest of the week making a living. This is borne out by the example of two Payne County preachers who doubled respectively as county treasurer and county judge. Another worked as an organizer for the Farmers' Alliance.[28] William V. Shook, who held an exhorter's license from the Methodist Protestant Church, supported himself for several years by farming and building stone foundations in southwestern Oklahoma.[29]

Many early preachers served several different communities, either on well-defined circuits or by appointment. Either case entailed at least three sermons--Saturday night, Sunday morning, and Sunday night--and sometimes more.[30] B. F. Stegall, a Methodist minister known as the "walking evangelist," arose early Sunday morning and walked ten miles for an 11:00 A. M. appointment. He then proceeded to a 3:00 P. M. service four or five miles away and hiked an

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[28]Debo, "The Diary of Charles Hazelrigg," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXV (Autumn, 1947), p. 231, 233.

[29]William V. Shook manuscript, Shook Collection, Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Library, Norman.

[30]Debo, "The Diary of Charles Hazelrigg," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXV (Autumn, 1947), p. 243.

equal distance for evening worship.[31] Even the church hierarchy underwent the rigors of frontier travel. B. C. Swarts, a district superintendent for the Methodist Episcopal Church, covered 11,125 miles while visiting his charges in 1890, much of it by wagon.[32]

In addition to spreading the word, the preacher inherited a myriad of duties. He was expected to comfort the sick and bereaved, to officiate at weddings, and to take part in community affairs. Perhaps the saddest task was burying the dead, always a somber job but even more difficult on the frontier where people were often separated from their families. The task of comforting grief-stricken parents was difficult for R. L. Imel when he was asked to officiate at the final rites of a child in the summer of 1895. Aided by a neighbor, he planned a simple service of suitable scriptures. "We wept together and laid the little one to rest," he noted, "trusting him who said 'Of such is the Kingdom of heaven.'"[33]

The devotion of these men becomes even more apparent in view of the small pay they received. It often consisted

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[31]Sidney H. Babcock and John Y. Bryce, History of Methodism in Oklahoma: Story of the Indian Mission Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Vol. I (n.p., 1937), pp. 300-301.

[32]H. E. Brill, Story of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Oklahoma (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma City University Press, 1939), p. 30.

[33]R. L. Imel reminiscence, Hatfield Collection, Box H-10.

of produce, or, in the case of official missionaries, a small check from the church and a barrel of used clothing, appropriately called the "missionary barrel." M. W. Sampson, an early Methodist preacher in western Oklahoma, got only $80 for his first year's work. A. N. Averyt of Norman began his work without an appropriation but finally received $255 the first year.[34] In 1902, appropriations in the six districts of the Methodist Episcopal Church ranged from $40 to $200. Lutheran missionaries received $400 a year.[35]

Occasionally, a preacher's behavior threatened the clergy's image. The Reverend Joe Jamison of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South drew as much criticism from the Guthrie State Capital as his predecessor had drawn praise. He meddled in politics too much to suit the newspaper, whose Republican views clashed with Jamison's Populist-Democrat ideas. His main trouble, the State Capital concluded, was a "dysentary of the mouth which had grown with him to a raging cholera."[36] Another case concerned the love affairs of an unordained Methodist revivalist who preached in Bear Creek township in the fall of 1893. The young man

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[34]Brill, Story, p. 179; Babcock and Bryce, History, p. 265.

[35]Minutes of the Oklahoma Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1902 (Tonkawa: News, 1902), pp. 27-29. Edmund Paul Frank, "A History of Lutheranism in Oklahoma," (unpublished Master's dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1947), p. 11.

[36]Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, September 1, 1894.

fell in love with the seventeen-year-old daughter of a local member, and the couple planned to be married until it was learned that he had a divorce suit pending in court. He had reportedly deserted his wife in Kansas. "He is said to be handsome, eloquent and apparently very earnest," commented the State Capital, concluding that "his main fault seems to be infatuation for women."[37]

More typical was the example of Charles Hazelrigg, a hard-working and sincere minister for the Disciples of Christ or Christian Church. His work is particularly enlightening since his early years in Oklahoma are faithfully recorded in a diary covering the period from July 5, 1891, to September 10, 1893. His entries, always on Sundays, reveal the hopes, fears, and frustrations of a pioneer preacher. A native of Indiana, Hazelrigg first settled in Nebraska, where he took up the ministry in 1887. He was attracted to Oklahoma Territory by the opportunities open to a young man. Accordingly, he made plans to come to Oklahoma in the summer of 1891 while his expectant wife visited with relatives in the East. Arriving at Guthrie in early July, Hazelrigg preached in the Grand Army of the Republic Hall on his first Sunday in the new country.[38] He later settled around Marshall in northwest Logan County,

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[37] Ibid., February 3, 1894.

[38] Debo, "The Diary of Charles Hazelrigg," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXV (Autumn, 1947), pp. 229-30.

where his wife and family joined him.

Hazelrigg's itinerary was both strenuous and challenging. His philosophy, as set forth in his diary on April 9, 1893, explains Hazelrigg's zeal: "As a preacher of the gospel I must make good use of the Lord's day, and the best use I can make of it, is to go among the people and gather them together at convenient places and talk to them about the word of Life and urge them to obey its precepts."[39] That he believed in what he preached was demonstrated by his busy schedule. He often traveled as much as twenty-five miles to meet appointments at five different schoolhouses.[40] Although he used the same sermons at various places, he offered his listeners a good variety, including such topics as "The Death of Christ," "The Parable of the Sower," and "A Peculiar People." Hazelrigg enjoyed an occasional fifth Sunday at home, which he put to good use by reading church papers. Such a hectic pace left Hazelrigg physically weak, especially since he had a tendency toward consumption. At times he was forced to punctuate his sermons with rest periods, even though he was less than thirty-five years of age.

In return for his efforts, Hazelrigg received a hodgepodge of remuneration, none of which amounted to more than mere subsistence. Consequently, he was forced to work

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[39] Ibid., p. 264.

[40] Ibid., p. 251.

at a variety of jobs, ranging from farming to brick-making. On one occasion he received proceeds of $6.40 from a concert given by a group of singers from the Sheridan congregation. This church later agreed to pay him $10 a month for half-time work. The brethren at Marshall provided him with a pony worth $50, and the Surprise church furnished a cow. The same church once plowed about five acres for Hazelrigg, which he in turn planted in corn and vines. From time to time, friends brought gifts of canned food, flour, and cash.

The seeds sown by Hazelrigg and numerous other pioneer preachers flourished despite adverse conditions. Worship services, for example, lacked the finesse of older areas. The Reverend Franklin Smith attested to this by noting that chants at Shawnee's Episcopal Church often amounted to a duet by the bishop and another person or sometimes a solo by the bishop with organ obligato, if an organist could be found.[41] But sincerity overshadowed the lack of polish. A Congregationalist missionary was particularly impressed by the communion service during the dedication of a new building in the Cherokee Outlet. Though the people were quite poor, someone had decorated the table with wreaths of wild flowers. "The wine was in an old catchup bottle," he observed, "and two common tumblers and

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[41]Smith, "Pioneer Beginnings," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXIV (Spring, 1946), p. 13.

an old plate was [sic] all their table furniture."[42] Dignity thus gave way to expedience.

The less formal revival service was apparently more in keeping with the spirit of the people. Even the normally staid Presbyterians and Congregationalists participated in such activities, which stemmed from the old camp meetings of earlier frontier days. In addition to providing a religious outlet, the revivals filled a social need for settlers who longed for relief from the boredom of pioneer life. Hence, virtually everyone in the community attended these meetings, regardless of which denomination sponsored them. The results were often electrifying. In describing an old-fashioned revival at the Southern Methodist Church, the Guthrie State Capital noted that "the people get happy and fill the air with shouts of joy."[43] Earlier, a Negro meeting in Guthrie produced a large crop of candidates for baptism, one boy reportedly lying in a swoon for a day and a half. A Presbyterian revival in Guthrie drew a crowd of 700 persons, fifty of whom were led to ask for prayers for dear friends. "One sinner went forward confessing her sins" read one account, "and before the close of the meeting rejoiced in a new found Saviour."[44] Even more successful was

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[42] W. G. Puddefoot, as quoted in Goodykoontz, Home Missions, p. 351.

[43] Guthrie State Capital, April 11, 1894.

[44] Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, July 1, 1893; Ibid., January 20, 1894.

a Christian meeting at Crescent which resulted in some 129 additions to the church--fifty-five by confession.[45] Indeed, the number of baptisms frequently gauged the success of the meeting and the ability of the preacher.

The subject of baptism also brought some controversy. Questions concerning candidates for baptism and the manner in which it was performed drew fine denominational lines. The Methodists stressed the baptism of the Holy Spirit over water baptism, which they practiced by sprinkling or pouring.[46] The Baptists and the Disciples, on the other hand, held that complete immersion was necessary. This in itself became an act of faith when the outdoor ceremonies took place in below freezing temperatures. A more accomodating stand was taken by the Congregationalists, who would accept either method.[47] But the Disciples and Methodists sometimes took their differences to the debating platform. For instance, a four-day debate at Prague in December, 1905, pitted Elder H. J. Poole of the Methodist-Episcopal Church against T. B. Wilkinson of the Christian Church. Three of the four propositions dealt with baptism.[48]

As a result of these doctrinal differences, there was some turnover in membership--doubtless a tribute to the

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[45]Debo, "The Diary of Charles Hazelrigg," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXV (Autumn, 1947), p. 262.

[46]Babcock and Bryce, History, pp. 323-24.

[47]Guthrie State Capital, April 7, 1894.

[48]Prague Patriot, November 2, 1905.

superior persuasive powers of certain preachers. When several members of the Carnegie Methodist-Episcopal Church defected to the Presbyterian and Christian churches, it was reported that these groups were "more to their way of belief."[49] Traditional ties, as well as those of family and home, further contributed to the proliferation of various religious bodies. By the end of the territorial period, Oklahoma was saturated with the major denominations and many of the smaller ones.

Despite the tendency toward fractionization, religion in Oklahoma Territory displayed a remarkable degree of unity. Since the nature of religion was almost exclusively Christian, different denominations could join in a common attack on sin. This was evident in the co-operative nature of early Sunday schools and protracted meetings, often held in community schoolhouses. Moreover, territorial life was greatly influenced by the church in general, especially in the rural areas where religious activities allowed the settler to commune not only with God but with other human beings as well. In fact, it may be argued that the social aspects of religion rivaled its spiritual attractions. The central figure of the preacher further contributed to the

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[49] Fifteenth Annual Session, Oklahoma Conference Methodist Episcopal Church, 1906 (Enid: n. p., 1906), p. 64.

uniformity of religious life. Regardless of whether he was known as priest or parson, the minister served as God's representative on the frontier. As such, he usually stood as an example of propriety, and the churches he established quickened the process of civilization. Certainly his role as a friend in time of need relieved the hardships of pioneer life and sustained many a discouraged family through the traumatic experiences of sickness and death. In general, the humanitarianism of old-time religion transcended the doctrinal differences that resulted in a multitude of churches which now merit attention.

CHAPTER V

FRONTIER CHURCHES

Throughout the nineteenth century, American churches were characterized by their tendency to follow settlement across the continent. As a result, denominational bodies often displayed a frontier orientation, based in part on the individualism of the pioneer and further manifested in a multiplicity of sects. This exposure to the frontier, concludes the historian William Warren Sweet, has remained a significant influence upon American religion.[1]

In many ways the development of religion in Oklahoma Territory confirms Sweet's view. Although settled late in the national experience, Oklahoma nevertheless attracted the missionary vanguards of many different groups. Implicit in their mission was the need to adapt themselves to the environment. The successful way in which individuals met this challenge is evident from the preceding chapter. Moreover, early churches often co-operated in union meetings and Sunday schools. This suggests that people sometimes submerged their affiliations for the sake of expediency.

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[1]William Warren Sweet, The Story of Religion in America (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), p. 3.

It would be misleading, however, to suggest that Oklahoma was devoid of denominational strife. To the contrary, the seeds of sectarianism were planted in the territorial period. As early as 1890, Mrs. Marion Tuttle Rock spoke of a general church representation, especially in the towns.[2] The leading bodies were the Methodist, Baptist, Christian, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic churches, and to a lesser extent the Protestant Episcopal and Congregational churches. Numerous other groups were also present.

The relative strength of denominations in Oklahoma was closely linked to patterns of migration. The influx of northern and midwestern people generally brought religious bodies popular in those areas. Hence, the northern branches of the Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian churches were more numerous in the early days, but as settlers of southern background came into the Territory, the situation became more equal. Whatever their origin, the people displayed a dynamic zeal for establishing churches--a sort of latter-day Macedonian spirit.

One of the first groups to boast a large following was the Roman Catholic Church. Any mass movement such as the opening of Oklahoma was certain to attract a number of

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[2]Marion Tuttle Rock, Illustrated History of Oklahoma (Topeka: C. B. Hamilton & Son, 1890), p. 124. Oklahoma's proximity to Indian Territory made it possible for already existing conferences or synods merely to extend their work, as in the case of the Methodists and Presbyterians.

Catholics, and by 1893 the church had some 10,000 followers in Oklahoma Territory.[3] The Roman Catholic church enjoyed a favorable position because of its missionary activity among the Indians on the eastern borders of the new country before the Territory was opened to settlement. The Prefecture Apostolic of Indian Territory was established in 1876 by French Benedictines, led by the Reverend Dom Isadore Robot.[4] Sacred Heart Abbey, located in the Pottawatomie country, was completed in 1880, thereby giving the church a base for its operations.[5]

After the original opening, Catholic churches were quickly established in several towns. Father N. F. Scalan celebrated the first mass in Oklahoma City on May 19, 1889, and the first Catholic building was dedicated at Edmond in June.[6] The Reverend Felix de Grasse, later Abbot of Sacred Heart, assisted in founding churches at Guthrie, Hennessey, Kingfisher, Chandler, and Shawnee. In addition, three Benedictine sisters began another Catholic institution at Guthrie in the autumn of 1889 when they

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[3] Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, 1893, p. 9.

[4] Sister M. Ursula Thomas, "The Catholic Church on the Oklahoma Frontier, 1824-1907" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Department of History, St. Louis University, 1938), pp. 55, 68.

[5] "Oklahoma," The Catholic Encyclopedia Dictionary (New York: The Gilmary Society, 1941), pp. 696-97; Kansas City Star, June 10, 1899.

[6] Thomas, "The Catholic Church on the Oklahoma Frontier, 1824-1907," pp. 114-15.

established the Territory's first parochial school.[7]

Catholicism enjoyed a steady growth. The Right Reverend Theophile Meerschaert became Vicar Apostolic of Indian Territory in 1891.[8] When he arrived in Guthrie that fall, Bishop Meerschaert found only thirteen priests and twelve churches in Oklahoma and Indian territories. Three years later, there were twenty-four churches in Oklahoma alone.[9] Because of this rapid growth, Oklahoma became a separate diocese in August, 1905, with Meerschaert as the first bishop. In a move that foreshadowed Guthrie's fate, the site of the episcopal see was transferred the same year to St. Joseph's Cathedral in Oklahoma City. Thirty-five priests were serving some sixty churches and 20,000 members by 1906.[10]

Methodists bodies comprised the largest protestant group in Oklahoma Territory. Two large factions resulted from the antebellum split. The Methodist Episcopal Church prevailed in the northern states and in those areas that

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[7]Fred L. Wenner manuscript, Wenner Collection, Box 1, Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Library, Norman.

[8]R. L. Williams, "Right Rev. Theophile Meerschaert (1847-1924)," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XI (March, 1939), pp. 739-40.

[9]Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, September 8, 1894.

[10]"Historical Review," This Is Christ in Oklahoma: The Golden Jubilee Yearbook of the Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa (n.p., n.d.), n. p.; Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, 1906, p. 82.

remained faithful to the Union; its southern counterpart after 1844 was the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. This division, still pronounced in 1889, was evident in the work of the two groups in Oklahoma.

The Methodist Episcopal Church was represented by the Indian Mission Conference, formed at Tulsa in March of 1889.[11] One of the conference's first projects was to send missionaries to Oklahoma City and Guthrie. About seventy-five persons answered the call to worship when the Reverend James Murray held services at Oklahoma City on April 28, the first Sunday after the opening. Murray, recently superintendent of missions for Indian Territory, preached a short sermon on that eventful Lord's Day, as did a representative from the Methodist Church, South.[12] Even more impressive services took place at Guthrie, where a crowd of several hundred persons crowded around a boarding tent to hear the Reverend E. F. Hill. One early account described the event in this manner: "The services of a young man were secured to lead the singing, and as the strains of 'The Sweet Bye and Bye' floated out upon the tented city, people began to pour in from all directions."[13] Methodism was thus quickly

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[11] H. E. Brill, Story of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Oklahoma (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma City University Press, 1939), p. 28.

[12] [Dr. and Mrs. D. D. McHenry, (comp.)], First Methodist Episcopal Church: Golden Anniversary (Oklahoma City: [1939]), p. 4.

[13] Rock, Illustrated History, p. 124.

established in these towns.

Activity quickened as the church spread over the Territory. At its second annual meeting in Oklahoma City in February, 1890, the conference reported a membership of 1,209. This session discussed the need for a Methodist university and prohibition of the liquor traffic. The Methodists also petitioned Congress for quick action on the Organic Act.[14] By 1892, when the conference met in Norman, there were 2,587 members in the six districts, three of which served Oklahoma Territory.[15] A separate Oklahoma Conference appeared in December of the same year. While the conference retained some Indian membership in a South McAlester district, the majority of its members came from Oklahoma districts based at El Reno, Oklahoma City, Perry, Enid, and Guthrie. Henceforth, all meetings were held in Oklahoma towns, except for the 1895 conference at South McAlester. Membership more than doubled from 1899 to 1906, reaching 16,806 in the latter year.[16] This rapid growth eventually resulted in the formation of separate Oklahoma

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[14]Brill, Story, pp. 29-30.

[15]Ibid., pp. 32-33.

[16]Minutes of the Oklahoma Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church (Tonkawa: News, 1902), p. 6. Official records listed Bishop John H. Vincent of Wichita as presiding officer for the 1893-1895 conferences. Vincent, who was known as the founder of the famous Chautauqua movement, visited the Oklahoma City meeting in 1893.

and Indian Territory missions in 1904.[17] Nowhere was this growth more evident than in Kay County--"the greatest Methodist county in the territory," as the 1904 minutes noted. In that county alone the church owned fifteen buildings, preached the gospel in twenty-two places and operated eighteen Sunday schools with a total membership of 1,700. Elsewhere, the church boasted large congregations in Guthrie, Oklahoma City, Shawnee, Kingfisher, Enid, Norman, and Stillwater.[18] Supplementary groups, such as the Epworth League, Ladies' Aid Society, and Women's Missionary Societies, further assisted in the work of the church.

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, began at a slower pace but eventually became one of the leading bodies. It too worked through an Indian Mission Conference originally founded in 1844 to serve the eastern part of Indian Territory.[19] As more southern Methodists moved into Oklahoma, the conference became predominantly white, and within ten years membership had increased from 2,115 to 33,520.[20]

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[17] Brill, Story, p. 50

[18] The following membership figures were reported in 1904: First Church, Guthrie, 456; First Church, Oklahoma City, 403; Shawnee, 257; Kingfisher, 233; Enid, 235; Norman, 198; and Stillwater, 237. See Oklahoma Annual Conference Minutes, 1902, statistical tables.

[19] Sidney H. Babcock and John Y. Bryce, History of Methodism in Oklahoma, Vol. I (n.p.: 1937), p. 54.

[20] Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, 1895, p. 14; Ibid., 1906, p. 80. These figures likely indicate membership in both Oklahoma and Indian Territories. Conference records for 1903 show less than 10,000 members in Oklahoma

Annual conferences met at El Reno in 1896, at Norman in 1898, and at Lawton in 1905. Three of the Indian Mission Conference's eleven districts--Oklahoma, Weatherford, and Mangum--exclusively served Oklahoma Territory, although some Oklahoma points were located in Indian Territory districts. By 1903 approximately one-third of the members lived in Oklahoma Territory. The old Indian Conference expired in November, 1906, when delegates approved the new Oklahoma Annual Conference.[21]

The foregoing discussion suggests the importance of the conference in Methodism, both North and South. In addition to being a convenient unit of organization, it allowed those of like mind to communicate at annual meetings and to enjoy fellowship. More than a hundred preachers attended a Methodist Episcopal conference at Oklahoma City in December, 1893. Such sessions were held at different places to minimize the hardships of travel. A highlight of these meetings was the bishop's annual address, in which he summed up the work of the preceding year and offered encouragement for the future. The bishop also presided over business matters, including the ordination of new ministers, discipline, and assignment of posts. The latter was

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districts. See Journal Indian Mission Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Ardmore: P. R. Eaglebarger, 1903), recapitulation table no. 1.

[21]Babcock and Bryce, History, pp. 296-97. Oklahoma was divided into eastern and western conferences in 1910. Ibid., p. 308.

particularly important since a preacher's salary and prestige depended upon where he was sent. Unfortunately, assignments sometimes resulted in unhappiness. J. T. Riley, presiding elder of the Oklahoma City District of the Methodist Episcopal Church, charged that Dr. E. C. Harper "died of a broken heart" after being sent to Mulhall. "Some one will have to answer to God at the last for the treatment that sent him to a premature grave," Riley commented.[22]

The Baptists also presented a divided front in Oklahoma. This was evident in the affiliation of local churches with either the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention or the Home Mission Society of the American (Northern) Baptists. But despite their differences, Oklahoma Baptists often exhibited a spirit of co-operation and eventually merged into one general convention.

Early Baptist activity was also linked to missionary work among the Indians. In 1874 the southern Texas Baptist Convention sent John McIntosh to minister to the Wichita Agency at Anadarko. His first sermon in August of that year was appropriately based on the traditional Baptist scripture from John 3:16, "For God so loved the world. . ."[23] In 1884, the northern-oriented Missionary and Education

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[22]Fifteenth Annual Session Oklahoma Conference Methodist Episcopal Church, Official Record, Vol. IV (Enid, 1906), p. 70.

[23]Mrs. H. C. Grimmet, "Rock Spring Wichita Indian Baptist Church near Anadarko, Okla. (1874)," Oklahoma Baptist Chronicle, Vol. III (Autumn, 1960), pp. 17-19.

Convention of Indian Territory sent another missionary to the Wichitas.[24] The opening of Oklahoma stirred the Baptists to send missionaries for the benefit of the settlers. In 1894, the Reverend L. J. Dyche, a northern missionary, reported a Baptist membership of about 2,000. The Central Association, formed in 1890, brought some order to Southern Baptist efforts in Blaine, Canadian, Logan, Kingfisher, and Oklahoma counties. Similarly, the Baptist District Association was founded in the same year to give direction to the work of Northern Baptists. The result, according to L. W. Marks, was Southern-oriented rural churches and Northern-minded city churches.[25]

Two territorial groups ultimately appeared. The Oklahoma Baptist State Convention, affiliated with the Southern Baptists, was formed at Lexington in 1895. The similarly-named Oklahoma Baptist Convention emerged in 1898 after a friendly division from the Missionary and Educational Convention of Indian Territory. It aligned with the Northern Baptists.[26]

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[24] J. M. Gaskin, "Baptist Beginnings in Western Oklahoma," Ibid., Vol. IV (Autumn, 1961), pp. 12, 19.

[25] L. W. Marks, L. L. Smith of Oklahoma: A Man of God on the Frontier (Edmond: Oklahoma Baptist State Convention, 1905), pp. 35-37.

[26] Ibid., pp. 36-37; J. M. Gaskin, "Baptist Beginnings in Oklahoma," Oklahoma Baptist Chronicle, Vol. I (Spring, 1958), p. 20; American Baptist Year-Book, (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1900), p. 46.

The existence of two separate conventions led some Baptist leaders to seek reconciliation. The leader in this movement was the Reverend L. L. Smith, young Northern Baptist missionary who suggested a joint meeting in 1900. Representatives met at Blackwell in October, and as a result the divergent groups were united into the Oklahoma Baptist State Convention.[27] Smith later became corresponding secretary but his untimely death in 1903 robbed the denomination of one of its most effective leaders. Since many Baptists did not understand the merger, Convention leaders met opposition from both Northern and Southern factions. L. W. Marks, an early missionary remarked: "The overlapping of the north and south had developed a type of Baptists peculiar to Oklahoma."[28] The church nevertheless experienced an encouraging growth. At the annual meeting in September, 1903, Smith reported a membership of 14,361. By 1906 the Baptists claimed 440 churches, 400 ministers, and 21,000 members.[29]

Rapid expansion was indeed a trademark of evangelical religion--especially under frontier conditions. For that reason the growth of the Disciples of Christ was to

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[27]Marks, Smith, pp. 39-40.

[28]Ibid., p. 47.

