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JOHN TRUDEN
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INDIGENOUS-SETTLER PARTNERSHIPS IN THE AMERICAN WEST, 1875-1975

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BY THE COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF

Dr. Anne Hyde, Chair

Dr. Bala Saho

Dr. Cori Simon

Dr. Amanda Cobb-Greetham

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Abstract

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Between Reconstruction and the early Cold War, Indigenous communities in Oklahoma faced an existential crisis. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the United States applied intense pressure on Indigenous communities in the path of US settlers to relocate to Indian Territory, an unincorporated US territory at the center of the continent. US officials offered the "promise" – as US Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch famously termed it in his groundbreaking opinion for *McGirt v. Oklahoma* (2020) – that Indian Territory would be Indigenous land forever. In 1889, those same officials reversed themselves and began opening parts of the territory to American settlers. Faced with disaster and bereft of resources, many Indigenous people formed strategic relationships with White settlers to survive and thrive in an otherwise hostile environment. Drawing stories and perspectives from Comanche, Southern Cheyenne, Cherokee, Absentee Shawnee, Choctaw, Seminole, Kanza, Citizen Band Potawatomi, Chickasaw, Mvskoke (Muscogee Creek), Mississippi Choctaw, Sac and Fox, Kiowa, Plains Apache, Kansas Kickapoo, and Prairie Band Potawatomi communities, this dissertation follows a suppression and resurgence of Indigenous sovereignty across Reconstruction, the Gilded Age, the Progressive Era, the 1920s, the Great Depression, World War II, the early Cold War, and finally the Red Power era. Over this broad swath of time, Indigenous-settler relationships varied in scope and scale, evolved, and were shaped by race, class, gender, and a host of other factors. Gradually, these partnerships became more sophisticated and involved larger groups of people. Still, Indigenous-settler relationships were never ideal; Indigenous people formed ties with White settlers as a stand in solution after the federal government suppressed their systems of self-governance during Reconstruction. Until they were able to rebuild their tribal governments, they did the best they could with the resources that they had. With the assistance of their allies, Indigenous communities in Oklahoma revitalized their governments from the 1970s onward but retained a skillset of making alliances.

Dedication

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This dissertation is dedicated in memory of Kash Spang (2000-2020), a classmate of mine during the 2019 summer session at Chief Dull Knife College (a tribal college in southeastern Montana). We took a Cheyenne language class together and became friends, often chatting about *Neon Genesis Evangelion* or “Chy-Crows” (people of mixed Northern Cheyenne and Crow ancestry, which included Kash) over daily lunches in the cafeteria. Kash Spang was eager to see the world. After I returned to Oklahoma, we kept in touch and planned to visit. I am sad to write that in 2020 he died in a hunting accident.

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***

As with all dissertations, I could not have completed this work without a vast array of people supporting me along the way. First and foremost, my advisor Anne Hyde patiently chiseled this project down from something much larger (and incoherent) into a sharp, deliberate narrative over the course of five years. More than anyone else, she championed and guided me through this process. Anne always seemed to know how to respond in situations that I had no idea what to do with. I deeply appreciate her mentorship and guidance. Bala Saho – one of the most delightful human beings I have ever had the privilege of knowing – bought me a lot of coffee over many years and was always happy to talk about African histories or colonialism. Amanda Cobb Greetham – a person whose generosity and kindness is inspirational – never hesitated to remind me that she was on my team and expanded my understanding of indigeneity more than anyone else in the academy. Cori Simon – a friend and colleague who fortuitously found her way to the University of Oklahoma as I was finishing up – has graciously lent her expertise to this project. Kathleen Brosnan and Jennifer Holland – two extraordinarily skilled scholars who refined me into a better historian – deserve thanks as well. I also owe debts to some of my fellow graduate students in the OU Department of History. Marcus Macktima, Louisa Brandt, John and Courtney Buchkoski, Austin Schoenkopf, Chelsea Ball, James Gregory, Brendan Thomas, and Brooke Hanohano were a breath of fresh air in what was often a very tense, tumultuous environment in the department, the university, and the United States in the Trump era. Finally, the OU Department of Native American Studies – specifically Katie Bayliss and Raymond Orr – welcomed me into their department while I worked there during the 2021-2022 year.

My dissertation would not have come together if not for the dedicated staff of Bizzell Memorial Library at the University of Oklahoma. They handled thousands upon thousands of requests from me and deserve raises and more funding for their programs. Library staff at Dr. John Woodenlegs Memorial Library in Lame Deer, Montana, the Bicentennial Library of Colstrip at Colstrip, Montana, Cornette Library at West Texas A&M University in Canyon, Texas and various branches of the Pioneer Library System in Cleveland County, Oklahoma and Metropolitan Library System in Oklahoma County, Oklahoma all lent assistance as well, especially during my eight month leave from the university in 2019 to take a mental health break (to anyone who is wondering as you read about this, I am glad I took leave not only because I was able to regain my footing but more importantly because that time helped me revaluate my priorities as a scholar).