[29]Ibid., p. 61; Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, p. 81. Oklahoma Baptists chose single alignment with the Southern Baptist Convention in 1914. See E. C. Routh, The Story of Oklahoma Baptists (Oklahoma City: Baptist General Convention, 1932), p. 70.

be expected in Oklahoma. Also known as the Christian Church and the Church of Christ, the Disciples were particularly well-suited to Oklahoma's pioneer environment. Born on the frontier shortly after 1800, the movement reflected a democratic outlook based on individual members and autonomous congregations. While their evangelistic efforts were aimed at eliminating denominational division, the Disciples merely added another group to the list of Oklahoma churches. As an expression of their evangelical zeal, they kept a running total of converts in the Oklahoma Christian.[30] A strong belief in the efficacy of baptism by immersion permeated the Disciples' doctrine.

The Disciples established several churches early in the territorial period. Perhaps the first congregation was that founded by Elder J. M. Monroe at Guthrie on May 6, 1889. Within a year the Guthrie Christian Church had 100 members. Other early churches were reported in Oklahoma City, Edmond, Frisco, El Reno, and Kingfisher.[31] Charles Hazelrigg delighted in the growth of the Disciples in Payne

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[30] Oklahoma Christian, February 15, 1900.

[31] Rock, Illustrated History, pp. 127-28; Kingfisher Study Club (comp.), Echoes of Eighty-Nine (Kingfisher: Times and Free Press, 1939), p. 85. By the turn of the century the Oklahoma City church had 400 members, making it the largest Protestant group in that city. Philip L. Alexandre (comp.), Alexandre's Compendium: Facts about Oklahoma City in Detail, Oklahoma Territory in General, Kiowa & Comanche Country in Particular (Oklahoma City: Times-Journal Publishing Company, 1901), p. 67.

County in the early 1890's. He was particularly pleased with their superiority over the Methodists, who he reported were "greatly in the minority."[32]

Despite their emphasis on local church government, the Disciples were united in the Oklahoma Christian Missionary Society in 1892. This group co-ordinated the work of the various churches and also published the Oklahoma Christian.[33] Doubtless there was some opposition to the missionary society, since the scripturality of such organizations had long been a controversial topic between conservative and liberal factions.[34] The Disciples nevertheless grew rapidly with the times. E. F. Boggess of the American Christian Missionary Society estimated the membership at 4,000 in 1895, and by 1900 there were some 7,000 members in Oklahoma.[35]

The Presbyterian Church also brought a long record of frontier ministry to Oklahoma Territory. More than a century before Oklahoma was opened, Scotch-Irish Presbyterians had practiced back-country religion in Pennsylvania.

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[32]Angie Debo, (ed.) "The Diary of Charles Hazelrigg," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXV (Autumn, 1947), p. 231.

[33]The Oklahoma Christian, November 2, 1899.

[34]Perhaps the "anti" brethren at Edmond were among the conservatives. Ibid., December 21, 1899. The conservative wing Church of Christ, which also opposed the use of instrumental music, was listed separately for the first time in the religious census of 1906.

[35]The Oklahoma Christian, February 22, 1900. The 1906 governor's report listed twenty-six thousand members.

In fact, the Presbyterians had been active in Indian Territory since the earliest Choctaw removals. Following the Civil War the southern wing assumed leadership among the Indians, but by 1879 the financial burden had become so heavy that the northern branch, or Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., was asked to reinstate its work as soon as possible.[36] Consequently, the northern Presbyterians controlled the Synod of Indian Territory when Oklahoma was opened.

The Reverend Robert McCastin, pastor of the Arkansas City Presbyterian Church, represented Presbyterians in Guthrie on the first Sunday after the opening. This preliminary work led to the organization of a congregation on June 17. The Reverend William T. King of the Cherokee Presbytery soon took charge of the church under the auspices of the Board of Home Missions, and an Oklahoma Presbytery was functioning as early as 1894, when it held a three-day meeting at Guthrie.[37]

The growth of the Presbyterian Church in Oklahoma Territory is somewhat difficult to trace because of the link with Indian Territory. Records indicate that in 1894 two of the synod's four presbyteries were composed

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[36]Joseph B. Thoburn and Muriel H. Wright, Oklahoma: A History of the State and Its People, Vol. II (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1929), pp. 775-76.

[37]Rock, Illustrated History, pp. 127-28. Guthrie State Capital, April 11, 1894.

primarily of Oklahoma people.[38] The Oklahoma Presbytery listed 593 communicants that year, while the Cimarron Presbytery had 514. Six years later the figures were 1,238 and 812 respectively, for a total of 2,050.[39] Presbyterians were apparently much stronger by 1900. The synodical missionary had theretofore painted a drab picture of the church's progress and financial condition. A different story emerged from the annual meeting in Oklahoma City when missionary F. W. Hawley urged his brethren to take up the full-time support of a missionary in the Philippines. "It ought to be done easily in this prosperous Synod," he remarked. By 1906 the church owned fifty-seven buildings valued at $152,000 and its membership was 5,000. With the coming of statehood, the name was appropriately changed to Synod of Oklahoma.[40]

Another small but important group was the Protestant Episcopal Church. Its growth is well-documented, however, because of the foresight of early leaders in keeping records. The Episcopal Church was established late in June, 1889, when the Right Reverend Henry N. Pierce, Bishop of Arkansas,

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[38] Minutes of the Eighth Annual Meeting of the Synod of Indian Territory (Muskogee: E. H. Hubbard & Co., 1895), p. 3.

[39] Ibid., pp. 10, 18; Minutes of the Fourteenth Annual Meeting of the Synod of Indian Territory (Muskogee: The Evening Times, 1901), p. 22.

[40] Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, 1906, p. 81; Minutes of the Synod of Oklahoma of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. (Enid: Eagle Press, 1907.)

visited Guthrie to form a parish organization. Cassius M. Barnes, the future governor, was appointed senior warden and served as lay reader until a regular rector was available. Attendance averaged around fifty-five persons as the Guthrie church first met in a frame store building on Oklahoma Avenue and later in its own building. Thanks to the hard work of a building committee headed by F. B. Lillie, an early Guthrie druggist, the structure was completed by September of 1890.[41]

The church acquired its first full-time worker in the summer of 1889 when the Reverend H. B. Jefferson became acting rector, but a shortage of funds forced him to leave at the end of the year. The parish was without professional leadership until the Reverend C. W. Tyler arrived late in 1890. The second permanent Episcopal worker in Oklahoma was the Reverend G. F. Patterson, who settled in Oklahoma City. Together they established missions in Chandler, Edmond, El Reno, Norman, Oklahoma City, Tecumseh, and Stillwater.[42]

More effective organization followed the arrival in January, 1893, of the Right Reverend Francis Key Brooke,

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[41] Journal of the Primary Convocation of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Missionary District of Oklahoma and Indian Territory (Guthrie: State Capital Printing Co., 1895), pp. 44-45, 48.

[42] The Living Church Quarterly, Vol. VII (December 1, 1891), p. 113. The latter town had nine communicants early in 1892, according to the Oklahoma Churchman, the Episcopal paper.

bishop of the missionary jurisdiction. At the first Episcopal convocation in 1895, the bishop reported a membership of nearly 600 persons in both Oklahoma and Indian territories. Brooke's speech to this gathering revealed true concern for the church, particularly his pleas for simplified teaching and ritual. "It is plain that much tact, care and forbearance must be exercised both by Clergy and Laity," he urged. Above all, he insisted, the church must not be restricted to one class or sort of people.[43] Such views labeled Brooke as "low church," but as one of his clergymen later observed, he was clearly the force behind the church. Despite recurring attacks of malaria, Brooke maintained a busy schedule of visits and fund-raising trips, in addition to his regular duties.[44]

Never large, the Episcopal Church had only 799 communicants in 1906. They were organized into two parishes --Trinity in Guthrie and St. Paul's in Oklahoma City-- eighteen organized missions, and eighteen stations. Bishop Brooke attributed such small numbers to the fact that most Oklahomans came from surrounding states where the church was weak. But despite his efforts to the contrary, the Episcopal Church was known as an exclusive group and therefore could expect little growth in a new country.

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[43] Journal of the Primary Convocation, 1895, pp. 26-27.

[44] The Rev. Franklin Smith, "Pioneer Beginnings at Emmanual, Shawnee," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXIV (Spring, 1946), p. 13.

Two other small but dynamic denominations completed the roster of major religious bodies in Oklahoma Territory. These were the Congregationalists and the Lutherans. The Reverend J. H. Parker, a Congregationalist missionary, planted the former group with services at Guthrie in September, 1889.[45] Later, he established the Union Congregational Church in Kingfisher and assisted in the organization of several other churches along the Rock Island Railroad.[46] By 1895 the Congregationalists had sixty-three churches in Oklahoma representing 1,563 members. They were united in the Congregational Association of Oklahoma; total membership in 1906 was 2,600. In proportion to its size, the Congregational Church left a notable imprint on the cultural development of Oklahoma through Kingfisher College, founded in 1894.

The Lutheran Church, on the other hand, served the culturally isolated German settlers who came to Oklahoma.[47] The first Lutheran pastor to enter the Territory was the Reverend J. V. Kauffeld of Halstead, Kansas. He established a mission station near Orlando in July, 1890, while

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[45] Rock, Illustrated History, p. 126.

[46] Kingfisher Study Club (comp.), Echoes of Eighty-Nine, pp. 85-86; Congregational Year-Book (Boston: Congregational Sunday School and Publishing Society, 1895), p. 314.

[47] This function was also served by various factions of the Mennonites. See Marvin Elroy Kroeker, "The Mennonites of Oklahoma to 1907," (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1954).

visiting some of his former parishioners. This station was duly listed as such in the 1890 edition of the Statistical Yearbook of the Missouri Synod.[48] The Kansas pastor also visited Guthrie, Oklahoma City, Okarche, and Kingfisher on his first missionary journey and returned for a second tour in 1891.

Other pastors along the border took up Kauffeld's work and served towns convenient to the Rock Island and Santa Fe railroads. In 1893 the Reverend M. J. Von der Au became the first permanent Lutheran missionary in Oklahoma. His congregation at Okarche numbered seventy-five members. Later, Claus Pape took over the missions along the Santa Fe Railroad. These dedicated men endured the customary hardships, particularly the lack of comfortable transportation.[49] Some pastors solved the problem by using bicycles.

German settlers were particularly happy to see Lutheran congregations established since the presence of the church encouraged their common heritage.[50] By the first decade of the new century, Lutheranism was well-established

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[48]As cited in the Rev. Edmund P. Frank (ed.), Silver Anniversary History of the Oklahoma District of the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod (Muskogee: The Going Print Shop, 1949), p. 11.

[49]Ibid., p. 18.

[50]Clara B. Kennon, "Neighbors in the Cherokee Strip," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXVII (Spring, 1949), p. 88. It was not uncommon for Lutheran services to be conducted in both German and English. See W. A. Willibrand, "German in Okarche, 1892-1902," Ibid., Vol. XXVIII (Autumn, 1950), p. 286

considering its limited clientele. Baptized believers numbered 1,367 in 1900. Six years later the religious census listed some 4,030 members at ninety-two preaching places.[51] Territorial preachers formed their own pastoral conference in 1902, and twenty years later this body became the Oklahoma District of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States.

Several smaller denominations and sects further worked the scene with varying degrees of enthusiasm. In addition to revealing the division of Christianity, these groups also portrayed a cross section of people who settled Oklahoma. In contrast to the generally main stream bodies already described, there were the Quakers with their spiritual insight, the Holiness with their joyous shouts, and the Mormons with their strange book.

Only fleeting mention has saved many from virtual obscurity. The Mormons, for instance, gained a place in Charles Hazelrigg's diary in 1893 after several of his own members had defected to the Saints. "This of course gives me much annoyance," he noted.[52] He also reported a group of dissident Mormons or "Followers of Christ" in Payne County.

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[51]Edmund Paul Frank, "A History of Lutheranism in Oklahoma," (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1947), p. 12.

[52]Debo, "The Diary of Charles Hazelrigg," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXV (Autumn, 1947), p. 267.

Similarly, the various Holiness movements stirred but little general interest with their extreme emotion, but they nevertheless distracted from the more staid bodies. Most Holiness pioneers in Oklahoma were of the Methodist persuasion, either Free or Wesleyan, or they were affiliated with such groups as the Church of God and the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene. These people were characterized by negative views, such as opposition to dancing, cards, liquor, and other social amenities, as well as by their highly emotional religious experiences.[53] Those of like belief eventually came together in the Oklahoma and Indian Territory Holiness Association in August 1904. This group did not advocate a separate religious existence, but rather encouraged Holiness people to work within existing churches, much in the manner of John Wesley. Their efforts largely escaped public attention, except for an occasional mention in the newspapers, such as the following item in the State Capital: "The Holiness people seem to be getting a little the best of the Salvation Army in attracting street crowds after sundown."[54] Sinful conditions among Oklahoma City's lower classes later attracted several Holiness preachers

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[53]Charles Jones, "Background of the Church of the Nazarene in Oklahoma," The B-PC Historian, Vol. I (1953-1954), pp. 18-20.

[54]Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, July 29, 1893. The governor reported more than two hundred Salvation Army soldiers in Oklahoma in 1895. Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, 1895, p. 14.

to the Territory's leading city.[55]

Several old-line denominations brought more traditional beliefs to Oklahoma. One of these was the Methodist Protestant Church, a rural-minded splinter from the main body of Methodism. This group reported 250 members in 1899.[56] The Church of the United Brethren in Christ appeared in the early 1890's and boasted eight churches with 300 members by the end of the decade. The Dutch Reformed Church entered Oklahoma in 1895 to work among the Indians, but eventually began to serve white settlers when four theology students first traveled around the southwestern area by wagon in 1900. It later formed a classis or district and established an academy at Cordell.[57] The Friends or Quakers reported 2,000 followers by the end of the territorial period, but little is known of their activities. Finally, the Negroes of Oklahoma Territory were served by a variety of churches, several of which were variations of the standard white denominations.

Several conclusions may be drawn from the foregoing

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[55]George Harold Paul, "The Religious Frontier in Oklahoma: Dan T. Muse and the Pentecostal Holiness Church," (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Department of History, University of Oklahoma, 1965), p. 64.

[56]Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, 1899, p. 35.

[57]Richard H. Harper, "The Missionary Work of the Reformed (Dutch) Church in America, In Oklahoma, Part III, Work Among White People," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XIX (June, 1941), pp. 172-73.

material. First, it is apparent that religious institutions necessarily adapted themselves to the environment. As Bishop Brooke indicated, old patterns of organization were often useless in a vast and largely unpopulated area. Likewise, educational requirements for clergymen proved unrealistic in a country that begged for spiritual solace, not theological pedantry. It is likely that the sophisticates of established religion would have been ill at ease amidst the crude furnishings of a country church. And yet, despite these departures from the traditional, Oklahoma steadily progressed toward a normal religious order as its people sought to emulate their brethren in other areas.

Moreover, Oklahoma churches attempted to influence the populace in the realm of morals. For instance, Episcopalians once passed a resolution asking Christians to refrain from betting at elections and to abstain from all corrupt and dishonest practices. Other groups likewise encouraged Oklahomans to respect the Sabbath by refraining from secular activities. Particularly suspect was the Sunday baseball game, once characterized as "the twin brother of gambling" and the source of "skeptics and moral imbeciles."[58] Temperance, which really meant total abstinence, drew further attention. One Methodist committee flatly declared the liquor traffic the church's greatest

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[58] Indian Mission Conference Journal, 1903, p. 31.

enemy, and on another occasion a group of Methodist preachers vowed warfare "until the last saloon is banished from our country."[59] The Southern Methodists even called for prohibition four years before statehood, while the Presbyterians went so far as to condemn certain Princeton professors for sanctioning the sale of liquor in the vicinity of the campus.[60]

Aside from such stringent maxims, the churches made more positive contributions to the field of Christian works. Many a settler doubtless overcame insuperable burdens with the help of neighbors who practiced the Golden Rule. Moreover, the social gatherings of church people often allayed the loneliness of life on a claim. Some churches later realized the opportunities of Christian ministry through hospitals and schools.[61]

It is evident, then, that religion met a considerable degree of success in Oklahoma Territory. The foregoing indicates a deep involvement on the part of many church-going people and at least nominal commitment by an even larger group. The extreme (and sometimes even hypocritical) attitudes embraced by some zealots should not distract from the over-all accomplishments of organized religion.

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[59] Oklahoma Annual Conference Minutes, 1906, p. 82.

[60] Synod of Indian Territory Minutes, 1897, p. 33.

[61] The Methodist Episcopal Church took over the supervision of a Guthrie hospital in 1906.

Certainly the Lord could overlook human frailty among those who chose to settle in his own country.

CHAPTER VI

THE DEVIL'S PRINTERS

The educational system otherwise known as the public press further implemented the development of civilization. Oklahoma Territory was served by numerous publications, ranging from small weeklies issued by a printer and his "devil" to large dailies published in Guthrie and Oklahoma City. Whether he sought political enlightenment, agricultural news, or simply community gossip, the average reader was certain to find something to his liking.

The opening of Oklahoma attracted a number of editors. While some saw a final chance for unfettered expression, most envisioned financial opportunity in hundreds of future towns, each sure to need its own newspaper. Regardless of motivations, these representatives of the press quickly established themselves in almost every hamlet and town in Oklahoma Territory. Once settled they often became one-man chambers of commerce devoted to promoting their towns in a style that would have done credit to P. T. Barnum.[1]

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[1]The newspaperman's role as booster is discussed in the following chapter.

Even before the local press was well established, news-hungry settlers eagerly awaited the latest editions of "outside" papers, notably the Wichita Eagle, Dallas News, and Kansas City Star.[2] The arrival of the weekly edition of the Star was a significant event to early settlers in the Cherokee Outlet. With the exception of a few magazines and personal letters, the Star constituted the principal mail item at the Prather post office in Kay County during the early years.[3] Public acceptance of the press soon proved advantageous to enterprising editors, who, by 1906, were operating more than 300 daily and weekly publications in the Territory. Among these were several German language papers, such as Das Oklahoma Volksblatt and Oklahoma Staats Zeitung, both published at El Reno, and a lively Negro newspaper, the Langston City Herald. Various specialized publications dealt with agriculture, medicine, religion, and education. These, along with a few well-edited magazines, amply covered the early Oklahoma scene.[4]

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[2]Dan W. Peery, "Editorial," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. IX (March, 1931), pp. 7-8.

[3]Angie Debo, Prairie City: The Story of An American Community (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1944), p. 59; "Early Postoffices and Country Stores," Hatfield Collection, Box H-10, Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Library, Norman, Oklahoma.

[4]No attempt is made in this study to categorize or list the newspapers of Oklahoma Territory, a task already performed by Carolyn Thomas Foreman in Oklahoma Imprints: 1835-1907: A History of Printing in Oklahoma Before Statehood (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1936.) Magazines are considered more fully in Chapter IX.

The story of Oklahoma newspapers actually begins in pre-territorial days. Long before white settlers set foot in the region, several printing presses were in operation in Indian Territory. The Reverend Samuel A. Worcester, a dedicated missionary to the Cherokee Nation, established a press in 1835 to print religious materials in the syllabary developed by Sequoyah. His print shop at Park Hill ultimately produced a variety of work in the Cherokee, Choctaw, and Creek languages.[5] Tribal governments eventually authorized Indian newspapers, some of which were printed in both English and Indian tongues. Notable among these publications was the Cherokee Advocate, first published at Tahlequah in September, 1844.[6]

The first paper published in what became Oklahoma Territory also emerged from an Indian background. The Reverend Alfred Brown established the Cheyenne Transporter at Darlington in the Cheyenne-Arapaho reservation in December, 1879. Brown not only attempted to give eastern readers a favorable view of the mission schools but he also featured a variety of local news as well. Before the paper's suspension in 1886, Kansas merchants from as far away as Caldwell and Arkansas City advertised in the

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[5]Foreman, Oklahoma Imprints, p. 1.

[6]Grace E. Ray, Early Oklahoma Newspapers: History and Description of Publications From Earliest Beginnings to 1889. University of Oklahoma Bulletin. (June 15, 1928), pp. 7-9; Foreman, Oklahoma Imprints, p. 77.

Transporter.[7]

Three papers were published prior to 1890 in No Man's Land, the public land strip between the Texas panhandle and the southern boundary of Kansas.[8] They were the Territorial Advocate, founded at Beaver City in 1887; the Benton County Banner, started at Benton in 1888 but later moved to Beaver City; and the Beaver City Pioneer, begun in 1886.[9] In 1887 the Territorial Advocate claimed a circulation in excess of 600.

National publications naturally focused on Oklahoma as the various openings occurred. The Santa Fe Railroad transported about fifty newspaper correspondents to Guthrie on April 22, 1889.[10] Among the reporters were Victor Murdock of the Wichita Eagle and Fred L. Wenner, who represented the New York Tribune, the Chicago Times, and the St. Louis Globe Democrat.[11] Several magazines also

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[7]Ray, Early Oklahoma Newspapers, pp. 65-70.

[8]Although unclaimed by any state or territory until Congress added it to Oklahoma Territory in 1890, the area reportedly had a population of several thousand in the mid-1880's. See Roy Gittinger, The Foundation of the State of Oklahoma (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1939), p. 173.

[9]Elsie Cady Gleason, "The Newspapers of the Panhandle of Oklahoma," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XIX (June, 1941), p. 144; Foreman, Oklahoma Imprints, pp. 272-73.

[10]"Wenner Biography," Wenner Collection, Box 1, Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Library.

[11]Victor Murdock to Fred L. Wenner, April 21, 1939, Wenner Collection, Box 2.

featured stories on early Oklahoma, one of the most significant being an article by Hamilton S. Wicks in Cosmopolitan.[12] Few of these correspondents remained in Oklahoma. Rather, the majority of territorial newspapermen were country editors who sought financial gain.[13]

Many Oklahoma editors came from Kansas.[14] Among those who arrived in 1889 were Milton W. Reynolds, Jacob V. Admire, Frank McMaster, Frank H. Greer, Hamlin W. Sawyer, Will T. Little, and J. B. Campbell. Later arrivals included Thompson B. Ferguson, Lon Whorton, John Golobie, and J. J. Burke, a native of Scotland.[15]

These journalists brought varied backgrounds to Oklahoma. A few were trained in other fields. Travis F. Hensley, for instance, practiced law and taught school

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[12]Hamilton S. Wicks, "The Opening of Oklahoma," Cosmopolitan, Vol. VII (September, 1889). This article has been reprinted in the Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. IV (June, 1926), pp. 129-43.

[13]Among the correspondents who remained were Wenner and W. P. Thompson, who reported the run for the Kansas City Times. See "Wenner Biography," Wenner Collection, Box 1; Marion Tuttle Rock, Illustrated History of Oklahoma: "The Land of the Fair God" (Topeka, Kansas: O. B. Hamilton & Son, 1890), p. 64.

[14]To the contrary, most Indian Territory editors had southern backgrounds. J. B. Thoburn, History of the Oklahoma Press Association (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Press Association, 1930). This commemorative work has no page numbers.

[15]Frank McMaster, "Representative Men; Oklahoma Editors, Chapter 1," McMaster's Magazine, Vol. VIII (October, 1897), p. 264; A. C. Scott, "J. J. Burke--Pioneer Newspaperman," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. X (June, 1932), p. 290.

before he bought the El Reno Democrat in 1892.[16] O. P. Sturm, editor of Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine, also taught school in Missouri before he migrated to Oklahoma City by way of Tulsa. While most Oklahoma editors were ambitious young men, some had already achieved successful careers. The dean of the early press was Milton W. Reynolds, better known by the pen name, "Kicking Bird." Reynolds had edited papers in Nebraska and Kansas and was recognized as an authority on Indians, having covered the Fort Smith peace conference in 1865 and the Medicine Lodge council in 1867. He established the Edmond Sun in July, 1889, but died soon thereafter.[17] W. P. Thompson also brought an interesting background to the Oklahoma scene. A Civil War veteran who reportedly fought under "Stonewall" Jackson, he toured Japan after the war and then returned to work for such papers as the New York Tribune, the St. Louis Republican, and the Kansas City Times. Thompson represented the Times at the opening and later launched the Guthrie Daily News.[18]

Regardless of his prior experience, each editor more or less faced the same problems in establishing a paper.

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[16]Gladys Hensley Engle, "Travis Franklin Hensley, 1851-1944," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXIII (Spring, 1945), p. 31.

[17]Rock, Illustrated History, pp. 99-102; Dan W. Peery, "Hon. Milton W. Reynolds," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XIII (March, 1935), pp. 46-47.

[18]Rock, Illustrated History, pp. 64-65.

Foremost was the matter of financial support. Although it took little capital to start a weekly, maintenance entailed regular expenses. Fortunately, printing supply houses granted liberal credit on type, newsprint, and ink.[19] In some cases, subsidization by political groups and other vested interests further lightened the load until the paper became self-supporting. Suitable housing posed another problem, especially in western Oklahoma where lumber was scarce. Consequently many editors lived and worked in the same building or dugout, and their offspring literally grew up with the newspaper. The editors of the Blackwell Record operated their press in the outdoors where it had been unloaded.[20]

In addition to naming their publications, editors had also to choose names and determine publication schedules and subscription rates. Some chose such mundane names as Sun, Times, and Press, but others enlivened the roster with the following appellations: Blackwell Spoon, Cheyenne Sunbeam, El Reno Supper Bell, Hennessey Clipper, and Oklahoma City Occidental Light Horse, a Negro paper. Also popular were the political tags, Democrat and Republican. The fact that there were more "Republicans" indicated the territory's early political leanings. The Lincoln County

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[19]Frank Luther Mott, American Journalism, Rev. ed. (New York: McMillan Company, 1950), p. 478.

[20]Homer S. Chambers, second interview, "Indian-Pioneer Papers," Vol. XVII, p. 88.

Democrat and Telegram, despite its name, even professed Republican politics.[21] Friday was the most popular publication day for Oklahoma weeklies. Rowell's American Newspaper Directory for 1901 listed sixty-five published on Friday, forty-three on Thursday, nine on Saturday, and three on Wednesday. As for the dailies, evening papers were usually issued every day except on Sunday. The two leading morning papers, the Oklahoma State Capital of Guthrie and the Daily Oklahoman of Oklahoma City, both published every day except Monday. Annual subscription rates for weeklies ranged from fifty cents to $1.50; the majority charged a dollar a year. The yearly rate for dailies was from $3 to $6, with the better papers in the higher range.

Once his paper was launched, replete with editorial promises, the editor faced the chore of issuing it regularly. No sooner had he dispatched the paper to its readers than he had to start over again preparing the next issue. In addition to writing both news and editorials, the country editor often solicited advertisements, set the type and ran the press, and kept the books.

The most important item in any print shop was the press. The symbol of country journalism during the territorial period was the Washington hand-press, first

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[21] Rowell's American Newspaper Directory (New York: Geo. P. Rowell & Co., 1901), pp. 943-49. The following political affiliations were listed in 1901: 43 Republican, 25 Democrat, 8 Populist, 4 Independent, and 1 non-partisan.

developed by Samuel Rust in 1827 and later manufactured by R. Hoe & Co. This hand-operated press required considerable physical exertion, but it produced a clear impression when properly used. The Washington was available in various sizes, ranging from one with a small 18x24-inch bed to the large 38½x48-inch model. The cost ranged from $165 to $380, and, as R. Hoe & Co.'s price list for the 1890's revealed, they were guaranteed for a year.[22] Obviously, the addition of power-driven machinery speeded up the process, and since both steam and gasoline-powered models were available editors sought these devices as soon as finances allowed. For instance, Thompson B. Ferguson, publisher of the Watonga Republican, bought a power press in 1900 to replace an old Washington hauled from Kansas in the early 1890's.[23] A few years later, he was negotiating with the Western Newspaper Union for a Cotterall press, which cost as much as $1,200.[24] Even larger cylinder model presses were required for daily newspaper operations.

Neither the typewriter nor the linotype was common

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[22]Robert F. Karolevitz, Newspapering in the Old West (Seattle, Washington: Superior Publishing Company, 1965), pp. 18-19.

[23]Mrs. Thompson B. Ferguson, They Carried the Torch: The Story of Oklahoma's Pioneer Newspapers (Kansas City, Missouri: Burton Publishing Co., 1937), pp. 99-100.

[24]D. M. Gallisha to Thompson B. Ferguson, August 21, 1903, Ferguson Collection, Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Library; Jack L. Cross, "Thomas J. Palmer, Frontier Publicist," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXVIII (Winter, 1950-1951), p. 483.

in the earlier days of territorial journalism. Many Oklahoma editors, including Frank H. Greer of the State Capital, preferred to write their copy by hand, and this practice persisted for years.[25] Greer nevertheless adopted machine typesetting, but such equipment was too costly for smaller papers, where editors continued to hand-set their type.[26]

Printing supplies came from various sources. One of the most active firms in Oklahoma Territory was the Western Newspaper Union, with branch offices at Oklahoma City and Wichita, Kansas. Founded at Des Moines in 1880, the company specialized in furnishing ready-print or "patent insides," printed sheets with feature material on one side and nothing on the other. Weekly shipments were usually sent C. O. D. and editors merely paid for the paper at the express office.[27] Even this small amount was hard to raise as E. E. Brown testified when he recalled the difficulties he met in finding $2.50 to pay for his weekly supply of

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[25] J. B. Thoburn, "Frank H. Greer," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XIV (September, 1936), p. 288.

[26] Guthrie State Capital, August 28, 1898. A good compositor could set from four to six columns of eight-point type a day. See Ferguson, They Carried the Torch, p. 22.

[27] Mott, American Journalism, pp. 478-79. Besides well-written features, the ready-print furnished the journalist with editorial ideas; hence, the frequency of locally-written articles on foreign politics and exotic places. The Western Newspaper Union also provided a territorial news service which it advertised as "unequalled" in the 1905 program of the Oklahoma Press Association.

five hundred sheets.[28]

The appearance of newspaper shops varied, depending upon the size of the operation, but Mrs. Thompson B. Ferguson's description of the Watonga Republican would fit many weekly papers. She recalled that type cases were placed along the wall where compositors could take advantage of the better light. The imposing stone or work table in the center of the shop held several iron chases or page forms and the wooden, wedge-shaped quions used to lock up the form. On a shelf below were brass column rules and a wooden mallet and plane to make the type level. In addition to the newspaper press, there was at least one smaller job press for printing envelopes, stationery, and handbills. A desk or table, littered with exchange papers and the appurtenances of an editor, completed the scene.[29]

Fortunate was the man who could depend on his family for help, as in the case of the Fergusons, owners of the above-mentioned Watonga Republican. The talented Mrs. Ferguson was known as the "junior editor" of the Republican in the mid 1890's because of her active role in the operation of the paper. An 1896 editorial, written soon after the birth of a daughter, noted: "If the paper is not up to the standard this week, our indulgent readers are hereby

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[28]Gleason, "Newspapers of the Oklahoma Panhandle," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XIX (June, 1941), p. 142.

[29]Ferguson, They Carried the Torch, pp. 21-23.

informed that a new girl came on last Monday to play devil in the office, and the Junior editor is manipulating flannels instead of presiding over the destinies of this sheet." The Fergusons' oldest son, Walter, also proved helpful in setting type.[30]

Hard work and meager profits characterized the early press. The first decade of settlement was especially trying for country newspapers, which were often viewed as public clearing houses rather than private businesses. Moreover, since editors were expected to take positions, they were open to financial recrimination. At times, a positive editorial stand literally took bread from the family table. This instability led in turn to a rapid turnover in ownership.

Part of the problem was due to the fact that there were too many papers. In 1898, the first year of detailed listing by the governor's report, Oklahoma claimed more than 120 newspapers; by 1906 the figure surpassed 300.[31] Guthrie alone had fifteen papers from 1889 to 1907--enough apparently, to satisfy every political whim.

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[30] Sooner State Press, April 21, 1934, p. 3. Young Ferguson later became an Oklahoma editor. He attributed much of his education to the hours he spent putting his father's writing into type.

[31] Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, to the Secretary of the Interior for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1898. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1898), p. 58. Ibid., 1906, p. 42. A breakdown in the latter report showed: 29 daily, 293 weekly, 13 monthly, 7 semi-monthly, and 4 quarterly publications.

Pawnee, a town of less than two thousand, once had five newspapers, including a daily. As already indicated, changes in ownership were frequent. The Edmond Sun, for example, passed through the hands of seven publishers before statehood, and the Anadarko Times had four owners between 1901 and 1907.[32] While many Oklahomans were involved with several papers, there is no indication that any ever approached the record of one midwestern editor who reportedly established twenty-six newspapers--one for nearly every year in his career.[33]

Depressed economic conditions brought more distress. Periodic crop failures and the general insecurity of a new land often kept settlers from paying their subscription, yet the editor could hardly afford to cut his circulation. As noted earlier, most Oklahoma weeklies charged only a dollar a year, but it was hard to collect even this amount. One editor bluntly told his readers to pay up because he needed their money to continue publication. Another was somewhat more subtle when he meekly reminded his patrons that many subscriptions were overdue. Dick Quinn of the Hardesty Herald tried humorous poetry:

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[32]Thoburn, Oklahoma Press Association, n. p., University of Oklahoma School of Journalism, "Abstracts of Oklahoma Weeklies," A-K Journal Building. These abstracts based on original research, the files of the Sooner State Press, and Mrs. Foreman's Oklahoma Imprints, were compiled under the direction of Dr. John Whitaker.

[33]Mott, American Journalism, p. 479.

Have you found that $ yet
  Hand it in.
We need it, you can bet,
  Hand it in.
We need it in our biz
To make this paper whiz,
It won't go less it iz
  Handed in.[34]

Because of the scarcity of money, editors frequently resorted to barter and received such items as stove wood, potatoes, turnips, and roasting ears as welcome tender for a year's subscription.[35]

Advertising brought in some revenue, but businessmen were often indifferent to its value despite low rates.[36] Since the numerous patent medicine ads in most early newspapers came on the ready-print side, these brought no money to the local publisher. To build up local business, editors often commented on the value of advertising. In November, 1893, the Watonga Republican warned merchants that "Flies roost upon the business man who never advertises." The El Reno Democrat and the Arapaho Arrow appealed to city pride by equating prosperity with the number of advertisements in the local press. The Arrow even feared for its reputation by noting: "Every boast made by a paper that business is booming

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[34]As quoted in Gleason, "Newspapers of the Panhandle of Oklahoma," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XIX (June, 1941), p. 143.

[35]Ferguson, They Carried the Torch, p. 18; Thoburn, Oklahoma Press.

[36]Display space sold for five or ten cents a column-inch. In 1891, Lillie's Drug Store paid the Guthrie Star $1.50 a month for an ad. Statement, Lillie Collection, Box 6, Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Library.

when it has no advertisements to back up the assertion brands the editor as a liar."[37] Advertising was more profitable in the larger towns with sizeable markets, but even city folk had to be educated. In 1893, the Oklahoma City Press-Gazette ruled that churches would henceforth have to purchase space for notices because many had failed to let the paper bid on office supplies. The announcement prompted this comment in the Guthrie State Capital:

> The newspaper that gives anything free-except news-matter--is digging its own sepulchre. The State Capital has always aimed to conduct its business on the same basis other vocations are conducted on--that everything we have for sale is worth the money, and if you don't want it at a 'living profit,' pass on.[38]

Although blunt on the surface, such an attitude doubtless contributed to the State Capital's success.

The county printing account represented a more dependable means of support. This political plum simply went without bids to the paper that had supported the successful slate of candidates for county commissioner.[39] Such was considered proper partisan action, as the State Capital once observed when it commended county officials for awarding the prize to a Populist paper. Although the loss of these funds could prove disastrous, editors learned to maintain their political loyalties and wait for the next election.

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[37]Arapaho Arrow, October 21, 1892.

[38]Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, June 17, 1893.

[39]Ferguson, They Carried the Torch, p. 24.

Once, after losing to the rival Watonga Herald, the Republican remarked: "It does not require county printing or anything of the kind to make us Republicans, and to make us work day and night for the Republican party."[40]

There were still other means of making public money. One was the lucrative practice of printing the final proof notices required of settlers before they gained full rights to their homesteads. The notices ran in six issues and brought the editor a total of eight dollars. On January 24, 1901, the Watonga Republican ran eighty-four final notices.[41] Still another form of aid was the commissioning of editors as postmasters--usually a fourth class job. Thompson B. Ferguson became postmaster of Watonga in 1897, but gave the job up after a few years because it interfered with his political activities. A. H. Classen of the Edmond Sun was appointed postmaster at Edmond in August, 1890.[42]

The discussion thus far has centered on how newspapers were produced. But what of their appearance? Naturally, the quality varied, depending upon the editor's ability and his equipment, but most papers looked remarkably alike. The following pertains more to weeklies than to dailies, which began to use modern make-up methods after 1900. Early papers varied from four to eight pages in length, and the

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[40]Watonga Republican, January 9, 1895.

[41]Ferguson, They Carried the Torch, p. 106.

[42]Ibid., p. 75; Rock, Illustrated History, p. 229.

number of columns ranged from three to eight. To the modern reader, territorial newspapers would seem drab, since worn-out type and faulty presswork often resulted in a dim product. Page layout was characterized by single-column headlines and gray body type and suffered from a lack of illustrations. Only an occasional drawing and advertisements provided relief from an otherwise monotonous make-up.[43]

Whatever their artistic deficiencies, the papers were more successful in presenting news and opinion, though the two were frequently indistinguishable. Weeklies contained mostly local news, except for the national and international stories furnished by the ready-print. Several daily papers, notably the Guthrie State Capital and the Daily Oklahoman, eventually carried wire reports from the Associated Press. News from surrounding communities appeared in virtually all papers, as did the popular personal columns with such vital information as who was visiting whom and who had made a business trip or bought a new buggy. These columns filled another need when advertisers demanded that their ads be placed next to reading matter. Thus, a patron might find his message sandwiched between an item describing a certain

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[43]In addition to their typographical appeal, advertisements were often cleverly written, as shown by this one for Grisham, Steel and Company in the Guthrie State Capital of April 11, 1894:

> And thus the years new Fashion bring
> which Flourish and Decay:
> The CORSET is the only thing
> That ever came to to [sic] stay.

farmer's crops and a notice of the ladies' aid society. Always willing (and often eager) to take a position, the country editor made little effort to hide his bias. He injected his view into both news stories and editorials, the latter ranging in length from a sentence to a column. Popular subjects were politics, land openings, statehood, crops, and the free home movement. The Spanish-American War drew considerable comment in 1898. In addition, papers served as chauvinistic promoters of Oklahoma.

An equally important aspect of early journalism was circulation, the process of getting a newspaper before the largest possible number of readers. This was a rather simple task for the smaller weeklies, whose clientele covered an area no larger than the county or even less. Since the mid-nineteenth century, the post office department had provided for free delivery of weekly papers within the county.[44] The larger papers, especially the Guthrie and Oklahoma City dailies, met greater problems in covering the territory, but they were disseminated more efficiently as rail and postal service improved.

Since audited circulations were rare before 1914, the figures supplied by publishers were often unreliable.[45] Circulations ranged from a few hundred to several thousand

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[44]Mott, American Journalism, p. 305.

[45]Ibid., p. 715. The Audit Bureau of Circulations was established in 1914.

among weekly papers. The Enid Eagle reported a circulation of 1,778 in 1899. The Chandler Publicist claimed an average of 1,129 subscribers the next year. The largest paper among the weeklies was the State Capital, with more than 15,000 alleged subscribers at the turn of the century. At the same time the daily edition of the State Capital reported 9,266 readers compared to 6,968 in 1895.[46] The El Reno Democrat preferred to deal in generalities by asserting that it had the largest list of bona fide subscribers in the Territory. Similarly, the Watonga Republican boasted that its subscription list was "increasing every week."[47]

E. K. Gaylord, who became business manager of the Daily Oklahoman in 1903, recounted the following story on newspaper circulation. Toward the end of the territorial period, Gaylord challenged the State Capital's claim of 20,000 subscribers. Since national advertisers paid on the basis of circulation, the Guthrie paper had most of the lucrative national accounts in Oklahoma Territory. In an effort to ascertain the paper's true size, Gaylord sent men to Guthrie and stationed them across the street from the newspaper plant. By comparing the length of the press-run with the press's known capability, Gaylord gained an

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[46] American Newspaper Directory, pp. 943-49.

[47] El Reno Democrat, December 26, 1893; Watonga Republican, March 28, 1894.

accurate estimate which he further checked against the second class postal figures on newspaper mailings. He then wrote a letter to Printer's Ink, the national publisher's magazine, and exposed the State Capital's claim as fraudulent. He accurately placed the paper's circulation at about 7,000, approximately the same as his own paper. The Daily Oklahoman soon got its share of national advertising.[48]

Editors often tried to increase circulation by offering national publications in conjunction with their papers for a special price. For instance, a reader could receive both the weekly State Capital and McClure's Magazine for $1.75 a year in 1894. The publishers in turn got the foreign publications at reduced rates. Early in 1905, the weekly Kansas City Star made such an offer to the Watonga Republican.[49]

Rivalry was to be expected when large amounts of money were involved, though in reality it extended to all levels of the territorial press. Judging from the tone of many papers, editors did not like each other, but belligerence actually was motivated less by hatred than by a desire to survive. Vicious statements were often meant to discourage the other fellow in hopes that he would "see the light, quit, and leave the field." Thus, the editor of the Kingfisher Free

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[48] Oklahoma Publishing Company, Fifty Years of Progress (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Publishing Company, 1953), p. 11. By 1907 the Oklahoman claimed a circulation of 22,230.

[49] State Capital, April 3, 1894; W. C. Rodecker to Governor T. B. Ferguson, January 26, 1905, Ferguson Collection.

Press could observe "a good many born jackasses have managed to crawl into the newspaper harness in Oklahoma."[50]

One of the fiercest rivalries involved Thompson B. Ferguson of the Watonga Republican and D. J. Martz of the Watonga Rustler, who never knowingly took the same side of any public question. Ferguson once chargedthe Rustler's editor with being in the hire of Kingfisher real estate men who wanted to run down Watonga and Blaine County. He further described the Rustler as "the tool of those who do not want to see Blaine county prosper." This classic denunciation followed:

> The ignorant, egotistical, scrawny, miserable, contemptible, disgusting, measley, mangey, depraved, lying, hypocritical, blear-eyed, dough-faced, idiotic, dwarfed, pinched-up squaking old numskull [sic] of the ex-Rustler ghost still continues to impose himself upon a people who are even more completely disgusted with him than were the Nebraska people who compelled him to make a premature and hasty exit.[51]

When the Republican office was set on fire a few months later, Ferguson accused Martz of instigating the act, but no legal action followed.

While they were often at each other's throats verbally, editors nevertheless formed a closely-knit group. Several examples of fraternal loyalty suggest that they did not take their feuds seriously. Upon learning that his chief

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[50]Ferguson, They Carried the Torch, p. 26; Kingfisher Free Press, January 4, 1894.

[51]Watonga Republican, July 12, 1893; Ibid., November 29, 1893.

opponent was indisposed by sickness and in danger of losing his legal publication account, one kind-hearted editor printed his rival's paper and even cut fire wood for the family.[52] Another publisher, his office destroyed by fire, continued regular publication because newspaper friends came to his assistance.[53] Even the quick-tempered Ferguson could overlook his quarrel with Kingfisher long enough to congratulate the newly-wedded editor of the Free-Press, J. L. Admire. Such courtesies also extended to daily papers. The Daily Oklahoman, for instance, was printed on the press of the Times-Journal while its own new press was being installed. The Oklahoman nevertheless continued to attack the Times-Journal on the paper's own press.[54]

Editors were less fortunate when they applied their vitriolic pens outside the profession. Those who found themselves involved in libel suits could usually depend upon other editors to come to their defense. When an El Reno editor accused the county commissioners of taking bribes, Tom Ferguson remarked: "It is customary in this country when some whited sepulcher wants to carry on fraud, and the newspapers expose him, to bring a libel suit. Times [sic]

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[52]Ferguson, They Carried the Torch, pp. 26-27.

[53]"Representative Men," McMaster's Magazine, Vol. VIII (October, 1897), p. 199.

[54]Oklahoma Publishing Co., Fifty Years of Progress, p. 12.

always vindicates the newspaper."[55] One of the most publicized cases involving an editor was that of Frank McMaster of the Oklahoma City Gazette, who was sentenced to six months in jail for contempt of court in 1894. Vigorously defending McMaster, the Guthrie State Capital declared that Judge Henry W. Scott had no authority to ban the utterances of the press in a country where the constitution guaranteed freedom of the press. "He will find that he has mistaken his power and the temper of the people," the paper concluded. The Guthrie paper soon turned on McMaster, however, and urged him to control his acid tongue. The press had no more right to abuse its liberty than a judge to abridge it.[56]

Journalists such as McMaster enriched the profession in Oklahoma Territory. Daring and yet conservative, they practiced a form of personal journalism on the decline elsewhere. Readers identified editors with their newspaper, such as McMaster's Gazette, Greer's State Capital, or Ferguson's Republican. Editors, consequently, exerted a great deal of influence on the people and the Territory.

No study of the early press would be complete without mentioning Frank H. Greer, the enthusiastic and capable editor of the Guthrie Oklahoman State Capital. In a relatively brief period, he established the first paper which

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[55]As quoted in Ferguson, They Carried the Torch, p. 85.

[56]Guthrie (daily) State Capital, April 3, 1894; Ibid., April 7, 1894.

attempted to serve the entire territory, and Greer's influence likely would have continued if Guthrie had not lost the capital to Oklahoma City. Instead, the Daily Oklahoman assumed the leading role, while the State Capital, removed from the scene of the new state's political wars and shorn of its advertising volume, gradually died. For two decades, Greer issued his daily and weekly editions with a zest long since lost. Before coming to Oklahoma from Kansas, Greer had worked for the Winfield Courier for fifteen years.[57] By his own admission, he was a "sooner," having entered Oklahoma before the official opening time on April 22, 1889--a secret kept for years.[58] Before the first day ended Greer was distributing copies of the Oklahoma State Capital printed in Kansas.[59] His first plant was housed in a small frame building erected during the first week of settlement, but the State Capital quickly outgrew such humble quarters and eventually became a profitable operation. Frank McMaster once asserted that Greer was "perhaps the only conspicuous proof that there is profit in Oklahoma journalism."[60] Greer took an active role in Republican

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[57]Rock, Illustrated History, pp. 67-68.

[58]Thoburn, "Frank H. Greer," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XIV (September, 1936), p. 275. Greer's paper later became anti-sooner.

[59]Ironically, Greer almost decided to establish his paper in Oklahoma City. He even set a dateline to that effect but later changed it. Ibid., p. 282.

[60]"Representative Men," McMaster's Magazine, Vol. VIII (October, 1897), pp. 196-97.

politics and soon became a leading figure, "powerful enough to make and unmake men in public life."[61]

Despite his astuteness, Greer eventually lost his paper, largely because of political developments. He chose the wrong side of the statehood controversy by supporting joint statehood and further alienated himself by taking an unpopular view against the new state constitution.[62] Later, when the capital was moved from Guthrie to Oklahoma City in 1910, Greer faced a crucial situation: either he could move or reduce the size and scope of his paper. He refused the first alternative and eventually was forced to suspend publication on March 26, 1911.[63] Frederick S. Barde furnished an appropriate epitaph when he wrote in the Kansas City Star: "Unable to escape his predicament, Greer applied the match and blew up the ship."[64] Thus ended one of Oklahoma's early institutions: Greer lost his fortune, and Oklahoma lost a good newspaper.[65]

Meanwhile, the Daily Oklahoman of Oklahoma City assumed journalistic leadership. This paper first entered the scene

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[61] Kansas City Star, April 22, 1911.

[62] Thoburn, "Greer," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XIV (September, 1935), p. 289.

[63] Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine, XII (May, 1911), p. 18.

[64] April 22, 1911.

[65] Following his wife's death, Greer moved to Tulsa where he died in 1933, long since removed from the exciting life of a daily newspaper editor. See Thoburn, "Greer," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XIV (September, 1935), p. 289.

in January, 1894, amidst the usual competition of a thriving town. Its founder, the Reverend Sam Small, envisioned a metropolitan daily and proceeded to operate the Daily Oklahoman as one. Small added an Associated Press wire report and hired a competent staff, but he soon learned that the path of a metropolitan paper in a country town was not "bordered with violets nor padded with hair mattresses." Several months later he departed for Texas and left his brainchild to a series of owners, none of whom succeeded until Roy F. Stafford and "Klondike" Parker bought the Daily Oklahoman in the winter of 1899.[66] When Stafford bought a linotype and hired a news editor, Parker became alarmed over expenses and sold his share, thus leaving the entire operation to Stafford.[67]

Fortunately, Oklahoma City had entered a boom period and the Daily Oklahoman profited from the times. In December, 1902, Edward K. Gaylord visited the city and became interested in the paper. Involved in journalism since his college days in Colorado, Gaylord was working on his brother's paper in St. Joseph, Missouri, when he decided to come to Oklahoma. Lured by the city's potential, he unsuccessfully tried to buy into the Times-Journal. Later Stafford offered to sell him an interest in the Oklahoman. The Oklahoma Publishing Company

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[66]Clark Hudson, "Struggle and Growth of the Oklahoman," Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine, Vol. VIII (March, 1909), p. 19.

[67]Ibid., p. 21.

was formed on January 29, 1903, with Stafford in charge of editorial operations and Gaylord responsible for business affairs. This relationship continued until 1918 when Stafford sold his interest to Gaylord.[68]

The Daily Oklahoman prospered under Gaylord's management and displayed a fierce competitive spirit toward its rivals. The paper moved into a new building in October, 1903, and added a 16-page, two deck Goss perfecting press, capable of printing two colors. As noted earlier, the Daily Oklahoman challenged the State Capital in a lively campaign for territorial leadership. In February, 1904, the Oklahoman "scooped" its competition with a special edition on the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War. Gaylord dispatched thousands of copies of the Oklahoman to Wichita and Guthrie, where neither the Eagle nor the State Capital was publishing on Monday. Victor Murdock, publisher of the Eagle, later admitted that he first read of the war in a copy of the Daily Oklahoman purchased in his own city.[69] Such enterprise greatly contributed to the Daily Oklahoman's rise to prominence.