Many, many archivists opened the gates for me as I worked on this project. Jacquelyn "Jackie" Reese and Lina Ortega (Western History Collections), Mallory Covington (Oklahoma Historical Society), Rachel Henson and JA Pryse (Carl Albert Center), Holly Hasenfrantz and Alyssa Vaughn (Oklahoma State Archive), Michael Wright, Meg Hacker, and Jenny Sweeney (National Archives at Fort Worth), and Warren Stricker (Panhandle Plains Historical Society) were some of the most important guides to their respective archives. Over the course of its development, this project changed substantially in chronological and geographical scope; consequentially, some of the archives listed below are not referenced in the actual text. Still, I would like to thank the following institutions and their staff (in alphabetical order) for their assistance: Acadiana Manuscripts Collection at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming, Archives of the Big Bend at Sul Ross State University, Carl Albert Center at the University of Oklahoma, Center for Southwest

Research at the University of New Mexico, Cleveland County (OK) Clerk's Office, Dickinson Research Center at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, East Texas Research Center at Stephen F. Austin State University, Glenbow Library and Archives, Helmerich Center for American History at the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American Art and History, History Nebraska, Hutchinson County (TX) Library, Jesuit Archives and Research Center, Kansas Historical Society, Kenneth Spencer Research Library at the University of Kansas, Leland D. Case Library for Western Historical Studies at Black Hills State University, Library of Virgina, Louisiana Research Collection at Tulane University, Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections Library at Montana State University, Montana Historical Society, Nita Stewart Haley Memorial Library and History Center, National Archives at Atlanta, National Archives at Denver, National Archives at Fort Worth, National Archives at Kansas City, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma Room at the Tulsa City-County Library, Oklahoma State Archives at the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum and Archives at West Texas A&M University, Pottawatomi-Wabaunsee Regional Library (St. Marys, KS), Provincial Archives of Alberta, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, Richard L. D. and Marjorie J. Morse Department of Special Collections at Kansas State University, Sequoyah National Research Center at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, Special Collections and Archives at Marquette University, Special Collections at Louisiana State University, Special Collections at Northeastern State University, Special Collections at Oklahoma State University, Southwest Collections at Texas Tech University, State Historical Society of North Dakota, The Texas Collection at Baylor University, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Western History Collection at the University of Oklahoma, and the Wolf

Law Library at the College of William and Mary. Lastly, I would like to thank the Fort Sill Museum Archives, who I had to file a Freedom of Information Act request with just to gain access to their finding aids. The 750 or so page finding aid secured through that FOIA request is located at the Western History Collections so that future researchers will have an easier time accessing the archive's important resources.

Many different entities made financial investments in my project. The OU Department of History formally assigned the Bea Mantooth-Estep Scholarship in Oklahoma or Latin American History, the E.E. Dale and Arrell M. Gibson Memorial Scholarship in Western American History, two Colonial Dames Awards in partnership with the Oklahoma chapter of the National Society of Colonial Dames, and provided quite a few smaller, informal appropriations. These funds provided me with the means to visit archives in Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas, and Missouri. The 2017 Gordon Morris Bakken Scholarship in Western History from the Phi Alpha Theta National History Honor Society and a 2019 Jo Stewart Randel Grant from the Center for the Study of the American West at West Texas A&M University allowed me to repeatedly visit the Panhandle-Plains Historical Society's magnificent archives in Canyon, Texas. After winning the Beatrice Shepherd Blane Fellowship from Harvard University's Radcliffe Institute, Native American and Indigenous Studies scholar Amanda Cobb-Greetham hired me to be her personal researcher for the 2021-2022 academic year. In addition to relieving me of my teaching responsibilities, this position with the OU Department of Native American Studies gave me considerable freedom to conduct my own research and regular conversations about Oklahoma history and indigeneity with one of the top scholars in the field (often over some very nice lunches!). Lastly, the Graduate College at the University of Oklahoma's award of the Nancy L. Mergler Dissertation Completion Fellowship relieved me of my teaching responsibilities for the

2022-2023 academic year and allowed me to focus solely on my dissertation. I am grateful for these investments and the way they enriched my research.

This project was not created or conducted in consultation with Indigenous communities, but at the suggestion of Amanda Cobb-Greetham, I contacted and corresponded with tribal government officials from some of the communities I wrote about during the 2021-2022 academic year. I asked the people I contacted if they would like to read over drafts of chapters that involved their communities and offered to change or remove material at their suggestion. The representatives responded in a variety of ways. Tribal government officials representing the Absentee Shawnee Tribe, Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, and Kickapoo Tribe in Kansas chose not to respond. Kiowa representatives were initially interested in reading several chapters but chose to withdraw after I disclosed that my project was not regulated by my university's IRB. A Kanza representative asked that I not criticize Kanza citizen Charles Curtis, so I removed the US Senator from the manuscript. Dawn LeClere (Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation) and Tanner Mahseet (Apache Tribe of Oklahoma) passed on drafts of the fifth chapter to their respective departments but did not offer commentary. Carney Saupitty Jr. (Comanche National Museum and Cultural Center) translated anglicized Comanche from the opening example in chapter one and corrected several errors. Wilson Seawright (Holisso, Chickasaw Nation), Richard Ellwanger (Seminole Nation Museum), and Ted Underwood (Seminole Nation Historic Preservation Office) read drafts of the second chapter. Ellwanger caught several errors. Juaquin Hamilton (Sac and Fox National Historian, Sac and Fox Nation of Oklahoma) and R. Blake Norton (Citizen Potawatomi Nation Cultural Heritage Center) read drafts of the third chapter. Norton suggested I expand sections on Abram Burnett and Moses Keokuk. Thank you all for your help and willingness to engage in conversations.