While Stafford and Gaylord built a metropolitan daily, a country editor from Watonga sat in the governor's seat at Guthrie. His presence there was largely due to his success

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[68]Oklahoma Publishing Company, Fifty Years of Progress, pp. 6-7; Thoburn, Oklahoma Press Association, n. p..

[69]Oklahoma Publishing Company, Fifty Years of Progress, pp. 9-11.

as editor of the Watonga Republican, for Thompson B. Ferguson was a newspaperman first and a politician second. Ferguson moved to Watonga in the fall of 1892.[70] In addition to his household goods, Ferguson brought several cases of type and a supply of ready-print. He had already shipped his Washington hand-press to Kingfisher by rail, from where it was taken the remaining thirty-two miles by wagon. When the Fergusons arrived at their new home, they found a crude prairie town with more than its share of saloons. Years later Mrs. Ferguson recalled how her heart sank as they drove into town:

> Drunken revelry from those places made me shudder and I looked at the sleeping baby on my lap, and at the small boy on the seat by my side, resolving that I would not rear my boys in such a wild place and that I would start back to Kansas the next morning.[71]

The Fergusons remained in Oklahoma, though, and the press gained a husband and wife team it would not soon forget.

Ferguson established his paper immediately. The first issue, published on December 12, 1892, carried a cheerful introductory editorial:

> How do you do, or if you prefer it, in good western style, Howdy. This week we present to the people of County C. the Watonga Republican. The paper is not very large, but young and

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[70]Local Republicans encouraged Ferguson to establish a paper. George Rainey to Mrs. Grant Foreman, November 7, 1933. Foreman Collection, Box 1, Folder 14, Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Rainey was one of the men who persuaded Ferguson to move to Watonga.

[71]Ferguson, They Carried the Torch, p. 35.

> healthy and will grow rapidly with proper nourishment. We make no extended promises. As the country develops and business increases, we expect to improve it. Its interests in the future are to be identified with Watonga and County C. We have come to stay. We will, in business matters, endeavor to give our readers a paper that can be appreciated by all. Its politics will be uncompromisingly and aggressively Republican. We make but one promise, and that is that the politics of this paper will never be questioned. We support the Republican party because it is the party of progress, truth and immortal history; because it is the party of bravery and patriotism, of integrity and justice.[72]

Despite its political affiliation, the Republican suffered financially and might have failed if not for Ferguson's tenacity and his wife's support. Once, when a rival paper threatened to supplant the Republican, Ferguson seriously considered quitting. He possessed little money and food, but Mrs. Ferguson refused to give up. Meanwhile, a law firm ordered two dollar's worth of letterheads, and thus saved the Republican from an early death. Through the years the paper gained respect around the Territory, especially in political circles. In 1901 Ferguson bought a small paper at Hitchcock, eleven miles north of Watonga--the first of a planned chain of country papers. But another development soon upset his scheme.

The nature of territorial politics changed abruptly with the assassination in 1901 of President William

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[72] Watonga Republican, December 12, 1892, as cited in Mrs. Walter B. Ferguson Manuscript, pp. 18-19, Ferguson Collection (unprocessed), University of Oklahoma Library, Norman.

McKinley. The new president, Theodore Roosevelt, was eager to appoint his own man as governor of Oklahoma, and the Territory was rampant with rumors concerning his identity. Ferguson also joined in the speculation and observed that it took as much courage to be governor of Oklahoma as it did to "sail into Manila bay, or to face the deadly Spanish mausers at San Juan Hill." Nevertheless, ten or twelve men were ready to "slip into the saddle." Meanwhile, Dennis Flynn, the territorial delegate, and several other friends and Republican leaders submitted Ferguson's name for the position. Ferguson ultimately accepted the job and served until 1906, longer than any other territorial governor.[73]

Perhaps the best-known newspaperman in the later years of Oklahoma Territory was Frederick S. Barde, for many years the Oklahoma correspondent for the Kansas City Star. A native of Hannibal, Missouri, Barde came to Oklahoma in 1897[74] and covered the area until his death in 1916. He was responsible for much of the news that went beyond the borders of the Territory, ranging from accounts of frontier life to political affairs. His material appeared frequently in the Star under a general heading "Oklahoma Notes." Barde maintained an office in Guthrie, from which he covered official

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[73]Ferguson, They Carried the Torch, pp. 111-13. Ferguson hired a manager to run the Republican until his retirement from office.

[74]O. P. Sturm, "Oklahoma Literati," Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine, Vol. XI (January-February, 1911), p. 9.

affairs first-hand and directed his own string of correspondents. He also depended heavily on exchange papers, which he clipped and used in his extensive files.[75]

Newspapermen further left their imprint on the Territory through the Oklahoma Press Association. The professionalization process began quite early when a group organized at Purcell on May 20, 1890. The resulting Oklahoma and Indian Territory Press Association was soon dominated by Oklahoma editors.[76] A few Indian Territory members attended the second meeting at Oklahoma City in May, 1891, but the affiliation ended the next year. By 1894 an incomplete roster listed thirty-eight members.[77]

Semi-annual meetings of the Press Association allowed editors to improve themselves while at the same time becoming better acquainted with one another. In addition to regular business, the sessions included papers on various aspects of the profession. For example, at the 1895 meeting Frank Greer spoke on "Why Editors Are Poor." Handsomely printed programs, filled with advertisements by printing

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[75]So complete was his coverage of the Territory and early statehood that the legislature authorized in 1917 the purchase of Barde's collection as an important part of the state's early heritage. See Larry Phipps, "Fred S. Barde," Oklahoma Today, Vol. XV (Spring, 1965), p. 34.

[76]Thoburn, Oklahoma Press Association, n. p. The press of Indian Territory later formed a separate organization.

[77]Minutes of the Proceedings of the Oklahoma Press Association. Guthrie, May 29, 1894, (Guthrie: 1894), pp. 26-29.

supply firms and railroads, gave the proceedings an air of elegance.[78] These meetings were social events as well, both for the editors and the sponsoring towns. Local commercial clubs and printing houses assisted host journalists in planning elaborate banquets, complete with food, drink, and dancing. Since women often accompanied their husbands, many an editor took more rides on city railway systems and toured more homes than he wished to admit, with only an occasional visit to a brewery where he could quench his thirst with free samples. But the editors still managed to have fun. At the 1893 meeting, Frank McMaster led the group in thirteen toasts from wine furnished by Kingfisher saloon-owners. One editor became so disgusted with his drunken colleagues in 1895 that he left for home on the next train.[79] Ferguson expressed further disappointment in the behaviour when he insisted that "beer and revelry have no place in an editorial meeting. The Oklahoma press represents the best thought of Oklahoma," Ferguson admonished, "and the brethren at their public meetings should maintain the dignity of the profession."[80]

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[78] See Program of the Oklahoma Press Association. Oklahoma City, April 24-25, 1905. Oklahoma Press Association folder, Oklahoma Historical Association.

[79] Thoburn, Oklahoma Press Association, n. p.; Cross, "Thomas J. Palmer," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXVIII (Winter, 1950-51), p. 465.

[80] As quoted in Ferguson, They Carried the Torch, p. 71 Perhaps his early years in the Methodist ministry accounted for this attitude.

Notwithstanding these episodes, editors were still able to plan worthwhile projects. Perhaps their most significant contribution was the establishment of the Oklahoma Historical Society at Kingfisher in 1893.[81] The association also sent delegations to national press meetings and to the Chicago and St. Louis world fairs. "The Oklahoma editors may not look like millionaires," remarked the State Capital, "but they will be well fed, well clothed, sleek looking fellows who will not give the people along the route to Chicago the idea that the faberizers out here live on prairie dog soup, seasoned with imagination."[82] The Oklahomans attracted more publicity by arranging for the National Editorial Association to hold its annual meeting at Guthrie in 1905.[83]

As statehood approached the press association made plans to merge with editors from Indian Territory. More than three hundred persons attended a joint session with the Indian Territory Press Association at Shawnee in May, 1906, which resulted in the formation of the Oklahoma Press Association.[84] Thus, the leading spokesmen of the Territory were assured a strong voice in the new state.

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[81]The role of the Press Association in this venture is further discussed in Chapter IX.

[82]Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, July 15, 1893.

[83]Thoburn, Oklahoma Press Association, n. p.

[84]Ibid.

The coming of statehood brought the end of one era for the press and began another. Editors had served the Territory well by assisting in the civilizing process, and many were frustrated by the political maneuvers that postponed statehood. Denied immediate recognition, they busied themselves with the task of bringing further order to a new country.

Not only did the press reflect the life of the people, but it also served as Oklahoma's link with the outside world. In addition, it was a utilitarian form of culture. Perhaps the best evaluation of the press's role was offered by Frederick S. Barde in Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine a few years after statehood:

> If the people of Oklahoma, individually and collectively, have prospered and grown rich; if grass has grown where once there was waste; if railroads have levelled the barriers of the wilderness; if cities have risen, almost miraculously, to break the silence with the roar of their industries; if schools and churches lift up their spires where once stood only the Indian tepee; if a better citizenship, with a keener conscious for right, has been developed; if justice itself has been made more certain--if all these things of growth and advancement have come to the people of Oklahoma, they may be traced to the public press of the state more than to all other influences.[85]

And yet Barde was quick to criticize the press for what he called the pernicious influence of "yellow dog partisanship." Too often, he charged, papers were founded for

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[85]Frederick S. Barde, "Oklahoma Newspapers," Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine, Vol. IX (February, 1910), p. 19.

selfish motives. Fortunately many editors repented of their youthful indiscretions and turned to the job of building Oklahoma--a nobler task that left an even richer heritage.

CHAPTER VII

SINGING OKLAHOMA'S PRAISES

The dramatic settlement of Oklahoma inspired a variety of promoters throughout the territorial period. To those who believed in the future of Oklahoma, it was natural to tell the world of its greatness--to "sing her praises," as the booster often exclaimed. This boastful spirit was by no means unique in a land where isolation and adverse living conditions sometimes discouraged human existence. The Southern Plains was particularly subject to the cry of the publicist, who used a variety of propaganda to draw people into the area.

Despite its many attractions and rapid growth, Oklahoma long remained a wild country in the minds of many Americans, who envisioned savage Indians, outlaws, and rattlesnakes.[1] It was natural that individuals--variously known as boosters, boomers, or promoters--should emerge to counteract this image with more sympathetic views of life in the "Land of the Fair God." That their efforts sometimes exceeded the truth is

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[1]Mrs. Thompson B. Ferguson, They Carried the Torch (Kansas City: Burton Publishing Co., 1937), p. 17.

readily apparent, but the resulting publicity accomplished its purpose.

Contrary to normal expectations, the most vocal promoters of Oklahoma were not the "fly-by-night" land speculators and petty opportunists who dominated other areas but rather newspaper editors and government officials, particularly the territorial governors. Their knowledge of the scene provided the information necessary for effective promotion. Both groups displayed a spontaneous enthusiasm for Oklahoma, as shown by the tendency to turn national celebrations into recitals of territorial progress. Thus, while commenting in 1893 on the Fourth of July, the editor of the Guthrie State Capital proclaimed Oklahoma "the sassiest, healthiest four-year-old that ever came from the bounty of nature."[2] Governor William G. Renfrow likewise transformed his 1893 Thanksgiving proclamation into a promotional missal by noting that Oklahoma had enjoyed the "bright sunshine of prosperity" in the face of national adversity.[3] In fact the every-day efforts of these promoters were so voluminous that they resulted in literal reams of praise for the Territory.

Thousands of potential settlers first read of the new territory in attractive brochures published by the railroads in an effort to encourage immigration. Railroad companies

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[2]Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, July 8, 1893.

[3]Ibid., November 18, 1893.

even maintained special publicity departments which prepared handsome booklets and other promotional materials. For example, a pamphlet issued in 1905 by the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad entitled "Oklahoma and Indian Territory Along the Frisco" described opportunities open to settlers and urged them to act while land was still available.[4] Similar propaganda appeared in the Frisco Magazine, a "slick" publication designed to boost the region served by the railroad.[5] Companies also advertised through regular newspapers and periodicals. The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad, which played a significant role in the original opening of Oklahoma, continuously praised the area in both general and trade magazines.[6]

Land companies closely related to the railroads further publicized Oklahoma. One of the largest operations was the Frisco Townsite Company, a division of the Frisco Railroad. From his headquarters in Enid, President Ed L. Peckham directed a far-flung sales program that employed several hundred persons, many of whom worked at regional offices in

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[4] Oklahoma and Indian Territory Along the Frisco (St. Louis: Woodward & Tiernan Printing Co., 1905), passim.

[5] William R. Draper, The Land Boomer: A Personal Experience Story of the Rush of Speculators, Homeseekers and Settlers to the Great Southwest (Girard, Kansas: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1946), pp. 21, 26.

[6] Sturm's Statehood Magazine, Vol. II (May, 1906), advertising section.

major southern and eastern cities.[7] Peckham tolerated no deception in advertising or sales, but this did not always inhibit imaginative writing such as the following:

> We want you to come and see the rolling plains, burdened, as they will be, with ripened and ripening grain; the cattle 'Fattening on a thousand hills'; the streams, sparkling in limpid beauty and alluring with piscatorial life; the mountains, teeming with game, serenely picturesque and rich of golden ore; and all the beauty and grandeur of one of nature's fairest lands; the energy of her citizens; the evidences of thrift and plenty; and above all the marvelous progress made on every hand--in city, town, village and hamlet, and on every farm--in the few fleeting years of this country's settlement.[8]

Although the company claimed that it cared less about profits than in settling good men on the land, financial gain motivated its actions. Even if land sales brought little return, the parent railroad would prosper from increased business.

Local commercial clubs--the predecessors of modern chambers of commerce--filled yet another promotional role. Virtually every town had such a group at some stage in its development. Guthrie residents, for instance, organized a booster club in July, 1889, and businessmen later created a board of trade.[9] In the Cherokee Outlet, Blackwell formed a

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[7]Homer S. Chambers, "Townsite Promotion in Early Oklahoma," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XIX (June, 1941), pp. 163-64.

[8]Frisco Development Company, Prospectus (Enid: Frisco Development Company, 1905), p. 11.

[9]Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, November 24, 1894.

similar group in 1894, as reported in the Tonkawa Chief of May 26. Hennessey, although older, did not begin its commercial club until April, 1896.[10] The Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce succeeded the old Commercial Club in 1903, thereby establishing what would become one of Oklahoma's most successful promotional organizations. Although these groups concentrated on urban development, their efforts to attract railroads and industry generally benefited the entire Territory.

Participation in two world fairs further portrayed Oklahoma's achievements. A display at the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893 again focused national attention on Oklahoma. The Guthrie State Capital noted that the Oklahoma exhibit drew a continual stream of admirers, "all of whom realize that we have a country rich in resources and marvelous in development."[11] When the St. Louis World's Fair was staged in 1904, the territorial legislature appropriated $60,000 for an even larger exhibit. A special commission appointed by Governor Thompson B. Ferguson planned the display, which featured various agricultural, industrial, and cultural items. In their first report the commissioners observed that their purpose was to let Oklahoma's wealth speak for itself. They concluded that "if we can show all this in an inviting and convincing way to the throngs that visit

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[10]Hennessey Clipper, April 23, 1894.

[11]Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, August 5, 1893.

the great fair, how great will be the harvest of immigrants, capital and development. . . . 12

Varied as these efforts were, they did not approach the over-all effectiveness of territorial newspapers. At least two reasons explain the pioneer journalist's role as a zealous local promoter. As a businessman he naturally took a vital interest in the growth of his town and county. Moreover, he possessed the literary skills necessary to transform a dusty town into a booming city or an undeveloped area into a prosperous region. The result was colorful journalism based on optimism, exaggeration, and even prevarication.

Almost every town had its self-appointed promoters, many of whom enjoyed semi-official recognition as the county printer. Each week these editors supplied what amounted to community progress reports, along with occasional chidings when the facts lagged behind the newspaper's enthusiasm.[13] At times a dissident voice complained of meager financial support, as exemplified by the Kingfisher editor who complained of receiving only "wind pudding" as

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[12] Report of the Oklahoma Commissioners to the Louisiana Purchase Centennial Exposition for the Biennial Period ending November 30, 1902 (Kingfisher: Free Press Print, 1902), pp. 3-4. Oklahoma gained still more publicity when the nation's editors traveled to Guthrie following the fair in June, 1905, for a meeting of the National Editorial Association. A tour of the Territory concluded the three-day convention.

[13] Many territorial papers published special booster editions. In December, 1891, the El Reno Democrat boasted

payment for his efforts, but most accepted the obligation of public promotion.[14]

The activities of the Oklahoma Press Association further reveal the press's acceptance of its self-appointed role. Speaking at the 1895 meeting in El Reno, President T. F. Hensley declared that Oklahoma editors had a "patriotic pride" in everything pertaining to territorial development.[15] The same gathering officially condemned the Associated Press for dispatching "slanted" reports emphasizing crime in Oklahoma.

Hensley's choice of words accurately defined the scope of newspaper promotion since editors took pride in everything ranging from local baseball victories to bumper crops. Little distinction was made concerning their relative importance.

The settlers' ability to overcome the difficulties of a new country especially impressed the newspapermen. The El Reno Democrat lauded the "push" displayed by the people,

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that its year-end issue was the largest paper ever published in Oklahoma.

[14]Kingfisher Free Press, March 31, 1892. The ethical aspects of lying for the good of the community apparently escaped otherwise honest men. Thompson B. Ferguson, a former Methodist preacher, admitted that he had stretched the truth in praising Watonga. Nevertheless, he remained "as serene as a bull frog in a mill pond" on his paper's first birthday. Watonga Republican, October 4, 1893.

[15]Official Report of the Semi-Annual Meeting of the Oklahoma Press Association. El Reno, August 16-17, 1895, p. 26.

while the Arapaho Arrow portrayed local citizens as men of brains, energy, and business ability--in short, the kind of people needed to "build up a new town." Similarly, the Watonga Republican made the following observation:

> The people who have succeeded and who will succeed in Oklahoma are the men and women of brains, energy and iron wills. People who come here expecting to pick money off of the bushes had better stay. It is no place for lazy people. To all those who are willing to work and are not easily discouraged we would say that golden opportunities are afforded in this 'wonderland' to build up good homes and achieve success. Drones are not wanted in Oklahoma.[16]

Newspapers also praised the land and climate in terms that suggested a paradise rather than a semi-arid region. To the El Reno Democrat, Oklahoma was "a country which for several months of the year holds winter in its hand, spring in its arms, and summer in its lap, all at the same time."[17] The prospects of numerous wheat fields led the Watonga Republican to dismiss the idea that Oklahoma was a barren waste as some had charged. "Who can pass through Oklahoma at this time," asked the Democrat, "and say she is not blooming like a rose." To the Kingfisher Free Press, the grain-laden countryside was "a sight that would make an eastern man cry out with delight."[18]

The opening of the Cheyenne-Arapaho reservation in

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[16]Watonga Republican, August 30, 1893.

[17]El Reno Democrat, September 26, 1891.

[18]Watonga Republican, November 22, 1893; El Reno Democrat, May 28, 1892; Kingfisher Free Press, May 5, 1892.

1892 especially brought forth extravagant claims. Since his own Canadian County stood to gain more territory, the editor of the El Reno Democrat spared no adjectives in describing the vast area several months before it was opened:

> Her hills and valleys are covered with nutricious grasses with here and there pleasant groves and bubbling brooks. Her soil is a rich alluvial deposit adapted to all grains and cereal grown in the United States. Her climate is salubrious and healthful, what more can people ask that seek a home, prosperity and wealth?[19]

The same paper later castigated journals in the eastern part of the Territory for spreading inaccuracies about the reservation lands. As the date of the opening drew near, the Kingfisher Free Press urged everyone to "saddle his racer and get ready for the great free-for-all in the Cheyenne-Rapee country."

Paradoxically, several newspapers in the Cheyenne-Arapaho country belittled the Cherokee Outlet when it was opened in September, 1893. The Watonga Republican, for example, boasted that Blaine County was better than most of the Outlet. "No one who owns property or is in business in Watonga can afford to 'pull up stakes' and move to the Strip," the editor urged. Shortly after the opening, the Republican announced: "Oh ye disappointed strippers! Come to Blaine county. It is the haven of success. Many have already come, yet Blaine county invites all of you." The Arapaho Bee expressed similar disdain when it called the

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[19]El Reno Democrat, September 12, 1891

Outlet an "over-rated cow ranch."[20]

The boastful attitude of Oklahoma promoters perhaps is best exemplified by the claim of an attractive and healthful climate. There was some truth to these boasts in comparison to the harsh weather of the northern states. In March, 1892, the El Reno Democrat observed that Oklahoma was enjoying "beautiful spring weather" while a general blizzard raged in the northwest. Two months later the paper reported Oklahoma preparing for harvest as Omaha, Nebraska, dug out from a snow storm. On the other hand, Oklahoma's own winters were so mild that the Watonga Republican lapsed into poetic language while describing a December day:

> Monday afternoon last was one of the most beautifully beautiful winter gala day dress parades ever experienced by mortals on this mundane shore. It was a day of rapturous, ethereal loveliness. The golden sunlight streamed upon the earth in a floodtide of transcendent glory. A balmy mellowness was in the air. Light zephyrs like the airy undulations of sweet softness that fan the sylvan bowers of Fairyland, gently but voluptously kissed the earth.[21]

The subject of rainfall brought similar outbursts of joy. The Arapaho Arrow, commenting on a recent "gully-washing rain," treasured the precipitation because it refuted those who thought the country drought-stricken. A few weeks later, the same editor proclaimed his new homeland a "rain blessed spot." Oklahoma was indeed fortu-

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[20]Watonga Republican, July 19, 1893; October 4, 1893; Arapaho Bee, August 3, 1893.

[21]Watonga Republican, December 13, 1893.

nate.[22] When other areas experienced drought or floods in the summer of 1893, the Guthrie State Capital remarked that "Oklahoma moves right along with about the right mixture of sunshine and rain." Even the Arapaho Bee in the western part of the Territory could thumb its nose at drought-ridden Texas and Kansas.[23]

By far the most preposterous claim about the climate appeared in the Guthrie State Capital. Commenting on the marriage of a local couple, the paper noted:

> As in all things, the climate of Oklahoma is congenial to marriages. Men have tramped the world over and withstood the armaments of that 'rascally God of Love,' but here where the landscape stretches like a dream of beauty, canopied by a sky blue, illimitable and tender as a woman's eye, where the perfume of flowers is like incense blown from the alter of paradise, and where the birds sing like the sighings of happy immortals in the Garden of Love, they fall victim to his enchantments.[24]

Perhaps newspaper editors were also affected by the climate.

The twin blessings of fertile land and amiable weather seemingly worked even greater miracles in the field of agriculture. Editors seldom missed an opportunity to brag of the bountiful crops that were bringing prosperity and success to Oklahoma. In the summer of 1893, the Kingfisher Free Press proclaimed Oklahoma an "agricultural country of

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[22]Arapaho Arrow, May 20, 1892; June 7, 1892.

[23]Arapaho Bee, May 4, 1893. Strangely enough, weather bureau statistics indicate that western Oklahoma was in better condition than the eastern area.

[24]Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, July 1, 1893.

first standing." Wheat was the leading commodity in the western part of the Territory where the prairie was suited to grains. "The fact that Blaine county is a great wheat country is settled," declared the Watonga Republican little more than a year after the county was settled. To prove his claim, the editor cited a farmer who expected to harvest thirty bushels per acre from poorly prepared soil. When the first carload of wheat headed north from Kingfisher in early July of 1892, the Free Press envisioned it passing through unharvested fields and remarked: "Tis ever thus that Oklahoma demonstrates her right to take precedence of less favored climes."[25] Two years later the paper predicted that Kingfisher would be unable to handle the huge wheat harvest.

Other crops also promised rich returns. Recounting the corn failures in Kansas in 1892, one paper predicted that Oklahoma would not only have to feed Kansas but furnish seed corn as well. Farmers were also urged to plant cotton--a good cash crop for poor men, the Free Press observed. In recounting his town's need for a cotton gin, the editor of the Watonga Republican pronounced Blaine County "unquestionably a great cotton country." The Arapaho Bee summed up the varied agricultural prowess in this manner:

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[25]Watonga Republican, June 28, 1893; Kingfisher Free Press, July 7, 1892.

Wheat, cotton and corn;
Cattle, hogs and sheep;
Peaches, apples and grapes.
Is the triad of trinities that will bring C county more wealth than if the whole surface was underlaid with gold, silver or iron.[26]

When the editor of the Kingfisher Free Press noted that Oklahoma newspapers never grew weary of singing the songs of wonderful crops, he implied their complicity in agricultural promotion. The fanciful utterings of numerous papers no doubt portrayed the scene in rosier hues than reality would have permitted. That such behavior was misleading apparently made little difference; therefore, the Hennessey Clipper could assert, without proof of course, that there were "more good farmers on Turkey Creek than any other portion of Oklahoma." The El Reno Democrat played on racial bigotry when it proclaimed: "With a big crop of corn, wheat and cotton and a small crop of niggers, thus diminishing the chances of the G. O. P., we expect to thrive in this neck of the woods."[27] A ten-foot stem of grass, one-half inch thick, convinced the Watonga Republican "of what Blaine County can do." Even more ridiculous was the county's alleged capability of producing "corn bigger than sawlogs and watermelons bigger than whales."[28] But it remained for the Arapaho Bee to

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[26]Arapaho Bee, December 7, 1893.

[27]Hennessey Clipper, May 5, 1893; El Reno Democrat, February 6, 1892.

[28]Watonga Republican, November 8, 1893; August 9, 1893.

print this crowning boast about local produce:

> Ye editor exhibited four pie melons averaging 48½ pounds taken from one vine grown on a lot in Arapahoe. This vine (a volunteer) received no cultivation or manuring and bore 92 melons averaging 25 pounds each--an aggregate yield of 2,300 pounds.[29]

Editors were equally concerned with urban growth. If all the predictions of future metropolises had come true, Oklahoma would have rivaled any eastern state in a few years. Both Guthrie and Oklahoma City, the only towns that even approached city-status, enjoyed a relative measure of security. But the small towns, particularly those not yet served by railroads, were less fortunate. Consequently, local boosters worked even harder to project a positive image in hopes of attracting more settlers. Numerous papers dedicated themselves to such a task and promised to use all proper efforts to build up the town and the surrounding country. The resulting propaganda was a mixture of imagination and optimistic yearning.

The editor of the Free Press, for instance, termed Kingfisher a "young Chicago" in comparison to the Kansas towns he had recently visited. In a more mercenary vein, the editor of the Arapaho Arrow characterized his town as "the place" to invest in Oklahoma, while the Republican thought Watonga "destined to be the commercial center of western Oklahoma." The Prague Patriot hurled this challenge: "We will put Prague against any other town of double or

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[29]Arapaho Bee, October 19, 1893.

treble its size in Oklahoma for business. It is absolutely without an equal or peer; it is the banner burg of southeastern Oklahoma." The best potential slogan, however, belonged to the El Reno Democrat, which reported that the "Creator" was considering settling in that fair city.[30]

If the point had been pressed, most editors likely would have preferred a railroad to the Lord. Indeed, the great panacea for ailing and undernourished towns was a railroad. Mention of railroads recurred in issue after issue, almost as though the mere suggestion of construction would somehow bring growth. In September, 1893, the Republican predicted the appearance of a railroad at Watonga within a year. The editor later outlined a plan calling for a line running southwest through Watonga from Arkansas City, Kansas. Such a venture, he estimated, would increase property value fourfold and "in every way enhance the general interests." Shortly thereafter the project was reportedly paying off in publicity, as papers along the proposed route favorably mentioned Watonga.[31] The Arapaho Bee stirred similar hopes in June, 1895, when it revealed that the Santa Fe would build a branch line from Woodward through Arapaho and into Texas. This tie-up with the Gulf of Mexico was touted as potentially "one of the greatest grain carrying roads in the country."

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[30]Prague Patriot, November 30, 1905; El Reno Democrat, March 19, 1892.

[31]Watonga Republican, September 27, 1893; February 28, 1894; March 14, 1894.

Hopefully, the editor predicted: "In less than a year the citizens of G county will hear the toot-toot-toot-toot of the iron horse as he passes the grade crossings."[32]

The sounds of progress were sure to please the territorial governors, who themselves were engaged in singing the praises of Oklahoma. Their exhuberance, which carried an official ring, found its main outlet in reports filed with the Secretary of the Interior at the close of each fiscal year.[33] The first report, dated October 9, 1891, dealt summarily with such topics as population, schools, and agriculture. A few statistical tables were appended. This brief report set a pattern for the future, and henceforth each governor would mention similar topics in a format that remained essentially the same except for the introduction of photographs. The 1898 report featured pictures of Oklahoma scenes and products in its seventy-six pages, as well as a map of the Territory. Governor Thompson B. Ferguson issued the largest report in 1904--some 220 pages of detailed information on all aspects of life in the Territory.

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[32]Arapaho Bee, June 8, 1893; December 14, 1893.

[33]Obviously, the governors were aided by staff members in the preparation of these documents. Fred L. Wenner spent several months working on the 1899 report while serving as private secretary to Governor Cassius M. Barnes. See the Kansas City Star, September 16, 1900, Wenner Collection, Box 7, Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Library, Norman. The governors are nevertheless accorded authorship since the reports appeared under their names.

Despite their desire to portray Oklahoma in the best possible light, the governors were necessarily expected to tell the truth. Governor William C. Renfrow once testified that he sought to present the true condition of the Territory, free from the "pernicious 'boom' statements that have heretofore been so injurious to many of the Western states."[34] Similarly, Governor Cassius M. Barnes vouched for the veracity of his 1898 report in spite of its fictional appearance. The propaganda potential of such material was fully exploited, however. Nearly 75,000 copies of the 1897 report were circulated through the North and East, and some 50,000 copies of the 1898 issue were given away at an Omaha exposition.

Population figures were of primary importance as a growth index. A special census cited by Governor George W. Steele in 1891 revealed a population of 60,417. An estimated 275,000 persons were living in Oklahoma Territory in 1894, and by the turn of the century Governor Barnes would report a population figure of 375,000.[35]

But mere statistics did not tell the whole story since the governors professed an equal interest in the quality of

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[34] Report of the Governor of Oklahoma to the Secretary of the Interior, 1894. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), p. 3. Hereafter, all reports will be cited as Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, with the appropriate year and page.

[35] An early breakdown by races revealed that the population was 85 per cent white, 10 per cent Negro, and 5 per cent Indian. Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, 1892, p. 3.

Oklahoma citizenry. Governor Steele once boasted that Oklahoma people were "unusually intelligent, above the average in education, generous . . . and God-fearing." Governor Renfrow was encouraged when he detected a worthy moral element in place of the ruffianism of earlier days. The speedy manner in which Oklahomans established religious institutions was further interpreted as a hopeful sign. Governor Barnes, himself a devout Episcopalian, was especially impressed in this respect. In fact, religion was deemed so important that it was accorded an entire section each year. Fraternal groups also received prominent mention.

Some of the reports suggest bigotry. Governor Renfrow's boast that Oklahoma people were largely American by birth doubtless drew applause in a day of heavy European immigration. He also rejoiced in the Territory's low percentage of Negroes. Since a hardy stock of pure Americans prevailed, Governor Renfrow naturally resented any effort to impugn the people. Consequently, he attacked the Associated Press in 1895 for implying that Oklahoma harbored a large number of criminals. Desperadoes were as much a curiosity to Oklahomans as to easterners, he asserted.

The concern for a public image is readily understandable when one considers the true state of affairs. While Oklahoma's assets were impressive, the accomplishments of less than two decades hardly placed the Territory on a plane with more established states. Comparisons nevertheless abounded,

even if laboriously contrived. For instance, Governor Renfrow once boasted that the sabbath was better observed in Oklahoma than in many older states. Governor Barnes offered the following comment:

> Nearly every town has its literary society or Chautauqua circle, good lecture courses are carried on, the best concerts and theatrical entertainments are well patronized, and the legislative and inaugural balls and banquets and other gatherings of note at the capital and other leading cities will bear the closest comparison with similar affairs in any State or Territory.[36]

A more bizarre example appeared in 1898 when Barnes observed that Oklahoma had one convict for every 2,150 persons, compared to a ratio of one to 425 in Arizona Territory.

To the contrary, Oklahoma reported a high rate of school attendance as well as general interest in educational matters. The vision of a schoolhouse convenient to every family especially delighted Governor Renfrow, and Governor Barnes rather awkardly declared: "No community on earth ever took so early a stand for higher education or made so rapid progress in an educational way as has Oklahoma."[37] The governors took special pride in the territorial institutions of higher learning. The University's remarkable growth led Governor Renfrow to predict that its graduates would prove as well equipped as those of eastern schools.

The expenses of education appeared justified when it

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[36] Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, 1895, p. 15.

[37] Ibid., 1897, p. 10.

was revealed that Oklahoma had fewer illiterates than thirty-five other states and territories. Governor Barnes summed up the Territory's respect for learning by observing: "A penitentiary we have gotten along without, jails were slow in building, poorhouses we have none, but schoolhouses are everywhere, nearly 2,000 of them capping the hilltops or dotting the valleys of the Territory."[38]

In the realm of natural attractions, the governors faced the difficult problem of reconciling Oklahoma's generally agreeable climate with the bad press it received elsewhere. Special efforts were necessary to show that Oklahoma enjoyed adequate rainfall. In 1894 Governor Renfrow declared that recent rains had removed the Territory from the "former great American desert." Toward the end of the decade Governor Barnes cited weather bureau statistics to prove the low drought rate. Furthermore, he castigated eastern newsmen for implying that storms plagued the area. In an effort to erase the stigma, he produced government records showing that several midwestern and eastern states had experienced more recent loss of life from storms than had Oklahoma.

Otherwise, the climate was portrayed as a panacea for the nation's infirm citizens. Governor Renfrow, for example, quoted the territorial medical superintendent to prove that

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[38] Ibid., 1897, p. 8.

persons suffering from throat and lung ailments were likely to regain their health in Oklahoma. Dr. L. H. Buxton asserted in 1897 that there was "no better land under the sun for the consumptive or person with lung trouble." He promised to those threatened with such debilitating diseases:

> We will not banish you to desert, uninhabited plain; to bleak, barren mountain region, exiled from the sympathizing hands of humanity, but welcome you to our boundless, undulating prairies, dotted with churches and schoolhouses, and invite you to find employment and enjoyment, to eat of the bounty of our grain-laden fields, sit under your vine and fig tree, and become one of our intelligent and prosperous citizens.[39]

The chief executives took similar pains to portray Oklahoma as an agrarian wonderland. One of the most graphic examples of agricultural promotion appeared in 1899 when Governor Barnes resorted to this colorful language:

> The farmer has converted the raw prairie into fields of grain, orchards of fruit, and gardens of vegetables; his home dots the landscape, his cattle and his sheep cover the hills, his swine run the timber, his horses and mules line the highway conveying to market the products of the land which has been made to bloom as the rose.[40]

Another phase of agriculture--stock-raising--brought more comment. The topography of western Oklahoma, argued Governor Steele, guaranteed success for the live-stock industry. Since he had never seen or heard of a horse with the "heaves," Steele therefore concluded that the Territory was

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[39] Ibid., 1897, p. 36. [40] Ibid., 1899, p. 61.

admirably suited to animal husbandry. Fortunately, land was plentiful, as demonstrated by the steady stream of settlers that continued to enter the western part of Oklahoma as late as 1898.[41]

Although agriculture reigned in the 1890's, Oklahoma's official boosters also took note of the Territory's commercial and industrial growth. Cities inevitably sprang up, and with them came the business channels necessary to support a thriving population. Governor Seay relied on his own background in banking to predict success for the infant forms of commerce that existed in 1892. A few years later, Governor Renfrow advised eastern capitalists to take advantage of Oklahoma's rich investment market. By 1897 Governor Barnes boasted of such diversified industries as distilleries, canning plants, and railway shops. The Territory was virtually free of unemployment, he noted, except for an influx of "tramps and beggers" from northern and eastern states.

Concurrent with such development was improved public finance. Although many farms were not yet subject to taxation, property valuation climbed steadily in the first decade of white settlement. Territorial Auditor J. H. Lawhead placed the value of taxable property at nearly $7,000,000 in 1891. Less than ten years later it amounted to $43,000,000. Moreover, in Barnes's estimation Oklahoma enjoyed the best

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[41] Ibid., 1898, p. 23. New immigrants settled a total of more than a million acres in 1898.

fiscal condition of all the territories.[42]

Perhaps much of this growth was due to stable government, for which the governors modestly took credit. After a prolonged argument over the location of the capital, the first legislature finally enacted a code of law that impressed Governor Steele as "very fair."[43] Governor Renfrow took a more critical view a few years later when he accused the early legislators of producing a mass of incongruity. He deemed the assemblies of his own administration more capable, however, and praised them for writing a set of laws "fully abreast with the best thought of the times and the particular needs of the people."[44]

Despite the alleged effectiveness of territorial government, most Oklahomans looked forward to statehood. Indeed, this topic generated great interest throughout Oklahoma. Governor Seay called for immediate statehood as early as 1892, but Governor Renfrow followed a more cautious policy in proposing single statehood for Oklahoma and Indian Territory. Governor Barnes concurred with Renfrow. Whereas one state would give Oklahoma a vigorous position, he reasoned, separate states would be "burdensome and annoying." Instead,

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[42] Ibid., p. 7. Oklahoma's per capita debt of less than seventy-five cents placed it far ahead of Arizona's $11 and New Mexico's $4.

[43] Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, 1891, p. 4.

[44] Ibid., 1896, p. 7.

Barnes preferred the "pride and gratification" that one large state would bring.[45]

True to his role as official booster, Governor Barnes placed great emphasis on pride, but he was no different in this respect from his colleagues and most of the populace. Helen C. Candee, a contemporary social critic, took a rather satirical view of this emphasis on local pride. "Whatever the district can produce that is noteworthy, whether in industry or crime," she noted, "brings upon the people much the same feeling that animated Jack Horner when he put in his thumb, and pulled out a plum, and said, 'What a good boy am I.'"[46] The country itself was first a source of pride. Later, the people and their institutions became the "joy" of Oklahoma promoters, as the governors' reports and territorial newspapers so vividly indicate. Perhaps the editor of the Watonga Republican summed up the feelings of most early Oklahomans when he remarked: "It is indeed the land of the fair god."[47]

Certainly, some divine assistance was implied when dusty towns such as El Reno and Kingfisher described themselves as "queen cities" and "young Chicagos," or when the

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[45] Ibid., 1899, p. 103.

[46] Helen C. Candee, "Social Conditions in our Newest Territory," The Forum Vol. XXV (June, 1898), pp. 435-36.

[47] Watonga Republican, August 16, 1893.

territorial governor equated the culture of his infant domain with that of older states. Prominent in the mind of each booster was the notion that Oklahoma had only to advertise its charms. "Show people what Oklahoma really is," urged the Kingfisher Free Press, "and Oklahoma will soon teem with people and grow noisy with industry."[48] The editor apparently failed to realize the incongruity of such a statement in an agrarian-minded newspaper that often condemned the east for just such attributes.

It would be unfair, however, to dismiss the promoter as a propagandist, for much of his boasting was based on fact. Moreover, this body of material preserved a storehouse of valuable facts unavailable elsewhere. If the boosters sometimes revealed inferiority complexes, this must be expected in a new country. The historian must nevertheless approach these sources with care, for to cite them indiscriminately would be misleading. Rather, he must weigh them as he would the information gathered by pressure groups--with one eye on the facts and the other on the compiler. Or, in the case of Oklahoma, with one ear attuned to the song, the other to the singer.

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[48] Kingfisher Free Press, March 1, 1894.

CHAPTER VIII

DOCTORS AND LAWYERS

No one was more welcome or needed on the Oklahoma frontier than those who came to practice their professions. Doctors were particularly at a premium in most communities. The physician often fought heroic battles in the absence of public health measures, and judges and lawyers brought a degree of order to an otherwise lawless scene. Although charlatans frequently exploited the people, conditions improved with time until the territorial professional man rivaled his colleagues elsewhere in ethics and experience.

Already buffeted by the hardships of pioneer life, isolated settlers daily faced the added dangers of accident and disease. Moreover, the very process of birth itself frequently ended in tragedy for both mother and child. The pioneer doctor therefore became a symbol of hope to the beleaguered settlers of Oklahoma Territory. While it may be true that the early doctor had little to recommend him "except imposing whiskers and an impressive bedside manner," he nevertheless represented the ultimate in human efforts

to help the sick.[1]

The frontier physician was truly a general practitioner. Not only was he called upon to treat illnesses but also to pull teeth and perform surgery.[2] The prospects of establishing a thriving practice in early Oklahoma was somewhat discouraging, however, since persons were often too poor to pay for medical services. But this did not deter optimistic physicians. Dr. E. O. Barker arrived at Guthrie in June, 1889, hoping to earn a fortune, until he learned that there were already seventy-five doctors in town. Barker later told his mother that a request for a doctor in the crowd would bring replies from a third of the people present.[3] Very likely many were self-styled healers or quacks, for Oklahoma had its share of fakes who preyed upon the people.

Unfortunately, the presence of so many doctors--legitimate or otherwise--did not guarantee good health. Considerable sickness and death marked the scene, despite the numerous claims that Oklahoma was a paradise. Much of this was due to the poor living conditions that characterized the period. Overcrowded dwelling places and limited

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[1]Edward E. Dale, Frontier Ways (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1960), p. 204.

[2]Carl Coke Rister, Southern Plainsmen (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1938), p. 165.

[3]Dr. E. O. Barker interview, "Indian-Pioneer Papers," Vol. V, p. 216.

sleeping facilities contributed to the spread of disease. Moreover, dugouts and other crude shelters attracted all kinds of insects. Poor diets, heavily weighted by fats and starches, further weakened people's resistance to illness, particularly the young. The second summer was generally considered the most dangerous time for babies especially if they were put on adult food unsuited to their delicate systems.[4] Polluted water posed a more serious threat in the form of typhoid. The Reverend Franklin Smith, an early resident of Shawnee, recalled that a green film appeared on a bucket of water soon after it was drawn. Once communities could afford water works, sewers, and surface drainage, the death toll declined. The very air itself allegedly carried disease at Anadarko where thousands of settlers participated in the Kiowa-Comanche opening in 1901. Health officials speculated that typhoid-laden dust caused several deaths.[5]

Meanwhile, Oklahoma was beset by diseases that normally accompany poor health conditions. Diphtheria was the most common ailment reported by the board of health in 1892.[6] The dreaded typhoid attacked forty-five persons and took nineteen lives in the Stillwater area in the fall of

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[4]Dale, Frontier Ways, pp. 192-94.

[5]Report of the Territorial Board of Health (Guthrie: State Capital Company, 1902), pp. 20-21.

[6]First Biennial Report of the Territorial Board of Health of the Territory of Oklahoma, 1891-92 (Kingfisher: Kingfisher Free Press, 1893), passim.

1893.[7] Despite the availability of vaccine, smallpox appeared in sporadic outbreaks. The Oklahoma Medical News-Journal blamed a large element of the population who superstitiously believed that vaccination caused blood poisoning and other diseases.[8] Such contagious maladies spread even more rapidly when infected persons violated quarantines or officials failed to confine them.

Settlers were likewise afflicted by many less serious ailments, the most common of which was malaria--variously referred to as the chills or the fever. Numerous contemporary accounts recall the agony of racking chills followed by "the sweats." Frank A. Bonner, who contracted malaria at Guthrie soon after the opening, remarked that hundreds suffered from this unpredictable malady.[9] A protracted meeting near Kingfisher had to be cancelled in the early 1890's because many people had the chills.[10] For some reason the settlers most often attributed malaria to the freshly-turned sod. Measles was also prevalent, as indicated by the epidemic that spread across the Territory in the spring

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[7] Oklahoma Medical Journal, Vol. II (August, 1894), p. 220.

[8] Oklahoma Medical News-Journal, Vol. X (February, 1902), p. 49.

[9] Frank A. Bonner Manuscript, Wenner Collection, Box 1, Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Library, Norman.

[10] Angie Debo (ed.), "The Diary of Charles Hazelrigg," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXV (Autumn, 1947), p. 236.

of 1898. Some counties reported as many as four hundred cases.[11] Even more common were the boils that afflicted so many persons, undoubtedly the result of an improper diet.

Physicians generally were helpless in treating serious illnesses and often could do little more than administer the meager medicine at their disposal and hope for the best. This was especially evident in the case of Dr. Richard H. Tullis, president of the Oklahoma State Medical Society and a prominent Lawton physician. He died in 1905 from what was diagnosed as typhoid fever. The autopsy revealed a perforating typhoid ulcer of the appendix and a general gangrenous condition.[12]

On most occasions Oklahoma settlers naturally relied on home remedies. This practice had long characterized the American frontier, and doubtless some of the treatments used in Oklahoma were centuries old. When ineffective or otherwise harmless, they at least served a psychosomatic function. Rock candy dissolved in whiskey was a popular cough syrup. Various kinds of poultices and plasters made from scraped raw potatoes, mustard, or other ingredients were reportedly good for everything from colds to the pinkeye, while warm

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[11] Fourth Biennial Report of the Territorial Superintendent of Public Health, 1897-98 (Guthrie: Leader Printing Co., 1898), p. 10.

[12] Oklahoma Medical News-Journal, Vol. XIV (January, 1906), pp. 37-39.

urine was often prescribed for earaches.[13] The common toothache was sometimes treated with cayenne pepper and water, although very likely this merely disguised the pain.[14] Practices such as a bag of asafetida tied around a child's neck to ward off disease or buckeyes carried in the pocket to prevent rheumatism belonged to the realm of pure superstition. One of the strangest customs was the use of a madstone to determine if poison remained in a person's system after being bitten by a rabid animal. Supposedly taken from the body of a white deer, the stone was placed on the wound. If it stuck, the victim was in danger; if it fell off, he was safe. W. W. Yoder, who lived seventeen miles southeast of Chandler, once brought his three children all the way to Guthrie in search of a madstone. Obviously, he found one for the State Capital reported a few days later that the stone did not adhere to the wounds and thus the children would live.[15]

Settlers placed similar faith in numerous patent medicines widely advertised in the press and available in most stores. These "omnibus remedies" included such well-known products as Ozomulsion, Wine of Cardui, Swamp Root,

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[13]Allie B. Wallace, Frontier Life in Oklahoma (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1964), pp. 66-67.

[14]T. W. Prather reminiscence, Hatfield Collection, Box H-10, Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Library, Norman.

[15]Dale, Frontier Ways, pp. 196-97; Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, January 6, 1894.

Peruna, SSS, and Oklahoma's own Electromode Katar Kure. One product, Mexican Mustang Liniment, boasted that it conquered pain and made man or beast well again.[16] The Territorial medical association naturally denounced many patent medicines and took steps to curb their use.

Lack of medical standards left Oklahoma Territory open to self-appointed doctors commonly known as quacks. These charlatans used various methods ranging from faith to massage, and some preyed on simple-minded persons through panacean concoctions.[17] Since anyone could practice before the establishment of a territorial government, medical fakes were free to operate without fear of reprisal. Following the enactment of a mild law in 1890, the average quack merely paid a diploma mill $50 to $100 for a certificate and then applied for a licence.[18] This practice brought a constant stream of complaints from legitimate physicians. In 1902 the Dewey County superintendent of health reported twelve quacks in his domain, many of whom enjoyed profitable

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[16] Dale, Frontier Ways, p. 200; Oklahoma Review, Vol. I (April 15, 1898); Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, August 25, 1894.

[17] One fake known as "Diamond Dick: charged $65 for eight pint bottles of his "special mixture." Fourth Biennial Report of the Territorial Superintendent of Public Health, 1897-98 (Guthrie: Leader Printing Co., 1898), p. 61.

[18] Ibid., p. 35. Oklahoma gained its own diploma mill when the Twentieth Century Physio-Medical College was established at Guthrie in 1899. This school charged $150 for a degree in all aspects of medical work and $50 for a degree in only one field. See Minutes, Oklahoma Medical Society, November 11, 1903.

practices through the recommendation of influential persons in the community. A Garfield County health official further denounced the osteopath's practice of massaging the abdomen of a typhoid fever patient, and Dr. D. C. Gamble of Woods County complained that practicers of Christian Science were allowing many persons to become infected by contagious diseases.[19]

Legitimate physicians also considered the midwife a threat to health because of her unsanitary methods.[20] A law eventually required those who assisted at births, variously known as "grannies" or "baby-catchers," to hold a territorial license, but many apparently evaded this provision.[21] The absence of proper laws likewise accounted for laxity concerning adulterations. In this regard, Dr. L. Haynes Buxton termed Oklahoma the "dumping ground of the United States."[22]

The territorial government took early steps to correct and forestall problems arising from low medical standards. In 1890 the legislature created a territorial board and

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[19] [Sixth] Report of the Territorial Board of Health, 1902, pp. 30-31, 58.

[20] Fourth Biennial Report of the Territorial Superintendent of Public Health, p. 32.

[21] [Sixth] Report of the Territorial Board of Health, 1902, p. 51.

[22] Minutes, Oklahoma Territory Medical Association, May 9, 1900. Hereafter referred to as Medical Association Minutes, with the proper date.

charged it with the general control of health conditions. The board was made up of the territorial superintendent of public instruction, who served as ex officio president, a vice president appointed by the governor, and a secretary, who was also the superintendent of public health.[23] It was required to meet regularly and to issue a biennial report. Duly-appointed county boards were to notify the central board about contagious diseases and other health matters.