Graduate school is difficult. I would not have made it through the end of five years of researching, writing and refining my dissertation without my friends and family. In North Carolina, Kathryn Truden, Tom Truden, and Grace Truden constantly cheered and supported me from afar. In Oklahoma, some friends of mine – particularly my longtime Bangladeshi roommate Shadman Salam and Chinese US history graduate student Shaoxing Li – expanded my horizons. City Presbyterian Church (Oklahoma City) and later The Well Church (Mustang, OK) enriched my life, gave me community, and deepened my connection to God. I met, dated, and eventually married my beautiful wife, Emily Truden. Emily's parents Cindi and Ron and her brother Eric Tennison – and their extensive network of cousins, uncles, aunts, and grandparents that dwarfs my own – welcomed me into their home. Lastly, Emily and I adopted our dog Ruffles, expanding our family to three

Introduction

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In the aftermath of the American Civil War, the United States threatened to obliterate Indigenous communities in the North American West. American soldiers stormed the plains, mountains, deserts, and valleys west of the Mississippi River, violently pursuing and subduing Indigenous communities that stood in their way with the fury of an industrialized American war machine honed through four years of conflict. While US soldiers had long ventured into Indigenous territories in North America's interior, the nation only began to gain practical control of that enormous region after defeating the Confederacy. Over the course of just twenty years, the United States crushed all substantial military opposition west of the Mississippi, leaving only the occasional guerilla resistance movement. Federal officials – backed by the nation's military – threatened Indigenous autonomy, while US citizens surrounded Native communities. By the end of the nineteenth century, Native America was in crisis.

In Indian Territory – a space that the United States set aside as a massive reserve for Indigenous peoples – this crisis represented a particularly cruel irony. In 1825, the United States designated much of the North American interior to be Indian Territory, a vast unincorporated territory that initially included most of modern Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma. Although the United States exercised little to no control over that region, federal officials applied intense pressure on Indigenous communities in the path of White settlers to relocate to Indian Territory, always with the "promise" that they would be left alone.[1] Over the next three decades, the US Army – with assistance from settler militias – forcibly removed Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Mvskoke, and Seminole peoples (often referred to as the Five Tribes) from the Southeast and

[1] Supreme Court of the United States, *McGirt v. Oklahoma*: Opinion of the Court, 591 U.S., 1 (2020).

Ottawa, Potawatomi, Kickapoo, Sac and Fox, Illini, Miami, and Shawnee peoples from the modern American Midwest.[2] These peoples soon encountered Comanche, Kiowa, Plains Apache, Osage, Southern Cheyenne, Southern Arapaho, Wichita, and Caddo communities that already called this space their home.[3]

The influence of the US government remained marginal in Indian Territory until after the American Civil War. In 1845, the United States annexed the adjacent Republic of Texas, an upstart Mexican province that seceded from Mexico a decade earlier. Though Texas bordered much of Indian Territory, federal and state officials wielded little to no meaningful control over West Texas or Indian Territory. In 1854, American officials cut off large chunks of Indian Territory to create Kansas and Nebraska territories, making the former region roughly contiguous with the modern state of Oklahoma. In 1861, the American Civil War erupted and quickly dragged Indigenous people in Indian Territory into fighting between Union and Confederate forces, which devastated the region. Depending on the side they aligned with, many Indigenous refugees ended up in southern Kansas or northern Texas. When they returned to Indian Territory, many found their homes destroyed and fields burned.

From 1865 onward, Indigenous communities in Indian Territory increasingly grappled with growing US influence and – depending upon the vicinity – encountered far more migrants from the United States; their responses were far from uniform and instead reflected their diverse cultural and historical experiences. In the 1860s, White settlers

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[2] For broad overviews of these removals, see: John P. Bowes, *Land Too Good for Indians: Northern Indian Removal* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016); Jeffrey Ostler, *Surviving Genocide: Native Nations and the United States from the American Revolution to Bleeding Kansas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019); Claudio Saunt, *Unworthy Republic: The Dispossession of Native Americans and the Road to Indian Territory* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2020).

[3] David La Vere, *Contrary Neighbors: Southern Plains and Removed Indians in Indian Territory* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000).

flooded into Kansas. Shawnee, Potawatomi, Osage, Kickapoo, Sac and Fox, Ottawa, Kanza, Miami, and Wyandotte communities fled south into central and northwestern Indian Territory as White settlers overran their reserves in a campaign of harassment and violence.[4] Only a few communities in far northeastern Kansas managed to hold onto their lands. Modoc, Nez Perce, Palouse, Cayuse, Northern Cheyenne, Ponca and Chiricahua Apache people arrived in Indian Territory as prisoners, while Pawnee and Tonkawa communities – having fought alongside US troops – used their connections to flee difficult conditions in their homelands.[5] In western Indian Territory, Comanche, Kiowa, and Southern Cheyenne communities repulsed American expansion until the Red River War broke out in 1874. That conflict saw the United States crush Indigenous resistance with overwhelming force. Although most Americans were too afraid of the Comanches to venture into the region until the twentieth century, Native people in that region were left with relatively little collective political autonomy after the war's conclusion.