The quasi-political nature of this work necessarily involved it in territorial power struggles. Governor Renfrow attempted to clear the public health office for Democrats in 1893 when he asked Dr. J. A. Overstreet to resign as superintendent.[24] In the preface to its 1902 report, the board remarked that it did not regard Republican politics as the only requisite for county health officers, but concluded that "it is a very good one to possess." Political differences at times detained county health superintendents from collecting their pay.

One of the health board's most important functions was the certification of physicians. Provided they were not habitual drunkards, graduates of medical colleges could qualify by presenting their diplomas and paying two dollars, or in case their diplomas were lost, by swearing that they

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[23]Oklahoma Territory, Statutes (1890), ch. 9, sec. 1.

[24]Oklahoma Medical Journal, Vol. I (September 15, 1893), p. 102 Dr. C. O. Arnold of El Reno succeeded Dr. Overstreet.

had been graduated. Some 190 persons were registered in this manner in 1891-1892. Early registrants represented such schools as the University of Michigan, Vanderbilt, Rush Medical College, St. Louis Medical College, and the College of Physicians and Surgeons at Kiokuk, Iowa. Louisville medical schools, particularly the Louisville Medical College and the Kentucky School of Medicine, furnished a large number of doctors for the new territory.[25] Those without medical degrees could apply for an examination adminstered by the board, provided they had practiced for five years.[26] Only twenty-five persons qualified through examination in 1891-1892.

The licensing law soon came under criticism. By 1898 some 740 physicians had gained their licenses on the basis of diplomas, while only seventy-one had passed the examinations.[27] Dr. C. D. Arnold, the second superintendent of public health, considered the law inadequate to protect the people from "unqualified doctors, charlatans, and quacks."

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[25] First Report of the Territorial Board of Health, pp. 18-24. The Louisville schools drew many students from the South and Southwest. While their standards were not high, they were nevertheless legitimate schools. See Basil A. Hayes, LeRoy Long: Teacher of Medicine (Oklahoma City: n. p., 1943), p. 11. The Territorial University at Norman offered two years of pre-clinical study beginning in 1900. See Lewis J. Moorman, "The Influence of Kentucky Medical Schools in Medicine in the Southwest," Bulletin of the History of Medicine, Vol. XXIV (March-April, 1950), p. 186.

[26] Kingfisher Free Press, July 7, 1892.

[27] Fourth Report of the Territorial Superintendent of Health, 1898, p. 11.

Medical degrees were too easily obtained, he charged, in view of the more than 125 medical schools in the United States, of which at least forty were mere diploma mills. Dr. Arnold cited as an example one man who sought certification on the basis of two such degrees mailed to the health board. Dr. Buxton told of another who betrayed himself through the following letter of inquiry: "Sir:--Pleas send to me addres the law, regarding the peractis of medicin in yore state. Will i have to regEster withe the state treasure and in the county i Practice in. ore have you a state bowrd of helth."[28]

With proper legal support, Dr. Arnold urged, the board could insure that Oklahoma would "no longer be the focal point of those who have been rejected in the states."[29] Some improvement came in 1901 with the establishment of the Board of Medical Examiners, which had jurisdiction over applicants who did not hold degrees from regularly accredited medical colleges. Quacks thus became subject to examinations before they were allowed to practice.

Efforts to strengthen medical legislation were generally unsuccessful because of opposition from either the governor or the legislature. The medical association, nevertheless, sought stricter licensing laws. In early 1897 the

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[28] Ibid., p. 61.

[29] Second Biennial Report of the Territorial Board of Health, 1893-94 (El Reno: Democrat [1894]), p. 5.

group advised its members to support a proposed bill correcting the undesirable aspects of the old law.[30] The association later reported that it had succeeded in getting a bill through the Council but that unforeseen obstacles and the "untiring efforts of Furlong the faith cure man" had blocked it in the lower house.[31] A similar bill passed the legislature in 1901 only to fall under Governor Barnes's veto. This measure would have required applicants to show proof of a medical diploma or ten years of legitimate practice.[32] The doctors finally got a new law in 1903 calling for essentially the same measures as the one vetoed by Barnes. It did not affect those already in practice, however.[33]

The controversy over standards grew even more intense in late 1903 when the medical association accused Dr. E. E. Cowdrick, secretary of the board of health, of licensing diploma mill graduates. Cowdrick's enemies charged that he knowingly certified unqualified graduates of the Twentieth Century Physio-Medical College at Guthrie. A committee investigating the charges found Cowdrick guilty but failed

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[30] E. O. Barker to Oklahoma Territory doctors, Guthrie, January 27, 1897, in Medical Association Minute Book.

[31] Medical Association Minutes, May 6, 1897.

[32] Oklahoma Medical Journal, Vol. IX (April, 1901), pp. 114-15.

[33] Oklahoma Territory, Session Laws of 1903, ch. 5, sec. 5.

to get him removed.[34]

Good health conditions obviously required sound legislation and trustworthy public servants, but the creation of a true medical profession was largely due to the efforts of the territorial medical association. As one member so aptly noted, this group was the "saving lump of salt" to the profession in Oklahoma. Early attempts to organize soon met failure, but with the establishment of the Oklahoma Medical Journal in January, 1893, came new impetus for professional activity. The Journal urged physicians to form a society which would keep them abreast of medical progress and foster closer relations among the members.[35] The Oklahoma Territory Medical Association was ultimately formed at Oklahoma City on May 9, 1893, with twenty-eight charter members. Dr. De Los Walker of Oklahoma City became the first president.[36] The association met twice a year at various territorial towns until 1904 when members voted to hold an annual meeting each May.

Once the association was formed, it attracted more members and embarked on worthwhile programs. Eleven new members joined at the second meeting held at El Reno in November, although general attendance was curtailed by the

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[34]Medical Association Minutes, November 11, 1903; May 11, 1904.

[35]Oklahoma Medical Journal, Vol. I (March 15, 1893), pp. 28-29.

[36]Medical Association Minutes, May 9, 1893

large amount of sickness in the Territory. Twenty-three more doctors joined in May, 1894. One of the group's first acts was the appointment of a committee to seek revision in the law regulating the practice of medicine.

A large part of each meeting was devoted to scholarly papers. This practice not only encouraged original research but allowed doctors to learn new procedures. Several early studies dealt with such topics as childbirth, compound fractures, gunshot wounds, and typhoid fever--all pertinent to frontier practice. The more significant presentations were printed in the Oklahoma Medical Journal and later in the Oklahoma Medical News-Journal.[37]

The Association underwent several reorganizations before statehood. A new constitution was adopted in 1902 and the group, now numbering 192 members, became known as the Oklahoma Medical Society.[38] Two years later the name was changed to "Oklahoma State Medical Association" and the organization became aligned with the American Medical Association.[39] Meanwhile, county medical societies were

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[37]The first became the official organ of the association soon after its establishment in 1893 by Drs. E. O. Barker, Joseph Pinquard, and H. P. Halstead. Dr. Barker later assumed full control and edited the paper alone until late 1901 when he sold it to Dr. J. R. Phelan, who then merged it with his own Oklahoma Medical News under the title, Oklahoma Medical News-Journal. "Indian-Pioneer Papers," Vol. V, p. 223.

[38]Medical Association Minutes, May 14, 1902; Oklahoma Medical News-Journal, Vol. X (June, 1902), p. 148

[39]Medical Association Minutes, May 11, 1904.

being organized throughout the Territory. Two such groups representing Oklahoma and Canadian counties existed as early as 1893. Others formed before statehood were the Guthrie District Medical Society and the Comanche County Medical Association.

In 1905 the president of the Indian Territory Medical Association proposed a merger with the Oklahoma association so that suitable laws might be planned before statehood.[40] Representatives from both associations met in July, 1905, to discuss the merger and lay plans for a joint meeting at Oklahoma City in May, 1906. The Oklahoma State Medical Association emerged from these transactions.[41]

Since health matters demanded ethical conduct on the part of physicians, one of the major purposes of the medical association was to raise standards and create a professional image. It is understandable why doctors were so concerned with ethics, especially in relation to the examination of young girls and unmarried women. Perhaps they were reacting to a scandalous event in 1894 when a certain Guthrie physician was charged with taking "improper liberties" with an eight-year-old girl.[42] Pioneer Oklahoma doctors also were

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[40] First founded in 1881, the Indian Territory Medical Association was reorganized in 1889. See Fred S. Clinton, "The Indian Territory Medical Association," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXVI (Spring, 1948), pp. 25-26.

[41] Ibid., p. 36; Daily Oklahoman, May 6, 1906.

[42] Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, August 11, 1894.

concerned with what they considered unethical birth control practices, illegal abortions, and fraudulent advertising.[43] Dr. L. T. Smith of Lexington, for example, was expelled from the society in 1904 for quack advertisements and conduct "unbecoming a gentleman."[44]

The opportunity to start anew undoubtedly lured many experienced doctors to Oklahoma Territory. Others, barely out of medical school or still lacking a year or so, hoped to grow up with the country. Whatever their reasons, physicians took part in the various openings with the same enthusiasm and optimism that motivated other settlers. Not only did a large number participate in the original land rush of 1889 but subsequent openings proved equally attractive. Lewis J. Moorman, who set up practice temporarily in Chickasha in 1901, was amazed at the large number of doctors waiting to enter the Kiowa-Comanche country.

Regardless of where he settled, the physician endured the discomforts of pioneer practice in the best tradition of the country doctor. Extended trips by horse and buggy often took him as far as forty miles in one day. Those traveling by horse carried the necessary implements and medicines in saddlebags. The primitive nature of the country

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[43] Dr. L. Haynes Buxton once described contraception as the "crime of the century." Medical Association Minutes, November 23, 1899.

[44] Medical Association Minutes, May 11, 1904.

precluded roads and bridges in many areas, so the doctor often struck out across the prairie, guided merely by a few landmarks and his own intuition. General scarcity of water in Oklahoma's rivers and creeks proved helpful to the traveling physician, who otherwise had to travel miles out of the way to the nearest fording place. Since his forays into the country often lasted five or six days, the doctor always left word of his next stop with each succeeding patient.[45]

Adverse weather conditions further hindered the pioneer physician. Dr. J. A. Jester recalled the sudden approach of a blue norther in which he almost froze to death before reaching home, while another reported that his mouth actually froze shut during a cold buggy ride. The wind particularly exasperated Dr. Lewis J. Moorman:

> Often I had to let the buggy top down to keep from almost going up like a balloon with the ponies dangling in the air as so much ballast. On such occasions I would put the top back, lean forward, duck my head and take the wind as it roared across the plains loaded with sand, slivers of cornstalks, dead grass, and sometimes biting little balls of ice in lieu of snowflakes.[46]

No wonder doctors greeted automobiles so enthusiastically! As the Oklahoma Medical News-Journal noted in June, 1906, doctors generally were the automobile dealers' best customers,

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[45]Margaret C. Adams interview, "Indian-Pioneer Papers," Vol. I, p. 214; Dr. J. A. Jester interview, Ibid., XXXII, 322; XLVIII, 123.

[46]Lewis J. Moorman, Pioneer Doctor (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951), p. 65.

even though the vehicles as yet were far from dependable transportation.

The trials of medical practice are dramatically set forth in the experiences of two young doctors who came to Oklahoma Territory in the early days. Dr. O. C. Newman settled at Grand, Day County, in 1900 after an uncle had impressed him with the unlimited possibilities for a young doctor in the West. Though he called himself a doctor, he still lacked a year of medical studies at the University of the South at Sewanee, Tennessee, before receiving his degree. He alighted from the mail hack at the little western Oklahoma town with only $2.50 in his pocket. Fortunately, an elderly couple advanced his room and board and eventually he was able to acquire a horse and saddle. The young doctor collected little from his patients, however. Some families could offer only a simple meal of clabber milk, sourdough biscuits, and molasses in return for a house call. In March 1902 the county finally paid Newman more than $500 for administering vaccinations during a smallpox epidemic the previous winter. Meanwhile, he supplemented his income by serving as deputy county treasurer.

Newman gained valuable experience during his four and a half years in Grand. Although at first he felt that the people were using him because he was the only doctor available, he nevertheless became an important part of the community. When he returned to medical school for his final

year in 1905, the townspeople took a collection to help defray his expenses. In June 1906 he was graduated from the Medical College of Ohio, whereupon he returned to Grand and served the community for another year. Eventually he moved to Shattuck and established a hospital that later failed.[47]

Lewis J. Moorman had already acquired his medical degree from Louisville Medical School when he set up practice at the little town of Jet in the Cherokee Outlet in 1901. He, too, had come to the West in search of opportunity, but once in Oklahoma the young physician found more work than money. The responsibility of saving lives, nevertheless, gave him invaluable training.[48] In fact, Moorman often reflected that he seemed to be guided by the muse of medicine and that his chief compensation came from serving simple people. After delivering a baby on one occasion, he was promptly invited to join the family for a meal. "The kitchen table had been cleared," he recalled, "and on the shining oil cloth a great loaf of homemade bread, a dish of golden butter, a generous supply of alfalfa honey in the comb, and a cup of coffee steaming hot warmed the cockles of my heart."[49]

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[47] O. C. Newman, "Reminiscences of a Country Doctor," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXVII (Winter, 1949-50), pp. 412-17.

[48] Lewis J. Moorman, "Medicine in the Dugout," Bulletin of the History of Medicine, Vol. XIX (March , 1948), p. 275.

[49] Ibid., p. 277.

Most modern doctors, accustomed to antiseptic conditions and well-equipped hospitals, would be aghast at the crude facilities and primitive state of medicine only a half-century ago. The few medicines available were frequently ineffective amidst the unsanitary surroundings of prairie dwellings, and the lack of equipment forced the family doctor to improvise to the best of his abilities. The most familiar piece of kitchen furniture thus became an operating table and the dish pan or wash basin a sterilizer.

Hospitals were indeed rare if not non-existent in the early days of the frontier. Drs. A. L. Blesh and Horace Reed opened one at Guthrie in 1902, but it was in constant financial straits. Although the hospital claimed to serve the general public, the doctors excluded charity and Negro patients. Eventually, the Methodist Church assumed control of the hospital and rescued it from bankruptcy.[50]

The dental profession likewise began on a primitive scale, but in time it too contributed to the advancement of health in Oklahoma Territory. Before dentists were readily available, general practitioners pulled teeth, but many hearty settlers were forced to perform their own dental work, especially those living in the rural areas. Like the early physicians, dentists were attracted to Oklahoma by the

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[50] Dr. E. O. Barker interview, "Indian-Pioneer Papers," Vol. V, p. 223; Oklahoma Medical News-Journal, Vol. X (October, 1902), pp. 231-32.

promise of opportunity. Dr. A. B. Walker of Fairview, for example, was enticed by railroad advertisements depicting the many new towns which obviously would be in need of dentists.[51] Others apparently reached the same conclusion, for when Dr. G. A. Hughes arrived at Guthrie in 1893, he found eight or ten dentists already there. Only two were professionally qualified, a fairly common situation before adequate dental laws were passed.[52]

Dentists, like doctors, found it necessary to establish standards that would encourage public trust. The first step involved the passage of a licensing law drafted by several territorial dentists. Approved by the legislature in December, 1890, this measure certified all dentists with degrees and those with three years of experience. It further provided for a five-member board of dental examiners to prepare tests for those who did not meet the foregoing requirements. Even with these precautions many unqualified persons continued to practice. Some held degrees from dental offices that issued diplomas after a nominal period of training,[53] while others bought fake credentials from diploma mills. Consequently, there were many dental quacks, or so-called

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[51] J. Stanley Clark, Open Wider, Please: The Story of Dentistry in Oklahoma (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955), p. 8.

[52] Dr. G. A. Hughes interview, "Indian-Pioneer Papers," Vol. XLV, p. 214.

[53] Clark, Open Wider, Please, p. 26.

"painless" dentists.[54] The number of registered dentists in the Territory grew from 43 in 1896 to 181 in 1904.[55] After June 1, 1905 a new law required the examination of all applicants for licenses, including even those with dental degrees.

The dentists themselves took steps to police the profession and promote higher standards through the Oklahoma Dental Association, which they organized at Guthrie on May 6, 1891. The election of a Purcell dentist as president in 1894 indicates the co-operation between the two territories until Indian Territory dentists formed their own group in 1903.[56] The two societies eventually merged in June, 1907.

Like his medical colleague, the early dentist often practiced under adverse conditions. Some took their services to the patient in one-day stands at crossroad stores and small towns--a practice known as "bushwhacking." Dr. L. M. Doss, who "bushwhacked" out of Shawnee as early as 1898, carried a folding dental chair and foot engine and other necessary tools in his buggy. His intended arrival had previously been announced by printed circulars.[57] Another

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[54]This term also appeared in the advertisements of legitimate practitioners. Dr. W. J. Broadfoot of Guthrie, a member of the Oklahoma Dental Association, advertised that he extracted teeth "without pain." See Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, October 13, 1894.

[55]Clark, Open Wider, Please, pp. 19, 57.

[56]Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, May 12, 1894; Clark, Open Wider, Please, p. 59.

[57]Clark, Open Wider, Please, p. 11.

pioneer Shawnee dentist was Dr. J. A. Wells, a graduate of the Chicago College of Dental Surgery. Obviously his training did not prepare him for the crude conditions he found in Oklahoma. He later recalled that a spittoon fastened to the arm of his dental chair had to be emptied by hand. Patients also suffered from these crude conditions, for they were often required to endure the pain of drilling and extraction without the benefit of anesthetic. While he may have been justified in having qualms about such methods, the patient could hardly complain about prices, since the normal charge for pulling a tooth was fifty cents. A complete set of dentures could be bought for $25.[58]

The pharmacist represented yet another aspect of the health scene. One such individual was F. B. Lillie, who brought in a supply of pills on the first train that entered Guthrie on April 22, 1889. He immediately set up shop and eventually became a leading territorial druggist. Most of the drugs that Lillie sold were patent medicine, but like other pioneer druggists he had to be proficient in mixing and compounding many kinds of medicine. Pharmaceutical companies often furnished only the components and not the finished products, while patent medicines generally came through mail order houses or "drummers."

The need for ethical standards led twelve druggists to

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[58] Ibid., p. 25.

form the Oklahoma Pharmaceutical Association at Edmond in August, 1890.[59] Among the first business transacted was the drafting of a pharmacy bill enacted into law by the territorial legislature in 1891. This measure provided for a pharmacy board charged with the responsibility of examining prospective pharmacists and issuing licenses, but it failed to go far enough. Throughout the territorial period concern over the easy availability of dangerous drugs, especially cocaine, remained constant. Medical doctors and registered pharmacists rightfully sought to restrict these medicines to prescriptions,[60] but the general public opposed such regulations. Consequently, bills to restrict the sale of morphine, cocaine, and other narcotics failed three times before an adequate one was finally passed in 1897.[61]

Relations between doctors and pharmacists were sometimes strained since physicians also sold drugs. Moreover, doctors suspected druggists of practicing medicine, as some undoubtedly did. Dr. E. O. Barker called the druggist a "persistent enemy" because he encouraged patent medicine manufacturers. Some doctors even feared that tablet slot machines would soon appear in drug stores and depots for those

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[59]"History of the Oklahoma Pharmaceutical Association," Lillie Collection, Box 3, Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Library, Norman.

[60]Medical Association Minutes, November 11, 1903.

[61]"History of the Oklahoma Pharmaceutical Association," n. p.

who wanted to prescribe for themselves.[62] On the other hand, pharmacists sometimes were wary of physicians. J. E. Gumaer of the Kendrick Drug Company, for example, suggested that doctors also engaged in the sale of habit-forming drugs.[63] Druggists, nevertheless, took steps to reconcile the physicians in 1901 when Professor Edwin DeBarr appeared before the medical association and urged a joint meeting of the two professions. This dialogue perhaps indicated the approach of true professionalism in the medical sciences.

Those trained in the law were also important in the professional realm. Unlike the doctor, who found more sickness than he could handle, the pioneer attorney had no courts in which to practice before Oklahoma acquired an organized government in 1890. In the absence of regular courts of law, the two United States land offices served as the nearest thing to judicial forums since the process of acquiring land involved legal procedures. Thus, a corps of land office lawyers represented the legal profession prior to the establishment of a formal bar. Successive openings encouraged similar situations, leading Helen C. Candee to observe that "lawyers appear in droves, knowing that disputes

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[62] Medical Association Minutes, May 9, 1900.

[63] J. E. Gumaer to F. B. Lillie, Kendrick, Oklahoma Territory, August 15, 1897, Lillie Collection.

and contests will be the first crop of the new district."[64]

The appearance of law naturally brought more opportunity for lawyers. Initially under the Nebraska statutes, Oklahoma Territory later embraced parts of the Indiana and Kansas codes.[65] Infringement of the law and civil disputes involved court procedure, and this in turn meant business for the attorney. In addition to handling the normal civil involvements, lawyers found employment in a proliferation of criminal cases. Early records indicate a wide variety of crimes, ranging from gambling and prostitution to horse stealing and homicide. The Guthrie State Capital reported on April 2, 1894, that one prisoner had been committed to the federal jail for passing counterfeit silver dollars, a second for selling whiskey to the Kiowa Indians, and another for cutting timber off government land.

Some 147 attorneys took oaths before the first session of the territorial supreme court on June 10, 1890. Among the applicants were Dennis T. Flynn, who later became the delegate to Congress, and Harper S. Cunningham, the first president of the Oklahoma Bar Association. By 1894 Guthrie alone listed more than fifty lawyers.[66]

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[64]Helen C. Candee, "Social Conditions in Our Newest Territory," The Forum Vol. XXV (June, 1898), p. 431.

[65]A. G. C. Bierer, "Early Day Courts and Lawyers," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. VIII (March, 1930), p. 9.

[66]Marion Tuttle Rock, Illustrated History of Oklahoma (Topeka, Kansas: C. B. Hamilton & Son, 1890), pp. 186-87; Noel Edwards (comp.), City of Guthrie Business Directory,

The establishment of a bar obviously required some attention to qualifications. The original statutes provided for the admission to practice of those who could satisfy a court of record "either by examination or certificate from any other state or territory."[67] The court-administered examination sometimes proved to be more an initiation than a test of knowledge, however. Thomas A. Edwards, for example, was asked only one question before he was passed.[68] These rather lax regulations remained in force until 1903 when the assembly enacted stiffer measures at the insistence of the bar association. Henceforth, the age limit was set at twenty-one and a year of regular study was required for all applicants.[69]

While the law laid down minimum requirements, it made no distinction between practical and formal training. As a result the bar included both college and self-trained lawyers. Judging from news reports in the Oklahoma Law Journal, it appears that the trend was toward formal training

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1894 (Guthrie: State Capital Printing Co., 1894), pp. 9-21.

[67] Oklahoma Territory, Statutes (1890), ch. vii, sec. 1.

[68] Thomas A. Edwards, "Early Days in the C & A," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXVII (Summer, 1949), pp. 156-57. The legendary Temple Houston of Woodward served on the committee that tested Edwards. This youngest son of the famous Sam Houston was known throughout the Territory as a brilliant but flamboyant lawyer.

[69] Proceedings of the Oklahoma Bar Association for the Years 1903-4 (Guthrie: Oklahoma Ptg. Co., 1904), p. 99; Oklahoma Territory, Session Laws of 1903, ch. 3, secs. 2-3.

after 1900, but the time-honored system of reading law remained an important means of preparation. Two schools of thought emerged concerning the best method of learning the law. One called for a thorough knowledge of the statutes, while the other maintained that the lawyer needed to know only the decisions of the territorial supreme court. The editor of the Oklahoma Law Journal, wisely advised a combination of principles and decisions.[70]

Varied as their backgrounds were, pioneer lawyers found the rough-and-tumble practice of the day a difficult proving ground. At the top of the legal system was the territorial supreme court, a three-man tribunal that sat at Guthrie. Moreover, each of the justices was in charge of a judicial district made up of several counties. These courts were circuit in nature since they traveled to various towns within the districts. The first district court alternated between Guthrie and Stillwater. The second district traveled to Beaver, Kingfisher, and El Reno, and the third divided its time between Norman and Oklahoma City. The opening of new lands and the addition of four justices to the supreme court increased to seven the number of judicial districts by the end of the territorial period. Probate courts and Justices of the Peace courts made up the lower judiciary levels, the latter dealing with cases in which the amount in controversy

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[70] Oklahoma Law Journal, Vol. I (July, 1902), pp. 18-19.

did not exceed $100.[71]

The scattered reminiscences of early participants reveal the adverse conditions of early practice. Since district courts met at various places, it was necessary for the judge and his company to travel at regular intervals. Several lawyers accompanied the court to provide defense counsel in criminal cases or to assist local attorneys in other matters.[72] To reach Beaver County in the Panhandle, it was necessary for Judge A. J. Seay to travel to Englewood, Kansas, by rail and then to Beaver by stage--a total of 300 miles. An alternate route took him overland 200 miles through Camp Supply. Once he reached his destination, the judge often found makeshift facilities and poor accommodations. In fact, conditions were so bad at Cloud Chief in Washita County that the judge adjourned court and declared he would not return until a better room was provided.[73] Lawyers were equally exasperated by the fact that a lack of precedent resulted in many problems "of their own kind," thus imposing additional burdens on all concerned.