In eastern Indian Territory, the Five Tribes created government bureaucracies that matched or exceeded contemporary American institutions on civil service, law enforcement, welfare, immigration and energy policy.[6] They wagered that by convincing the American public that they could govern themselves through institutions that resembled the American government, they could keep the United States at the margins of their affairs. The Five Tribes were justifiably concerned about growing numbers of US migrants flooding into and then squatting on their lands in eastern and central Indian Territory. Although the United States worked with the Five Tribes

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[4] H. Craig Miner and William E. Unrau, *The End of Indian Kansas: A Study of Cultural Revolution, 1854-1871* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1978); Ronald D. Parks, *The Darkest Period: the Kanza Indians and their Last Homeland, 1846-1873* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014).

[5] J. Diane Pearson, *The Nez Perces in Indian Territory: Nimiipuu Survival* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 2008); John Anthony Turcheneske Jr., *The Chiricahua Apache Prisoners of War: Fort Sill, 1894-1914* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1997).

[6] For example, see: Julie L. Reed, *Serving the Nation: Cherokee Sovereignty and Social Welfare, 1800-1907* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016).

to remove many of these squatters, the former nation's response was inadequate. For example, although federal officials and Indigenous lawyers convicted David Payne – a US citizen who repeatedly broke federal law while leading a movement to seize Mvskoke and Seminole lands – in federal court, the judge was unable (or unwilling) to punish Payne with anything besides a fine. Payne never paid the fine because he supposedly did not have any assets. Due to either ineptitude or deliberate malevolence (perhaps both) on the part of the United States, Indigenous communities in eastern Indian Territory experienced a forty-year immigration crisis that worsened in the late nineteenth century. Their governments never ceased to function even under such immense strain but US officials used the flood of White squatters as a justification to break treaties.[7]

In 1889, the US Congress buckled under pressure from American settlers and completely reversed sixty years of treating the region as a space reserved exclusively for Indigenous peoples. To White American settlers, Indian Territory represented the last unclaimed (although the region was already occupied) western lands with significant agricultural capabilities. An individual American could still find land to homestead in Nevada or Montana but stood a much better chance of growing a wheat, cotton, or corn crop in Indian Territory. About a month before federal officials opened a portion of the territory to White settlers, an Office of Indian Affairs inspector wrote his superior that "nearly every acre I saw was good farming land, it is well watered and has an abundant supply of good timber, all the land of this reservation [will] produce good crops."[8] On April 22, 1889, the federal government opened former Mvskoke lands in the center of

[7] The State of Oklahoma used the same argument in *Castro-Huerta v. Oklahoma*. See: Rebecca Nagle and Allison Herrera, "Where is Oklahoma Getting Its Numbers from in Its Supreme Court Case?" *The Atlantic*, April 26, 2022.
[8] Arthur W. Tinker, Sac and Fox Agency in Indian Territory, August 3, 1891, 1, roll 45, *Reports of Inspection of the Field Jurisdiction of the Office of Indian Affairs, 1873-1900*, M1070, National Archives at Washington D.C.

Indian Territory to settlers and created Oklahoma Territory the following year. Over the next twenty years, federal officials forced Indigenous communities across the region to allot their reservation lands, redistributed most of those lands to settlers, and then empowered Oklahoma Territory to annex the reservations.[9] In 1907, White settlers successfully merged Oklahoma Territory with the rump remnant of Indian Territory to create a new state; the settlers (mistakenly) assumed that the state government erased Indigenous governments.[10] Using the US government's power to arbitrarily recognize or not recognize the legitimacy of an Indigenous administration, federal officials formally suppressed some Indigenous governments while cutting others down to just a figurehead appointed by the US President. Some communities quietly organized internal governments that operated outside of federal surveillance, but those wielded little power outside of their communities. Most Indigenous people in the newly minted state of Oklahoma could no longer rely on their now-suppressed governments to protect them.

Faced with utter disaster, Indigenous people in Oklahoma found new pathways to survive and thrive in a hostile environment. For many living on dismembered reservations now filled with White settlers, a viable strategy was to partner with those same settlers. Indigenous-settler partnerships – the principal subject of this dissertation – became an important tool for Indigenous people to endure while being monitored by the federal government and pursued by predatory White settlers. These partnerships ranged from individual friendships all the way up to formal alliances between tribal governments and settler communities.[11] While ties between settlers and

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[9] Angie Debo, *And Still the Waters Run: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940); William T. Hagan, *Taking Indian Lands: The Cherokee (Jerome) Commission, 1889-1893* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003); Tanis C. Thorne, *The World's Richest Indian: The Scandal over Jackson Barnett's Oil Fortune* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Katherine Ellinghaus, *Blood Will Tell: Native Americans and Assimilation Policy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017).

[10] John Truden, "Settler Colonialism on the Southern Plains: Squatters and the Construction of a Settler State in Indian Territory, 1879-1901" (Master's Thesis: University of Oklahoma, 2018).

[11] David Usner, *Weaving Alliances with Other Women: Chitimacha Indian Work in the New South* (Atlanta: University of Georgia Press, 2015); Katrine Barber, *In Defense of Wyam: Native-White Alliances and the Struggle*

Native communities were rarely equitable and at times even went awry, most had concrete economic and political value for both groups.[12] From the late nineteenth century to the late twentieth century, such relationships were an important tool for many Indigenous people whose governments existed as skeletal entities or were suppressed completely by the United States.

***

At its most basic, this dissertation adds many shades of gray to a portrait of Oklahoma normally painted in black and white. Most national histories implicitly label the region an unimportant backwater, while the state's historiography has long been both siloed from the rest of the profession and divided into two camps: 1) historians who focus on political movements, politicians, and state histories and 2) historians who write about individual Indigenous communities. A small but growing number of scholars such as David Chang, Kendra Field, and Alaina Roberts have radically re-envisioned the region through national and international lenses, but the historiography remains both overwhelmingly marginal and painfully underdeveloped.[13] Though the stories gathered here have inherent value for the communities involved and need to be accessible to the public, their greater sum is a nuancing of Oklahoma historiography (and hopefully an encouragement for more people to explore Oklahoma history!).

The stories – scattered strategically from Reconstruction through the Red Power Era – constitute a longitudinal study of Indigenous persistence in settler-dominated spaces and are an opportunity to explore how an Indigenous strategy – partnering with settlers – evolved over time.

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for Celilo Village (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018); Zoltan Grossman, *Unlikely Alliances: Native Nations and White Communities Join to Defend Rural Lands* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017).

[12] Margaret D. Jacobs, *After One Hundred Winters: In Search of Reconciliation on America's Stolen Lands* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021).

[13] David A. Chang, *The Color of the Land: Race, Nation, and the Politics of Landownership in Oklahoma, 1832-1929* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Kendra Taira Field, *Growing Up with the Country: Family, Race, and Nation after the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018); Alaina E. Roberts, *I've been here all the while: Black Freedom on Native Land* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021).

Oklahoma history is often understood through the lens of episodes – the Fort Smith Council (1865-1866), the First Land Run (1889), statehood (1907), or the Okie exodus during the Great Depression (1929-1939) – rather than continuity with the present. Arguably, the most prolific period of scholarly debate associated with Oklahoma is the period between Reconstruction and statehood, before the forty sixth state came into being in its modern form. A few longitudinal scholars have worked hard to bridge these barriers. For example, in his seminal work on land ownership in the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, David Chang weaved together a story of Mvskoke, Afro-Mvskoke, Black, and White landowners that stretched from Reconstruction through the Great Depression.[14] Like Chang's work, these stories too connect periods in Oklahoma and Indigenous histories – Reconstruction, the territorial era, allotment, the Cold War, etc. – that are often poorly tied together, if at all. My narrative begins with the end of the Red River War in 1875, the point at which the federal government first asserted real control over a portion of Indian Territory and began a long process of suppressing tribal sovereignty (the inherent right of a people to rule themselves) across the region. Although the epilogue explores present day state-tribal government relations, the last chapter ends in 1975. Though chapter five largely dwells on events in northeastern Kansas that led to the occupation of a small federal facility that year, that event reflected a much broader international Indigenous resurgence and a corresponding shift in federal policies affecting Indigenous peoples across the United States.

It may seem strange to mention Kansas in a work focusing on Oklahoma, but Indigenous geographies rarely corresponded to Oklahoma's current borders. Over the course of its existence as an unincorporated territory between 1825 and 1907, Indian Territory's dimensions continually shifted. The federal government promised many different peoples lands in the territory but later

[14] Chang, *The Color of the Land*.

turned around and declared portions of the territory to be new states – Kansas, Nebraska, and Oklahoma – open to US citizens. As those citizens entered these new states, they often drove the Indigenous peoples to whom the region was already promised off their lands. Today, it is easy to forget that these spaces were once reserved for Indigenous peoples and that many who now call Oklahoma their home retain ties to the other two states. Similarly, the boundary between Texas and Indian Territory existed largely as an imaginary border drawn by non-Native men in Washington City, Madrid, Mexico City, and Austin until the late nineteenth century. In the meantime, Indigenous people crossed the Red River freely. While increased policing by federal troops and Texas Rangers hardened that border considerably between 1875 and 1885, many Indigenous communities retained ties to Texas that endure into the present.[15]

North American conceptions of race and indigeneity (Indigenous identity) shifted rather dramatically between 1875 and 1975. In the nineteenth century, many Indigenous communities – especially those on the Great Plains – had no conception of race at all; they thought of themselves through the lens of kinship. Notions of race – particularly blood – did influence federal policies affecting Indigenous people, but on the ground no version of race or indigeneity was ever uniform across Oklahoma's extraordinarily varied patchwork of communities.[16] Race and indigeneity were highly situational and often in flux.[17] Many Native people used that ambiguity to their advantage. By the late nineteenth century, many White Americans increasingly saw themselves as racially superior to other peoples; to protect themselves, a wealthy minority within the Five Tribes leveraged their influence at the 1906 Oklahoma

[15] This conclusion is partially informed by how scholars such as Cori Simon think about Indian Territory, but also by borderlands literature. For example, see: Michel Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).
[16] Katherine Ellinghaus, *Blood Will Tell: Native Americans and Assimilation Policy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017).
[17] Malinda Lowery, *Lumbee Indians in the Jim Crow South: Race, Identity, and the Making of a Nation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

Constitutional Convention to have Indigenous people defined as White in the new state's constitution. Over the course of the twentieth century, some Indigenous people began to identify with one another across cultural lines, especially after the African American-led Civil Rights Movement shook binary conceptions of race. This more cross-cultural indigeneity peaked during the Red Power movement of the 1970s.