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[71]George Shirk, "The Start of the Law," Daily Oklahoman Sunday Magazine, April 29, 1951, p. 15; Dora Ann Stewart, The Government and Development of Oklahoma Territory (Oklahoma City: Harlow Publishing Co., 1933), p. 55.

[72]Dan W. Peery, "The Indians' Friend John H. Segar," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. X (September, 1932), p. 349.

[73]Dan W. Peery (ed.), "Autobiography of Governor A. J. Seay," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XVII (March, 1939), p. 44; Edwards, "Early Days in the C & A," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXVII (Summer, 1949), pp. 158-59.

Lawyers often turned to other jobs to supplement their meager incomes. W. C. Austin, a pioneer lawyer in southwestern Oklahoma, served as postmaster and operated a drug store until his law practice provided enough money to support his family. Following his successful defense of a traveling peddler accused of unlawfully carrying a gun, Austin took his fee of $25 in merchandise. The very nature of many early cases dealt with the scarcity of money, as indicated by the fact that Brandenburg's volume on bankruptcy was the best-selling law book in the Territory.[74]

Considering the foibles of pioneer practice, it was fortunate that lawyers could take a humorous view of their situation. In an address before the 1904 meeting of the bar association, J. B. A. Robertson of Chandler recounted "Humors of the Law" as enacted in the first district. One of the anecdotes concerned a Negro justice of the peace, who, when "cussed" by a man outside the courtroom, promptly fined the individual $5 for contempt of court. In reply to the defendant's complaint that he could not be fined when court was not in session, the judge replied: "Young man, you are now informed that this court am always in session, and therefore always am an object of contempt."[75] Another

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[74]Monroe Billington, "W. C. Austin: Pioneer and Public Servant," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXXI (Spring, 1953), pp. 66-67; Oklahoma Law Journal, Vol. II (January, 1904), p. 247.

[75]Proceedings of the Oklahoma Bar Association, 1903-4, pp. 118-19.

story told of a defense attorney who "hocked" a stolen guitar which was the incriminating evidence against his client and promptly got drunk on the money during a court recess.

While such antics were no doubt amusing to lawyers, the profession attempted to project a much different image before the public. Foremost in this effort was the Oklahoma Bar Association, first organized at Guthrie in June, 1890 and later reorganized in 1896. Harper S. Cunningham repeatedly served as president of this group. The purposes of the association, as set forth in the constitution, were "to advance the science of jurisprudence, promote the administration of justice, and, in the enactment of wise and useful legislation, uphold the honor of the profession of the law, and encourage cordial intercourse among the members of the Oklahoma bar."[76] By 1904 the association claimed 228 members.

Bar association activities stimulated the lawyer's professional life. Annual meetings provided a forum for pertinent papers, highlighted by the presidential address on significant developments in territorial law. Among the topics in 1903 were "Judge-Made Law," "Trusts--A Possible Solution," and "Needed Railroad Legislation." Although the bar association did not publish a journal, individual

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[76]Rock, Illustrated History, p. 186; Guthrie Daily Leader, June 5, 1896; Proceedings of the Oklahoma Bar Association, 1903-4, p. 13.

members supported the Oklahoma Law Journal, a private publication established in June, 1902, by D. H. Fernandes of Stillwater. Its format included professional articles, digests of Oklahoma cases, and news about territorial lawyers.

Mindful of the role that lawyers would play in the formation of a new state, the bar association effected an early consolidation with its Indian Territory counterpart.[77] The executive councils of the two groups met at Oklahoma City in September, 1904, to plan the merger finally consummated at Shawnee in December. An Indian Territory attorney, C. B. Stuart of South McAlester, became the first president, and Charles H. Woods of Guthrie the first secretary. The other officers were evenly divided between the two territories.[78] United, the lawyers could look forward to a significant place in the upcoming constitutional convention.

The professional man thus fulfilled an important role in a country that desperately needed his services but could ill-afford to attract the best qualified. Few who were happily established elsewhere came to Oklahoma in the early

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[77] The latter group was organized at South McAlester in February, 1900. See Proceedings of the First Meeting of the Indian Territory Bar Association (South McAlester: Press of South McAlester Capital, 1900), p. 1.

[78] Proceedings of the First Annual Meeting of the Oklahoma and Indian Territory Bar Association (Guthrie: The State Capital Co., [1905]), pp. 2-3.

years. As a result, many of the doctors, dentists, and lawyers who did come were often novices or failures, and not a few were outright fakes. Poor standards naturally accompanied such conditions, but it is a credit to the early practitioners that a high degree of professionalism eventually emerged. This was largely due to ethical leadership in the professional societies as well as the adoption of constructive legislation. As the country matured, Oklahoma gained better qualified personnel and thereby assured itself continued growth. But the day of the country doctor and the land office lawyer would not soon be forgotten.

CHAPTER IX

FROM DUGOUT TO OPERA HOUSE

That Oklahoma society was flourishing by 1907 is a tribute to both its rural and urban elements. Indeed, the transformation from raw prairieland to settled countryside took less than two decades. The true test of maturity, however, often lies in the refinements of society--in art, literature, and music, as well as those organizations and social activities that tie men together in fellowship and common interests. From the beginning Oklahomans exhibited strong desires for cultural improvement, and even before the hardships of pioneer life had vanished they formed literary societies, musical groups, and fraternal organizations. Moreover, elaborate social functions became increasingly more common, especially in the cities and towns.

The isolation of rural life naturally limited the homesteader's contacts to special occasions, but town dwellers had considerable opportunity for social intercourse which in turn led to a more cosmopolitan outlook. Such physical improvements as electric lights, telephones, and street railways doubtless contributed to this socializing process.

Much has been written about the "instant" growth of

Oklahoma towns, especially those associated with the opening of 1889. Actually, their progress was often laboriously slow after the initial boom. Although Guthrie and Oklahoma City claimed 10,000 to 15,000 inhabitants immediately after the run, each listed less than 6,000 in the first official governor's report issued in 1891. Guthrie's population of 5,884 was slightly larger than Oklahoma City's 5,036. The presence of a government land office helped boost Kingfisher's population to 1,278, but the remaining four county seats each reported less than 800 residents.[1] Shawnee, Enid, and Lawton later became significant towns.[2] Only six towns were rated as first class in 1899, but within seven years a total of twenty-three fulfilled the necessary legal standards.[3] Nevertheless, only Guthrie and Oklahoma City resembled true cities throughout a substantial part of the territorial period.

Because of its central position, Guthrie was an important center from the beginning. As early as 1890, Marion Tuttle Rock spoke of the city's "charming location,

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[1] Report of the Governor of Oklahoma to the Secretary of the Interior, 1891. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1891), p. 3.

[2] Edward Everett Dale and Morris L. Wardell, History of Oklahoma (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1948), p. 550. Oklahoma City, with 32,451, was clearly the metropolis of Oklahoma in 1907. Guthrie lagged far behind with only 11,643, followed by Shawnee (10,955), Enid (10,067), and Lawton (5,562).

[3] Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, 1899, p. 13; Ibid., 1906, pp. 44-45.

beautiful surroundings, and commercial importance."[4] Even more glowing was the following contemporary description by O. C. Seely:

> Guthrie, the capital and chief city, is the fountain head of all this grand Territory and the center of wealth, culture and refinement. . . . Like a proud queen, she sits upon a commanding elevation overlooking the beautiful valleys of the Cottonwood and Cimarron rivers, surrounded by a region unequaled for its beauty of topography and the richness of its productions. . . .[5]

In addition to its natural blessings, Guthrie enjoyed an enlightened citizenry that early attempted to establish an effective government. As noted earlier, Guthrie was initially made up of five contiguous townsites, each of which eventually formed its own separate government. Residents of Capitol Hill, for instance, met in a mass convention on May 1, 1889, barely a week after the opening. According to the original minutes of the meeting, the purpose was to organize a municipal corporation and to elect "necessary officers therefor."[6] Such civic spirit would continue to motivate Guthrie throughout the early days. One of the leading boosters was Frank H. Greer of the Oklahoma

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[4]Marion Tuttle Rock, Illustrated History of Oklahoma (Topeka, Kansas: O. B. Hamilton & Son, 1890), p. 55.

[5]O. C. Seely, Oklahoma Illustrated: A Book of Practical Information (Guthrie: The Leader Printing Co., 1894), pp. 51-52.

[6]Minutes of Capitol Hill City Council, May 1, 1889. The original journal is in Box 3 of the Wenner Collection, Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Library, Norman.

State Capital, who once proclaimed that "we need to tear down no other town or community in order to build up Guthrie."[7] Yet, Greer went on to observe that there could be only one great city in Oklahoma Territory, and he was determined that it would be Guthrie. His attitude foreshadowed the struggle that saw Oklahoma City emerge as the capital after statehood.

Guthrie indeed faced a formidable rival in Oklahoma City, thirty miles to the south. This sprawling frontier town enjoyed a lively commercial growth from its earliest days, mainly through the efforts of effective promoters in attracting railroads and industry. According to Mrs. Rock, Oklahoma City possessed "a sufficient amount of Western force and goaheadativeness" to make itself the business center of Oklahoma. "The artisan, merchant, and capitalist," she declared, "may look elsewhere in vain for a more advantageous location in which to employ their money or muscle."[8] The Oklahoma Review likewise attributed Oklahoma City's success to natural conditions and public spirit, while Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine concluded that the "pluck and spirit" of Oklahoma City's people had made the town

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[7]As cited in "History of the State Capital," Cooperative Publishing Company Collection, Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Library, Norman.

[8]Rock, Illustrated History, p. 71.

great.[9] One of the leading entrepeneurs was Henry Overholser, who owned the opera house and the Grand Avenue Hotel, as well as several other buildings.[10] Dr. Lewis J. Moorman, who passed through Oklahoma City in 1901, was amazed at the city's intellectual attainments and progressive spirit.[11] E. K. Gaylord, another early observer, was less impressed when he visited Oklahoma City in December, 1902, to investigate newspaper possibilities. The business district, he recalled, consisted of only a few blocks, mostly unpaved and muddy.[12]

Fortunately, the crude appearance of most Oklahoma towns did not distract from their social development. After all, as Mrs. Rock observed, it was the people who formed the character and reputation of communities, and in this respect Oklahoma was particularly fortunate: "Eastern exclusiveness is merged in Western democracy, while Northern conservatism joins Southern hospitality in a spirit of harmony and congeniality not found in any other locality."[13]

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[9] Oklahoma Review, Vol. I (April, 1898), n. p.; Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine, Vol. II (November, 1906), p. 9.

[10] Rock, Illustrated History, p. 78.

[11] Lewis J. Moorman, Pioneer Doctor (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951), pp. 41-42.

[12] Oklahoma Publishing Company, Fifty Years of Progress (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Publishing Co., 1953), p. 7. Gaylord nevertheless remained in Oklahoma City to build a newspaper and financial empire over the next half century.

[13] Rock, Illustrated History, p. 118.

Locally-organized clubs were one of the first signs of formal society.[14] Among those formed in Guthrie during the winter of 1889 were: the Calumet Club for young people, the Arion Dancing Club, the Pioneer Progressive Euchre Club, and the Guthrie Whist Club. In addition, the Ladies' Social and Literary Society, composed of twenty-five married women, met each Friday afternoon to study music and literature.[15] Similar groups appeared elsewhere, until by the turn of the century club work was an established practice in most towns.

Various groups merged into the Oklahoma and Indian Territory Federation of Women's Clubs at Oklahoma City in May, 1898. The twenty-four delegates also voted to affiliate with the national General Federation. A year later some sixty delegates from twenty clubs attended the first annual meeting at Norman.[16] An account of the business session revealed that women's clubs were inclined toward educational ventures and civic affairs, such as establishing rest rooms for those farmers' wives who accompanied their husbands to town.[17]

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[14]Mrs. Thompson B. Ferguson recalled that a "culture" club was formed in Watonga for the purpose of mental improvement. See Mrs. Thompson B. Ferguson, They Carried the Torch (Kansas City: Burton Publishing Company, 1937), p. 56.

[15]Rock, Illustrated History, p. 120.

[16]Luretta Rainey, History of Oklahoma State Federation of Women's Clubs (Guthrie: Co-operative Publishing Company, 1939), pp. 8-9; Mrs. Thompson B. Ferguson, They Carried the Torch, p. 198. Separate Oklahoma and Indian Territory groups were formed in 1903.

[17]Kansas City Star, May 18, 1899, Barde Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City.

The Women's Christian Temperance Union held its first territorial convention at Guthrie in October, 1890. Temperance chapters also were active in Guthrie, Oklahoma City, and Kingfisher, as well as other cities throughout the territory.[18]

Among early men's groups were the Junior Club in Guthrie and the Pickwick Club in Oklahoma City. The first was composed of younger men who reportedly made "quite a shine in society," while the Pickwicks consisted of ten Oklahoma City bachelors who "directed" the social scene there. In addition to maintaining its own quarters, the Pickwick Club remained active in civic affairs and in planning the governor's inaugural ball after the Capital was moved to Oklahoma City.[19]

Even more impressive in terms of members were the various fraternal societies represented in Oklahoma Territory. Sixteen different orders reported a total membership of 32,865 shortly after the turn of the century.[20] These organizations, ranging from the traditional Masons and Odd Fellows to the Grand Army of the Republic, further illustrated the "maturity" of Oklahoma society. Somewhat unique

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[18] Rock, Illustrated History, p. 190.

[19] Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, May 12, 1894; Fifty Years of Progress, pp. 11-12. E. K. Gaylord was a charter member of the Pickwick Club.

[20] St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad, Oklahoma and Indian Territory Along the Frisco (St. Louis: Woodward & Tiernan Printing Co., 1905), p. 24.

among frontier regions. Oklahoma Territory rapidly drew upon the experience of its settlers and assumed a full-grown appearance almost overnight. Visitors or potential new residents could not help but be favorably impressed by the presence of their fraternal lodges in a town with muddy streets and false-front buildings.

Secret orders enticed both men and women to support a host of different groups. Oklahoma City Masons held their initial meeting less than a month after the opening of 1889 and were well organized by September. First known as North Canadian Lodge Number 36, it claimed twenty-three charter members.[21] Guthrie Masons got an equally early start and eventually turned their city into a Masonic stronghold, boasting a large Scottish Rites temple.[22] Not to be outdone, Territorial Odd Fellows also laid plans for impressive temples. The Kingfisher lodge, for instance, was planning a three-story brick building in the summer of 1893.[23] Other orders, such as the Knights of Pythias, Knights Templar, and Knights and Daughters of Tabor, took pride in the pageantry of knighthood. The Guthrie chapter of Knights Templar seemed especially fortunate to have within its ranks

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[21] "Bunky" [Irving Geffs], The First Eight Months of Oklahoma City (Oklahoma City: McMaster Printing Company, 1890), p. 23.

[22] Guthrie Leader, November 13, 1933. The first Scottish Rites temple in Guthrie was begun in 1898. A later edifice was reportedly the largest in the world.

[23] Chandler News, June 9, 1893.

a future governor, Sir Knight C. M. Barnes, who was elected eminent commander in 1893.[24] Another organization was the Ancient Order of United Workmen, which held its second annual meeting in Guthrie in June, 1894. This group reportedly had the largest number of lodges and represented nearly every profession in the Territory.[25]

Other fraternal organizations active during the territorial period were the Sons of Herman, the Eastern Star, the Rebekahs, the Order of Chosen Friends, and the Woodmen of the World. The latter group offered insurance as well as ritual, thereby assuring its members not only a good time but a decent burial as well. O. H. Richards, a pioneer Day County resident, joined the Woodmen when an organizer came through the area prior to 1900. Richards later wrote of the thrill he experienced in wearing the "W. O. W." button and greeting brothers with "the sign."[26]

The predominance of Union veterans in the early land rushes naturally gave rise to local posts of the Grand Army of the Republic. The G. A. R. was first organized at Guthrie

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[24]Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, December 9, 1893. The Knights and Daughters of Tabor held their first reunion in Guthrie the next week. See Ibid., December 16, 1893.

[25]Ibid., June 2, 1894.

[26]O. H. Richards, "Early Days in Day County," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXVI (Autumn, 1948), p. 316. The Coming Men of America offered similar joys to young boys. Edward H. Teachman reminiscence, Hatfield Collection, Box H-10, Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Library, Norman.

on decoration day, May 30, 1889.[27] By the middle of September a post was established in Oklahoma City, where newspaperman Frank McMaster served as commander.[28] Sufficient interest in the G. A. R. led to a separate Oklahoma Department in August, 1890, at which time Cassius M. Barnes was chosen departmental commander. Membership eventually reached 8,000, and although the ranks began to thin after 1900, the organization still functioned for several years.[29]

The Grand Order of the Anti-Horse Thief Association served yet another special function. The territorial order was established at Hennessey in December, 1895, with the assistance of Charles F. Leech of Arkansas City, national A. H. T. A. president. Ninety-four delegates attended the annual meeting at Guthrie the next year, and within ten years this figure exceeded 600.[30] The society was originally

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[27]Rock, Illustrated History, p. 191. Future-governor C. M. Barnes was post commander.

[28]"Bunky," First Eight Months of Oklahoma City, p. 45. McMaster published an account of his war adventures in McMaster's Magazine under the heading, "A Private's War History." See McMaster's Magazine, Vol. IX (February, 1898).

[29]Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, April 21, 1929. In 1902 Governor Ferguson was asked to speak at the Oklahoma Department reunion at Anadarko.

[30]Proceedings of the First and Second Sessions of the Grand Order of the Anti-Horse Thief Association of Oklahoma (Enid: Eagle Book and Job Print, 1897), pp. 1-2, 5; Twelfth Annual and Second National Meeting of the National and State Order A. H. T. A. of Oklahoma and Indian Territory (Edmond: Sun Print [1906]), p. 1. W. T. Parnell, former register of deeds at Kingfisher, was an early president.

intended to protect property in a manner reminiscent of the early vigilence committees, but its activities in Oklahoma were largely restricted to social affairs.[31]

Social functions were often the barometer of community spirit. The above-mentioned groups, as well as church organizations and private individuals, were soon sponsoring a variety of teas, dinners, and balls.[32] Perhaps the first significant social event in Oklahoma Territory was the welcome tendered a group of visiting congressmen in the fall of 1889. Both Guthrie and Oklahoma City responded with elaborate receptions and banquets designed to show the advanced state of culture in the nation's newest territory. The Oklahoma City banquet was described as a "spread eagle affair" that ranked, in the opinion of the Oklahoma City Gazette, as the "most brilliant display of beauty and fashion in the great south west."[33]

Fancy balls were perhaps the nearest thing to high society in the Territory. An affair held at Guthrie's opera house in December, 1893, featured a grand march by the Knights of Pythias in full regalia. "Guthrie has many charm-

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[31]Alva C. Snider reminiscence, Hatfield Collection, Box H-10.

[32]Rock, Illustrated History, p. 120.

[33]As cited in "Bunky," The First Eight Months of Oklahoma City, pp. 84-85. The visiting congressmen were C. H. Mansur, W. M. Springer, J. M. Allen, C. S. Baker, B. W. Perkins, and S. R. Peters.

ing ladies, and they were out last evening in all their rapture thrilling loveliness," observed a reporter for the State Capital the next day. The orchestra, led by the popular Professor Lehrer, was described as the best ever gathered in the territorial capital.[34] Similar social affairs were held by professional groups. The bar association, for example, held a formal banquet at Guthrie's Royal Hotel in 1903.[35]

Official or state functions likewise were particularly important to Guthrie, where the territorial social pace was set. Governor and Mrs. Ferguson attended numerous luncheons, receptions, and balls during his tenure from November, 1901 to January, 1906, despite the governor's scorn for such events. The social scene was even busier when the legislature was in session. The serious manner in which people received these affairs amazed Mrs. Ferguson, who perhaps remembered less prosperous times while observing the people from her place at the head of the receiving line. The ladies' elaborate dresses, characterized by small waists, big sleeves, and long trains, were especially impressive. Their satin, lace, and fur certainly suggested a way of life quite unlike that of the average Oklahoma homestead.[36]

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[34]Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, December 9, 1893.

[35]Proceedings of the Oklahoma Bar Association for the Years 1903-4 (Guthrie: Oklahoma Printing Co., 1904), pp. 18-19.

[36]Ferguson, They Carried the Torch, pp. 116-18.

A degree of pretension indeed accompanied territorial society, in the opinion of Helen C. Candee, a contemporary writer. Women were especially class-conscious in church and club work, she noted, and the glowing newspaper accounts of social events surely must have added to their delusions. Perhaps Miss Candee had the following item in mind:

> The house was darkened and colored lights threw a magic glamor. The parlors were decorated with flowers; garlands of similax clambered over pictures and up the walls. A sweet parfum pervaded the soft and glowing warmth of the house. . . . Conversation sparkled as the diamonds on the ladies.[37]

But social activities were not restricted to Guthrie or Oklahoma City. The opening of the new Hendrickson Hotel at Alva in the mid 1890's was an equally gala affair. "This being the first social event for the young city," observed the State Capital, "youth and old age joined hands and circled both to the right and left." Delicate silk dresses, dainty white slippers, and sparkling diamonds invariably made a colorful story for the society page, whether the event took place in New York City or the Cherokee Outlet.[38]

While the early settlers were generally concerned with financial survival, a degree of cultural refinement nevertheless emerged in rather short order. Only two months after

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[37] Helen C. Candee, "Social Conditions in Our Newest Territory," The Forum (June, 1898), pp. 434-35; Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, November 18, 1893.

[38] Ibid., February 3, 1894.

the opening, Oklahoma City boasted three music teachers and two theaters.[39] President David Ross Boyd of the Territorial University was impressed by the number of people who owned pianos or subscribed to Harper's magazine. Although the correspondent who described his community's cultural life as "alive and on the progressive" may have been over-optimistic, his statement still contained a measure of truth.[40]

Several examples indicate a nascent interest in the arts. The Oklahoma exhibit at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair displayed several paintings of Oklahoma scenes by two territorial artists, a Mrs. Stumpf of Guthrie and a Mrs. Hall of El Reno. The next year a group of Guthrie artists combined to present an exhibit of hand-painted china at a Guthrie store.[41] A simpler esthetic expression was evident in the use of wild prairie flowers to decorate schools or churches for special occasions.[42]

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[39]Candee, "Social Conditions," The Forum (June, 1898), p. 437; "Bunky," The First Eight Months of Oklahoma City, p. 25.

[40]George Milburn, "Planting a University: First Varsity President Recounts How He Did It," The Sooner Magazine, Vol. I (November, 1928), p. 41; Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, April 2, 1894.

[41]Ibid., August 5, 1893; April 11, 1894. The Oklahoma Art League was formed in 1910, largely through the efforts of Nellie Shepherd. See Oklahoma Club News, October, 1927, pp. 19-20.

[42]Buhrman-Corbin reminiscence, Hatfield Collection, Box H-34.

Architecture was necessarily restricted to a utilitarian role. As previously noted, the settler faced a formidable obstacle in the shortage of building materials. His answer--the sod house--was suitable temporarily, but it hardly qualified as an architectural accomplishment in the artistic sense. Similarly, prairie towns with their box-frame buildings were more practical than beautiful. In fact, the traditional false-fronts on many buildings merely exaggerated their plainness.[43] As times improved, more pleasing homes appeared both in the countryside and in urban areas. Although generally plain, some homes featured cupolas, gingerbread trim, and spindled balusters.[44]

Most public buildings were in keeping with the garish styles of the Victorian period, although Guthrie's Carnegie Library retained the neo-classical charm reminiscent of Jefferson's designs. On the other hand, the Territorial University's main building at Norman struck Vernon L. Parrington as ugly and "with a wart atop" when he first

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[43]Cloud Chief in the Cheyenne and Arapaho country eventually had a dozen or so buildings of this nature, each with its own rattly, wooden sidewalk. The "Iron Hotel," so-called because it was made of corrugated iron, and a courthouse of warped cottonwood lumber added little to Cloud Chief's esthetic appearance. See Thomas A. Edwards, "Early Days in the C & A," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXVII (Summer, 1949), p. 151.

[44]Angie Debo, Prairie City (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1944), p. 80. A few of these houses are still in evidence in the countryside and along Guthrie streets. Governor A. J. Seay's home in Kingfisher is due to be restored.

viewed it on his arrival in the fall of 1897.[45] Even more grotesque was the turreted building housing the Northwestern Normal School at Alva. What it lacked in beauty was gained in versatility, for the structure included a large assembly hall, classrooms, and an elaborate suite of offices for the president. A description in the State Capital Art Edition noted that President J. E. Ament's private office featured a colonial fireplace with marble mantle, large plate mirrors, and Italian marble statuary.[46]

A popular approach characterized the realm of literature since most writing appeared in newspapers and magazines. Even the few books published during the territorial period were issued by newspaper concerns such as the State Capital Printing Company or the Times-Journal Printing Company.[47] One early writer, F. W. Jacobs of Kingfisher, published his own book under the title, Life, Lectures and Poetry. An anonymous reviewer for the Oklahoma Law Journal considered Jacob's poetry better than his lectures and sermons. He cited the following stanza as a "sublime" example:

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[45] The Mistletoe, Vol. I (1906), p. 82. This was the early year-book at the Territorial University.