Similarly, the historical process of colonialism – the act of one country or people imposing themselves upon another – varied considerably across region. In the last two decades, settler colonialism – a model of understanding colonialism in which settlers take ownership of a the landscape they settle by erasing the prior inhabitants – has become the dominant approach to understand the United States' relationships with Indigenous peoples.[18] The most important example of this approach is Alaina Roberts' pathbreaking work on Freedmen in eastern Indian Territory, a space where successive waves of Indigenous peoples and American settlers took control of the landscape between the 1830s and the 1920s. With that time and place in mind, Roberts argues that all people who settled the region and subscribed to the logic that they owned the landscape were taking part in settler colonialism.[19] I adopt a different (and I hope complimentary) perspective. As Allan Greer notes, settler colonialism is often understood as a

[18] For a general overview of this concept, see: Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); For key studies of settler colonialism in the United States, see: Margaret D. Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); Jean O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Bethel Saler, *The Settler's Empire: Colonialism and State Formation in America's Old Northwest* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Adam Dahl, *Empire of the People: Settler Colonialism and the Foundations of Modern Democratic Thought* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2018); Heather Dorris, Robert Henry, David Hugill, Tyler McCreary, and Julie Tomiak, eds, *Settler City Limits: Indigenous Resurgence and Colonial Violence in the Urban Prairie West* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2019); Daniel Justice and Jean O'Brien, *Allotment Stories: Indigenous Land Relations under Settler Siege* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2021).

[19] Roberts, *I've been here all the while*, 2-3.

structure but this idea can also be conceived as a historical event with a beginning and ending.[20] In the United States, settler colonialism reached its height in the early twentieth century. Many stories here contribute to a relatively new but rapidly growing – and as yet unnamed – historiography that acknowledges how Indigenous communities adapted and used settler-created and dominated systems to their advantage at the high tide of settler colonialism in the United States, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[21] However, some portions of this dissertation explore stories more related to what Greer calls imperial colonialism, or colonial rule by a minority – typically a colonial administration – in order to extract resources from the colonized majority.[22] The US Army's relationship with Indigenous peoples in southwestern Indian Territory in the late nineteenth century (as described in Chapter I) and the Bureau of Indian Affairs' attempts to control tribal government administrations in the late twentieth century (Chapter V) more resembled imperial colonialism.[23]

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[20] Allan Greer, "Settler Colonialism and Beyond" *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 30/1 (2019): 61-86.

[21] Brenda J. Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Frank Rzeckowski, *Uniting the Tribes: The Rise and Fall of Pan-Indian Community on the Crow Reservation* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012); Rose Stremlau, *Sustaining the Cherokee Family: Kinship and the Allotment of an Indigenous Nation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014); Katherine Ellinghaus, "A Little Home for Myself and Child: The Women of the Quapaw Agency and the Policy of Competency" *Pacific Historical Review* 84/3 (August 2015): 307-32; Kevin Whalen, *Native Students at Work: American Indian Labor and Sherman Institute's Outing Program, 1900-1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016); Louis S. Warren, *God's Red Son: The Ghost Dance Religion and the Making of Modern America* (New York: Basic Books, 2017); Justin Gage, *We Do Not Want the Gates Closed Between Us: Native Networks and the Spread of the Ghost Dance* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2020).

[22] For an example of what has often been referred to as extractive colonialism, see: Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington, D.C: Howard University Press, 1982).

[23] For general histories of the Office of Indian Affairs (Bureau of Indian Affairs from 1947 onward), see: Curtis E. Jackson and Marcia J. Galli, *A History of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and its Activities Among Indians* (San Francisco, CA: R&E Research Associates, Inc., 1977); Cathleen D. Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers: A Social History of the United States Indian Service, 1869-1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); David H. DeJong, *The Commissioners of Indian Affairs: The United States Indian Service and the Making of Federal Indian Policy, 1824-2017* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2020).

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Before moving onward, three caveats are necessary. First, this is not an Indigenous history; it is an interpretation of how Indigenous people survived and thrived in a hostile environment for a century.[24] Tribal histories – histories of one Indigenous community designed to be authoritative – should be authored by a member of that tribal citizenry or in collaboration with the corresponding Indigenous community. I am neither a tribal citizen nor am I working in direct collaboration with a community, so I looked to non-Native historians such as Katrina Jagodinsky and Anne Hyde who have addressed Indigenous communities in a more decentralized way, focusing largely on families or individuals. As a non-Native historian working without a formal commissioning from a tribal government, this approach was a more responsible (and considering Oklahoma's complexity, more applicable) path than attempting to write a history of a particular community. Intriguingly, this approach also gave me a set of stories that would not have made sense in a history structured around a specific tribal government. Portions of this narrative do follow entire Indigenous communities such as the Big Jim Band of Absentee Shawnees and the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation over specific periods, but in service of other stories rather than the national histories of those peoples. These communities deserve to tell their own stories; I cannot speak for them. However, this dissertation does adhere to the six principles recognized by Susan Miller and James Riding In in their important text on the practice of Indigenous history, *Native Historians Write Back*: Indigenous communities possess their own "inherent powers" or sovereignty; Indigenous lands were "serially" stolen or taken in bad faith by Americans; the Doctrine of Discovery – which denies

[24] Katrina Jagodinsky, *Legal Codes and Talking Trees: Indigenous Women's Sovereignty in the Sonoran and Puget Sound Borderlands, 1854-1946* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016); Anne Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families: A New History of the North American West, 1800-1860* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011).

the validity of Indigenous sovereignties – is rooted in racist thought; the United States wielded this doctrine against Native peoples to justify the conquest of their lands; both scholars and courts continue to produce works and rulings that rest on the products of this doctrine; and lastly that "colonialism…is a crime against humanity."[25] In other words, I write from the premise that 1) Indigenous sovereignty cannot be extinguished (just ignored) and 2) the federal government's relationship with Indigenous nations is one of colonial rule, which in the abstract can only ever be malevolent because colonialism relies on the subjugation of the colonized for the benefit of the colonizer. On the advice of the eminent Amanda Cobb-Greetham, I set out to give the Indigenous communities mentioned in my writing the opportunity to review my work and make changes. Five Indigenous officials – noted in the acknowledgements section – generously read sections of this manuscript and offered helpful commentary.

Secondly, Indigenous women such as Mamie Porter, Wanada Parker Page, Mary Long Neck-Chapman, Lotta Charley, and Catherine Greiffenstein are important parts of this story, but readers may note a more general underrepresentation of Indigenous women. Oklahoma has long been home to powerful, prominent Indigenous women, including Kanza politician Lucy Tayiah Eads.[26] A small but important literature has grown up around this topic.[27] Indigenous women are represented here, but not to the extent that they should be as fifty percent of the Indigenous

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[25] Susan A. Miller and James Riding In, "Introduction" In *Native Historians Write Back: Decolonizing American Indian History*, edited by Susan A. Miller and James Riding In (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2011): 2.
[26] "Kaw Indians Have Elected A Woman to Be Their Chief" *Duncan Weekly Eagle* (Duncan, OK), December 28, 1922; "Kaw Indians Follow Example of Other Tribes and Elect Woman as Chief at Great Meeting; Claims Against Government Will Be Pushed" *Oklahoman* (Oklahoma City, OK), November 19, 1922.
[27] For some examples of literature on Indigenous women in Oklahoma, see: Paula Waldowski, "Alice Brown Davis: A Leader of Her People" *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 58/4 (December 1980): 455-463; Wilma Mankiller and Michael Wallis, *Mankiller: A Chief and Her People* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993); Linda Williams Reese, *Women of Oklahoma, 1890-1920* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997); LaDonna Harris, *LaDonna Harris: A Comanche Life*, edited by H. Henrietta Stockel (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000); Richard Green, *Te Ata: Chickasaw Storyteller, American Treasure* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002); Sarah Eppler Janda, *Beloved Women: The Political Lives of LaDonna Harris and Wilma Mankiller* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2007); Sarah Eppler Janda and Patricia Loughlin, *This Land is Herland: Gendered Activism in Oklahoma, 1870s to 2010s* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2021).

population. Partially, this underrepresentation is a consequence of selectively focusing on Indigenous-settler partnerships, which narrowed a much wider field of sources. Generally, Native women are underrepresented here because White, male settlers in power who authored histories and saved sources did not value most women of color's stories. For example, the Pleasant Porter Collection, a selection of the eponymous Muscogee Nation Principal Chief's letters to his daughter Mamie Porter, does not include Mamie's letters even though their entire conversation centered around her experiences. Out of the five women named at the top of the paragraph, only Wanada Parker Page's papers are extant and these only represent a tiny fraction saved by a White woman who recognized the inherent value of the letters.

Lastly, Afro-Indigenous people are nearly absent from this narrative. Although Oklahoma's constitution included Indigenous people in the White racial category, Afro-Indigenous communities fell under the Black racial category constructed to segregate people with African ancestry from the rest of society. Racial segregation significantly reduced the theoretical opportunities Afro-Indigenous people had to make relationships with White settlers or other Indigenous communities. Consequentially, Afro-Indigenous accounts of such partnerships proved hard to come by. Fortunately, scholarship on Afro-Indigenous communities in Indian Territory is both robust and rapidly growing.[28] One story that did not make it into this narrative – that of an Afro-Mvskoke teenager named George Fields who routinely defrauded grafters attempting to take his land – deserves further exploration.[29]

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[28] Gary Zellar, *African Creeks: Estelvste and the Creek Nation* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007); Kevin L. Mulroy, *The Seminole Freedmen: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007); Cecilia E. Naylor, *African Cherokees in Indian Territory: From Chattel to Citizens* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Field, *Growing Up with the Country*; Roberts, *I've been here all the while*.

[29] "Something New In 'Oversold' Lands" *Muskogee Daily Phoenix*, September 12, 1911; "Negro Sold His Land Forty Times" *State Sentinel* (Stigler, OK), September 15, 1911.

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Chapter 1 lays out the basic value of Indigenous-settler partnerships after the United States crushed Indigenous military resistance in western Indian Territory. Drawing on correspondence, oral histories, and federal records scattered from around various institutions across Texas and Oklahoma, this chapter follows a Comanche businessman and a mixed-race Southern Cheyenne family as each attempted to find a place for themselves on the rapidly changing Southern Great Plains. After being exiled to southwestern Indian Territory, Quanah Parker sought to regain access to his lost homeland in Texas by befriending White settlers living there. For forty years, he accrued influence across the Red River and returned to West Texas through his business ties to the region's cattle and railroad industries in the first decade of the twentieth century. The Chapman family – the union of a powerful Southern Cheyenne woman named Mary Long Neck and a White US Army scout named Amos Chapman – searched for a new home as war and allotment reshaped the Cheyenne and Arapaho Reservation. They created a narrow oasis for themselves, a place where neighboring White settlers viewed them part of the geography of the region rather than as racially inferior.