[46] State Capital Art Edition, May 26, 1900, n. p. Perhaps Ament's offices were too fancy for a minor territorial official. He was later fired by Governor Ferguson.

[47] For the most part these were minutes of church and professional groups, government reports, or booster material. An exception was Marion Tuttle Rock's Illustrated History of Oklahoma, published by a Kansas firm.

Fair as May in rosy setting
was the face of my Irene,
Standing in the early morning
By the sunlight's golden stream.[48]

The poetry of Freeman Miller, an English professor at the Agricultural and Mechanical College at Stillwater, was considerably more professional.[49]

Magazines provided another outlet for the literary-minded. One of the first publications was Mistletoe Leaves, issued by the Oklahoma Historical Society and edited by William P. Campbell. First published in August, 1893, the magazine continued for two years and carried historical items, literary pieces, personal items, and some political material. Although Campbell was responsible for preserving many early newspapers, only a few issues of his own publication remain.[50]

Another early journal was the Oklahoma Magazine, founded by the controversial Frank McMaster at Oklahoma City in 1889 and later renamed McMaster's Magazine: An Illustrated Monthly of Oklahoma and Indian Territory.[51] This publication drew generally favorable comments from the

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[48]Oklahoma Law Journal, Vol. II (February, 1904), p. 285. The book sold for one dollar.

[49]Ferguson, They Carried the Torch, p. 74.

[50]Angie Debo, "Early Publications of the Oklahoma Historical Society," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXVI (Autumn, 1948), pp. 325-26.

[51]Esther Witcher, "Territorial Magazines," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXIX (Spring, 1951), p. 491.

territorial press. In the fall of 1894, for instance, the Guthrie State Capital noted that McMaster's October issue was "full of meat and handsomely illustrated." Such a magazine, the paper concluded, would be "of much value in establishing our high civilization, culture and enterprise."[52] The Norman Transcript had similar praise for the November, 1897, issue: "It is a distinctively Oklahoma magazine, dealing exclusively with Oklahoma matters, edited by one of the brainiest men of Oklahoma and printed in one of the best print-shops in the Territory."[53]

A typical issue of McMaster's Magazine was the one published in February, 1898. Pictures on the opening pages depicted a view of the city of Chandler and a portrait of General William Walker. The article on Chandler was pure booster material, complete with pictures of the town's leading citizens. Another article was reputedly a first-hand account by General J. C. Jamison, a survivor of Walker's Nicaraguan filibuster. Equally interesting was McMaster's own account of his experiences in the battle of Corinth during the Civil War. The issue concluded with an editorial column on the likelihood of statehood for Oklahoma and Indian territories.[54]

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[52]Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, October 20, 1894.

[53]Norman Transcript, November 19, 1897.

[54]Scattered volumes of this magazine are available in the Phillips Collection of the University of Oklahoma Library and at the Oklahoma Historical Society.

Twin Territories and Sturm's Magazine also dealt with the Oklahoma scene, although both were founded in Indian Territory. Twin Territories was established at Muskogee late in 1898 by Ora V. Eddleman, a young Cherokee woman. Filled with Indian legends, folklore, and poetry, this magazine dealt primarily with Indian Territory. Sturm's Statehood Magazine was born at Tulsa in 1905, but it was soon moved to Oklahoma City where the title became Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine. Although it was in existence for only a brief part of the territorial period, Sturm's offered an excellent forum for such writers as Frederick S. Barde, J. B. Thoburn, Ora Eddleman Reed, and Roy Temple House. Moreover, it was well-edited and handsomely illustrated.[55]

Dramatic offerings similarly combined low art and entertainment, as witnessed by the popularity of touring vaudeville companies in early Oklahoma. Henry Overholser's Grand Avenue Opera House, a brick and stone structure seating a thousand persons, was one of the early public buildings in Oklahoma City.[56] Kingfisher formally opened its new opera house in July, 1892, with a performance of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," described as the "latest of novelties in the theatrical line."[57] Less than two years later, the

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[55]For a complete study of Sturm's, see Bobby H. Johnson, "Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine, 1905-1911: A History of a Booster Publication," unpublished Master's dissertation, University of Oklahoma School of Journalism, 1962.

[56]Rock, Illustrated History, p. 78.

[57]Kingfisher Free Press, July 7, 1892.

Kingfisher Free Press reported that it would soon be unnecessary to import theatricals since the city's "home made talent" was equally effective.[58] Guthrie, on the other hand, was upset because it was unable to attract good shows. The blame did not lie with the opera house management, complained the State Capital, but rather with the people because they would not support decent performances. The situation apparently was somewhat improved by 1899 when the Rose Stillman Stock Company presented its variety show. The State Capital critic was particularly impressed by Miss Stillman's performance in the English melodrama, "Queen's Evidence."[59]

Music perhaps offered the widest range of cultural endeavor. Indeed, both vocal and instrumental presentations captured the public fancy, as indicated by the large number of singing groups and bands. Church choirs further allowed local musicians to demonstrate their talents or inabilities, as the case may have been. Regardless of quality, music was an important part of community life. Mrs. Addie Utterback Daniel, for instance, recalled the joy of "singings" and singing schools taught by traveling musicians in the early

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[58] Ibid., March 22, 1894. An example of local talent occurred at Prague when the ladies of the Eastern Star gave a comedy entitled "Female Masonry." See Prague Patriot, November 16, 1905.

[59] Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, December 2, 1893; Ibid., January 6, 1899.

days of the Cherokee Outlet.[60] The large number of advertisements for pianos and organs was another sign of general interest in music.[61] At least one Oklahoman, Mrs. S. Annette Davis of El Reno, qualified as a composer when Brainard, Sons and Co. published her "Mistletoe March" in 1896.[62]

Guthrie early displayed considerable taste for music. The town's musical element was enriched by several graduates of the Boston Conservatory of Music,[63] as well as a number of musical groups. A new organization, the Germania Musical Society, was formed in December, 1893, under the leadership of Professor Oscar Lehrer, a leading figure in Guthrie music circles.[64] The Guthrie Musical Union was organized the next year by twenty-three persons who shared a common interest in light opera. Their first offering was "The Pinafore."[65] Various other concerts, such as those held in the First Methodist Episcopal Church, allowed other home-town musicians to perform publicly. One such performance in April, 1894,

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[60]Mrs. Addie Utterback Daniel reminiscence, Hatfield Collection, Box H-10. Popular songs were "My Angel Little Nell" and "The Whippoorwill Song."

[61]C. W. White, a Guthrie jeweler, and Murry & Willians both advertised large stocks of these instruments in the weekly State Capital of October 13, 1894.

[62]Guthrie Daily Leader, June 12, 1896.

[63]Rock, Illustrated History, pp. 122-23.

[64]Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, December 2, 1893.

[65]Ibid., November 10, 1894.

featured in addition to the Methodist choir a cornet solo by Oscar Lehrer and a whistling solo by Miss Maud Birch. Music-lovers occasionally had an opportunity to hear professionals, such as Ellen Beech Yaw, a concert singer brought to Guthrie by the Knights Templar in 1894.[66]

Several special interest groups further encouraged musical activities. The German communities around Guthrie and Okarche were particularly interested in singing since choral work was a means of retaining the German language.[67] The Territorial University was another center of musical interest. The Mistletoe Male Quartet, for instance, was quite popular in 1894. Later, the Modoc Glee Club became the "most notable and famous institution of the University of Oklahoma," surpassing even Professor Vernon L. Parrington's football teams. The sixteen-man glee club made a tour of territorial cities in 1898, accompanied by Miss Loma Johnson, who was known as the "sweetest singer in Oklahoma."[68]

To many Oklahomans, however, the term "music" implied a band. Indeed, the Watonga Republican declared that a good band was "an indispensable institution in any well

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[66]Guthrie State Capital, April 9, 1894; April 11, 1894; June 9, 1894.

[67]W. A. Willibrand, "In Bilingual Old Okarche," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXIX (Autumn, 1951), p. 351.

[68]Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, April 7, 1894; Oklahoma Review, Vol. I (April, 1898), n. p.

regulated town."[69] Newspapers, commercial clubs, and other boosters often acted the role of "the music man" in establishing brass bands in their communities. In turn, these musical groups served local interests. Guthrie's Silver Cornet Band, for example, welcomed Governor Steele to Oklahoma in 1890 with a rendition of "Hail to the Chief who in Triumph Advances."[70] The First Territorial Regiment band held Monday evening concerts that drew hundreds of Guthrie residents, in addition to representing Oklahoma in cities throughout the nation.[71] Elsewhere, struggling settlements found the village band a source of fellowship as well as community pride, for music was more meaningful when it originated among friends. Such was the case at Dayton in the Cherokee Outlet. Rich indeed were the memories of W. J. Porter when he recalled band master J. H. Starr and his fellow bandsmen.[72]

Various other forms of public entertainment relieved the boredom of pioneer life. The people enjoyed a variety of games and races at local fairs, in addition to the livestock and handicraft exhibits. The Oklahoma State Fair at

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[69] Watonga Republican, February 13, 1895.

[70] Rock, Illustrated History, p. 140.

[71] Biennial Report of the Adjutant-General of the Territory of Oklahoma, 1899-1900 (Guthrie: State Capital Printing Company, 1900), pp. 36-37; Guthrie Daily Leader, June 9, 1896.

[72] W. J. Porter reminiscence, Hatfield Collection, Box H-10.

Guthrie drew 10,000 persons on the third day in the fall of 1894 and proved so popular that it was held over an additional day.[73] More exotic were the circuses that came to Oklahoma Territory. The advance publicity for Sanger and Lent's Grand International Allied Shows doubtless struck a respondent chord in Guthrie with its pictures of wild animals and various other features, including a hippodrome and aquarium. Those with an interest in pugilism probably welcomed the announcement of a forthcoming fight in the Cherokee Strip between Kid Hogan of St. Louis and John O'Keith of Colorado.[74]

The entire Oklahoma populace looked forward to the Fourth of July. Only a month after the opening, Guthrie officials began making plans for a public celebration,[75] and soon the entire Territory came to consider the Fourth a special time for gratitude and merriment. It was largely a day of orations, fireworks, band music, and old-fashioned fun. "One day every year the American people became a great big, bragadocio, beligerant [sic], big-mouthed, rip-roaring, fire-cracker, eagle-shrieking, flag-flying, picnic-plying, vociferous, hurly-burly boy," the State Capital observed on July 8, 1893. "It is really the only time when the full

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[73] Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, October 20, 1894.

[74] Ibid., September 9, 1893; August 5, 1893.

[75] Capitol Hill City Council Minutes, June 4, 1889, Wenner Collection, Box 3.

people from plowboy up to president meet on a common footing. Every man is as great as another. . . . This one day of national unity is the fourth of July."[76]

Midway between culture and entertainment was the Chautauqua movement, founded on the premise that learning can be enjoyable. Named after the national assembly at Chautauqua, New York, the movement spread elsewhere through Chautauqua Circles. These groups were present in Oklahoma and in time the area even came to enjoy the spectacle of the Chautauqua circuit, especially its traveling lecturers such as William Jennings Bryan. In 1894 the Guthrie circle was honored by a visit from the Reverend John H. Vincent of Topeka, Kansas, the originator of the movement.[77]

Efforts to establish public libraries indicated still more desire for enlightenment. Various groups supported such ventures in different towns, as these random examples reveal. The Philomathea Club first sponsored a library at Oklahoma City and ultimately saw its work culminate in the opening of a Carnegie library in 1901. Official recognition of the need for such institutions came the same year when the legislature allowed cities of more than 5,000 persons to levy

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[76] Guthrie (weekly) State Capital, July 8, 1893.

[77] Ibid., October 20, 1894. A reporter who interviewed Bishop Vincent during an earlier visit to Guthrie in 1893 described him as "a charming man, full of vim, bubbling with humor and possessing an inexhaustible store of rich information and anecdote." Ibid., December 30, 1893.

taxes in support of free public libraries.[78] Meanwhile, smaller towns remained dependent upon private agencies. At Perry, for instance, the Women's Christian Temperance Union opened a reading room in 1902, and three years later the Congregational Church of Alva made a small collection of books available to the public.[79]

Guthrie's library story is more complete. The Chautauqua Circle first discussed the need for a public library before other interested citizens took up the project early in 1900. By July a library was in operation after a book collection netted 300 volumes. A $25,000 grant from the Carnegie foundation later provided funds for a building, the cornerstone of which was laid on July 2, 1902.[80]

Colleges maintained libraries of necessity, but they were frequently neglected, as evidenced by the small number of books and the meager amount of space alloted to them. Upon first seeing the library at the Territorial University, Vernon L. Parrington was amazed at the lack of books.[81] The

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[78] Charles F. Barrett, Oklahoma After 50 Years, (Oklahoma City: The Historical Record Association, 1941), Vol. II, p. 382; Oklahoma Territory, Statutes, 1901, c. 18, p. 146.

[79] Oklahoma Library Commission, Oklahoma Libraries 1900-1937: A History and Handbook (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Library Commission, 1937), p. 15.

[80] Library notes, Wenner Collection, Box 1, The dedicatory speech emphasized the necessity of admitting only those books that would "morally elevate" young people.

[81] The Mistletoe, Vol. I (1906), pp. 82-83.

university library nevertheless numbered seven thousand volumes by 1900, part of which were destroyed in a disastrous fire soon thereafter. Four years later the library acquired its own building.[82]

An equally significant institution that predated most libraries was the Oklahoma Historical Society, established at Kingfisher in May, 1893. Organized and sustained by the Oklahoma Press Association, the society became a repository for all types of historical material, particularly newspapers.[83] It later merged with a similar group founded at the Territorial University in 1894, and the growing collection was housed at Norman until it was moved to the Carnegie library at Oklahoma City in 1901.[84]

Society and culture were thus assured a place in the life of every Oklahoman. Some were satisfied with the simple fellowship of the church social and the mild stimulation of the "literary" session in the local schoolhouse. Others sought greater sophistication in elaborate balls and

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[82] State Capital Art Edition, n. p.; Oklahoma Libraries 1900-1937, p. 9.

[83] Minutes of the Proceedings of the Oklahoma Press Association. Guthrie, May 20, 1894, pp. 14-15.

[84] Roy Gittinger, The University of Oklahoma, 1892-1942 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1942), p. 21; Luther B. Hill, A History of the State of Oklahoma, Vol. I (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1910), p. 404. Mrs. Marion Rock, author of Illustrated History of Oklahoma, served as custodian of the collection from 1903 to 1904. Although the state later assumed comtrol of the O. H. S., the press association has maintained close ties through the years.

specialized groups. Certainly the level of social-cultural achievement was affected by frontier conditions, but once past the early days Oklahoma became increasingly similar to surrounding states. Even in the "Land of the Fair God," life could rise no higher than the mortal beings who lived it.

EPILOGUE

With the approach of statehood in the fall of 1907, the territorial era drew to a close. Oklahomans often referred to their status as second class citizenship. Business interests were especially eager for admission to the Union. In 1904 President Jesse Dunn of the Oklahoma Bar Association claimed that continued uncertainty over statehood had even frightened investors away.[1] Now that the obstacles were finally removed, the Territory was to find a home after nearly two decades as an orphan. The marriage of Oklahoma and Indian territories, so aptly symbolized by a mock ceremony uniting a cowboy with an Indian maiden,[2] not only created the state of Oklahoma but also added another star to the United States flag, bringing the total to forty-six.

Indeed, the unsettled prairie that lay before the pioneers of 1889 had changed dramatically during the

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[1] Proceedings of the Oklahoma Bar Association for the Years 1903-4 (Guthrie: Oklahoma Printing Company, 1904), p. 100.

[2] This ceremony took place at Guthrie on November 16, 1907 in conjunction with statehood day festivities.

eighteen years before statehood. As early as 1892 the El Reno Democrat boasted that the once poor farmer "today lives in a comfortable house, surrounded with stock, growing orchards and increasing values in his landed interests." Moreover, the paper took special pride in El Reno's transformation from a city of shacks to one bearing the title, "Queen of the Canadian."[3] Allowing for local bias and lack of perspective, it was essentially correct to observe that Oklahoma had enjoyed rapid development. A more objective appraisal was offered by Edwin H. Manning, a visiting Baltimore lawyer who spoke before the Oklahoma Bar Association in 1905. Manning frankly admitted that he had not expected the advanced state of civilization evident in Oklahoma. "Your cities," he exclaimed, "have grown up over night. Your people are truly cosmopolitan. The brawn and brain of every state and nearly every country is represented within the borders of this future commonwealth."[4]

A tour of the Territory in 1907 would have revealed the remarkable changes since 1889. Thriving towns stood where buffalo herds had once roamed. Oklahoma City had long since shed its temporary demeanor for a more permanent look befitting Oklahoma's leading city. This bustling metropolis of more than 30,000 population was clearly the commercial and

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[3]El Reno Democrat, February 27, 1892.

[4]Proceedings of the First Annual Meeting of the Oklahoma and Indian Territory Bar Association (Guthrie: State Capital Company, [1905]), pp. 198-99.

industrial leader. Guthrie, on the other hand, was losing ground, although the presence of the territorial capital would assure some importance for a few more years. Elsewhere, Shawnee, Enid, and Lawton were eclipsing the older towns of Norman, Kingfisher, and El Reno.

The prairie, meanwhile, evinced a settled appearance reminiscent of the older states. Though dugouts and sod houses still stood as symbolic reminders of leaner days, they had largely been replaced by more substantial homes. Prosperous farms produced a variety of crops and thereby freed the farmer of the extreme poverty so evident in bygone days. At the same time, a pronounced social stratification accompanied economic growth, apparently substantiating Helen C. Candee's observation that "when all start life equal, in a few years each will find his natural level."[5] Schools and churches were everywhere apparent, even as the less visible but vital quest for social development was evident in clubs, fraternal organizations, and special interest groups. Moreover, improved transportation and communication had so completely bridged the Territory by 1907 that isolation no longer remained a formidable problem except in the far west. Once past adolescence, Oklahoma was now ready to enter young adulthood.

Oklahomans themselves were well aware of their achieve-

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[5]Helen C. Candee, "Social Conditions in Our Newest Territory," The Forum, Vol. XXV (June, 1898), p. 437.

ments. Territorial growth was a perennial topic in newspapers and public addresses or whenever people gathered to talk, and traveling photographers even enjoyed a thriving business portraying sod houses and other signs of frontier life for posterity.[6] But aside from their superficial expressions of pride, what were the true accomplishments of these pioneer folk? Foremost perhaps was the conquest of the land itself--despite harsh conditions and overwhelming odds--a conquest that entailed many psychological adaptations and much hard work. Shortages of fuel, water, and building materials often forced the settler to seek workable alternatives in the process of adjusting to a plains environment. Moreover, the hardships of poverty and isolation were compounded by a fickle climate that frequently turned bumper years into drought-ridden nightmares. In view of these circumstances, pioneer Oklahomans relied on the old frontier practice of mutual assistance, so reminiscent of the scriptural dictum, "Bear ye one another's burdens. . . ." Undoubtedly, a strong religious faith relieved much physical and mental anguish.

An intense desire for respectability further character-

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[6]Angie Debo, Prairie City (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1944), p. 23. Numerous photographs in the Division of Manuscripts at the University of Oklahoma substantiate this statement. One itinerant photographer in the Cherokee Outlet took pictures of settlers and their homes for $1.50 down and $1.50 on delivery. Burlison interview, Hatfield Collection, Box H-10, Division of Manuscripts, University of Oklahoma Library, Norman.

ized Oklahoma's pioneer citizenry, and this was no more evident than in the enthusiasm for public schools. In this respect, the settlers merely perpetuated a tradition begun in New England and later extended to the midwestern frontier. As times grew better and tax rolls increased, schools were moved from dugouts and sod houses into better facilities, and teachers improved their academic qualifications at territorial colleges. By the end of the era, virtually every child was guaranteed at least eight years of school and the opportunity for further study at preparatory schools and colleges.

The territorial press "educated" an even larger segment of the populace. Newspapers characteristically published both fact and fiction, well seasoned with the editor's particular bias. In fact, newspapermen made little effort to hide their pride in regard to Oklahoma's accomplishments. Unlike William Allen White, who in a famous essay written in 1896 wondered "what is wrong with Kansas," territorial journalists delighted in telling "what is right with Oklahoma." But despite their overt partisanship and frequent lack of responsibility, newspapers served a useful function by informing the public and encouraging civic improvements.

The professional man's growing concern for standards moved Oklahoma society still closer to maturity. The overwhelming need for physicians naturally encouraged unqualified persons to practice medicine, especially since territorial

laws and officials were slow to ferret out quacks. Honest practitioners thus assumed the responsibility for policing their own profession through a territorial medical association which ultimately persuaded the government to enact stricter licensing laws. Dentists likewise formed a professional organization, and the Oklahoma Bar Association fulfilled a similar role in respect to lawyers.

Oklahoma's numerous clubs, fraternal groups, and cultural organizations also represented rapid social advancement. Their activities not only relieved boredom but also allowed early settlers to foster the relationships necessary to personal and community development. Thus, the popularized culture of home-talent shows served a useful purpose, just as the pretentious pomp of formal balls satisfied social cravings. The obvious depreciation of culture mattered little as long as the participants were pleased and Oklahoma advanced.

Obviously, the territorial period has left its mark on the present state of Oklahoma. In bequeathing a varied population to Oklahoma, the Territory thus freed the new state of some of the binding prejudices evident in the integration problems of other states.[7] Political develop-

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[7]Oklahoman's relatively calm acceptance of racial integration is in direct contrast to the problems of neighboring Arkansas and Louisiana. A degree of bias toward Indians has continued, however, especially in western Oklahoma.

ments further show the influence of a varied populace. The old Cherokee Outlet, for instance, has repeatedly sent Republicans to Congress, and while the recent tendency to favor the Republican party stems in part from other causes, a dormant Republican heritage has apparently survived the territorial period. In short, Oklahoma is neither northern nor southern, but a combination of the two with a strong western flavor.[8]

Subsequent development has eroded somewhat the inferiority complex implicit in the boastful attitudes of many early Oklahomans. The booster's shout has gradually diminished as Oklahoma's attainments approach those of older states. While the state no longer resides at the bottom of the list concerning such matters as education and highways, it still suffers from growing pains--a common malady in so young a state.

The sudden wealth of the oil industry has provided various patrons of the arts whose efforts are evident in museums and private collections and in the national reputation of the Oklahoma City symphony orchestra. Norman and Stillwater remain as cultural centers because of the aesthetic events associated with the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University.

Elsewhere, many Oklahoma towns are exhibiting a new

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[8]W. Eugene Hollon, in The Southwest: Old and New (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), included Oklahoma in the Southwest, along with Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona.

spirit of competition through industrial development. To a large degree these towns have retained a western appearance typified by wide streets and expansive boundaries. Oklahoma City, despite its skyscrapers, remains a big country town in some respects, much as Kingfisher is still a small "cow town." Guthrie has changed little in appearance since territorial days, and the visitor of today might well identify himself with the residents of 1900 as he walks along brick streets and glances at old buildings.

Certain enigmas persist, however, in defiance of the territorial heritage. Widespread criticism of the federal government's role in society, particularly concerning welfare, agriculture, and education, is perplexing in view of the government's benevolent assistance in each of these areas during Oklahoma's formative years. The retention of statewide prohibition for nearly half a century also seems inconsistent with the individualism of the frontier.[9] Furthermore, Oklahoma sometimes displays a seemingly unhealthy opposition to change, quite out of keeping with what Dr. Edward E. Dale once defined as "The Spirit of Soonerland." This attitude, Dale observed, "manifests itself in an eagerness for action, a desire for adventure, a willingness to

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[9]The influence of Indian Territory, where federal law prohibited the sale of alcohol, must be considered in regard to Oklahoma's long history of prohibition.

take a chance. It is a pioneering spirit. . . . ."[10]

If the state today lacks some of its former vigor, this paridoxically may be traced to the success of its settlers. The land itself was rich, but the very realities of nature forced Oklahoma pioneers to fight for survival. When the task seemed too large, the homesteader and hard-pressed town dweller alike took solace in the fanciful notion that God had a special interest in Oklahoma and that hard work and faith would bring relief. The ensuing years did bring varying degrees of success, which the settlers interpreted as a sign of divine assistance. To the contrary, Oklahomans of the second generation needed no providential link or spiritual crutch until the devastating days of the Dust Bowl turned the once fair land into a desert. Without the faith of his forebears, the latter-day Sooner was quick to desert his homeland for greener pastures farther west. Hence, the mass exodus of the "Okie" in effect destroyed the image that territorial settlers so diligently tried to project. In another sense, however, the events of the 1890's as well as the 1930's merely reconfirm the frontier thesis: settlement follows opportunity. In 1889 Oklahoma offered both hope and opportunity. To those who came and stayed, it would always remain the "Land of the Fair God."

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[10]Edward E. Dale, "The Spirit of Soonerland," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. I (June, 1923), pp. 175-76. This article appeared in the first issue of the state historical magazine.

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