Chapter 2 is centered around a devastating wave of Indigenous land loss in eastern Indian Territory (later eastern Oklahoma) at the hands of predatory settlers between the 1890s and the 1920s. In her famous expose of these horrifying episodes, Angie Debo described this event through a racial lens of White settlers defrauding Indigenous and Afro-Indigenous landowners. While Debo's description was not wrong, her analysis did not account for a complicating factor: class. Some upper class Indigenous people in Oklahoma partnered with settlers to defraud their lower class or classless Indigenous communities. Using the rich, largely unexplored papers of members of the gentry in Oklahoma archives, this chapter examines the role the gentry played in

redistributing Indigenous wealth to themselves and their White partners, including shaping US Indian policy as members of the US Congress.

Chapter 3 explores relationships between settlers and Indigenous communities in central Oklahoma. Unlike Native peoples in eastern Indian Territory, Sac and Fox, Potawatomi, Shawnee and Iowa peoples endured multiple removals, losing homeland after homeland on their way from the Great Lakes to Indian Territory. When the federal government opened a portion of central Indian Territory to White settlers in 1891, these peoples drew on their experiences to respond. Drawing on a wide variety of records stored at the Oklahoma Historical Society, Western History Collections, and the National Archives at Fort Worth, this chapter determines that their responses were more diverse and reflected a belief that removal was a storm to be weathered rather than evaded. Some fought removal, but others manipulated that moment of chaos to gather wealth or create more advantageous situations for themselves.

Chapter 4 compares how the immediate descendants of Quanah Parker and a Kiowa politician named Robert Goombi used historical memory as a medium to create relationships with White settlers. The Quanah Parker's children led relatively private lives; they occasionally drew on their deceased father's memory to form individual partnerships with White settlers that benefited the family. In the largely local world of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this was an effective strategy; the Parker family's social capital in the surrounding region protected them from racial violence. Most Indigenous people in southwestern Oklahoma did not enjoy such privilege. Indigenous politicians instead leaned into stereotypes to provide economic benefits for their constituents and gradually learned how to influence a broad audience of White settlers rather than just individuals.

Chapter 5 examines the transition back to Indigenous governance. In the 1970s, Potawatomi and Kickapoo communities in Kansas had much in common with Indigenous peoples further south in Oklahoma, both because of shared historical origins and mutual frustration with the same administrative office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs at Anadarko. This chapter combines archival records scattered across Kansas, Oklahoma, and Missouri and a more public archive created by tribal newspapers in the same era to tell the story of a struggle for power in northeastern Kansas. Prairie Band Potawatomi activists attempted to circumvent the BIA through a collaborative effort with a Catholic religious order. After that effort failed when the Bureau suspended the Prairie Band government in retaliation, a grassroots Kickapoo-Potawatomi coalition emerged. The coalition occupied the BIA's local facilities in northeastern Kansas. Rather than rely on settler allies, these communities returned to self-governance by dismantling the colonial administrative state interfering with their inherent sovereignty.

The epilogue explores how Indigenous-settler alliances have remained an important vehicle to bolster tribal sovereignty in Oklahoma. From the 1970s onward, Indigenous nations made enormous economic gains and built tribal government infrastructure that expanded their capabilities, facilities, and personnel well beyond their capabilities even in the nineteenth century. In Oklahoma, Indigenous peoples partnered with settlers to construct casinos, then redistributed billions of dollars in gaming revenue into rural Native and non-Native communities throughout the state. In 2018, Kevin Stitt – a citizen of the Cherokee Nation who had no cultural connection to that community – won the governorship with unrealistic promises that he could use his business expertise to economically revitalize a state suffering from decades of neglect and decline. Much like grafters in the early twentieth century, Stitt made promises he could not keep unless he stole Indigenous wealth. Unilaterally, he attempted to break a 2004 gaming compact

with tribal governments, but he did not have the support of the Oklahoma public. Indigenous communities across the state banded together with their many settler allies to confront the governor. A massive public relations fight began. Using digital materials gathered during a research internship with Amanda Cobb-Greetham, this last section explores that confrontation while keeping a long history of Indigenous-settler partnerships in mind.

Chapter I: Finding a Home

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On a cloudy day in 1878 that followed a series of thunderstorms at Fort Sill, Indian Territory, Tsy Nuh (I'm Holding On), his mother, and their friend Quer a miyah (Likes his Wife) looked up from a corn field. Several men on horseback rode towards them.[1] The two Noconi Comanche men faced charges of attempted murder; they knew the soldiers were coming to take them to a US federal court in American Arkansas, a place where prisoners awaited judgement in filth, darkness, and isolation. With the Americans approaching, the two friends rushed from the field to Tsy Nuh's brother Pahsookoo toohooveet's (Black Otter) tent in the nearby Noconi camp on Cache Creek. Encouraged by their mother and bolstered by Pahsookoo toohooveet's powerful medicine as soldiers, U.S. marshals, and even a Noconi chief screamed at them for several hours in Comanche and English to vacate the tent, the two men prepared themselves to die honorably near their relatives rather than alone in a faraway land. All at once, the soldiers charged the tent. Noconi women fled with their babies across the creek as the distinct sound of gunfire cut through their dwellings. Tsy Nuh and Quer a miyah, armed with knives against rifles and revolvers, fell. Pahsookoo toohooveet fought hard but soon found himself shot through. Their mother, armed with a revolver, tried and failed to escape the grip of an African American government laborer. In the aftermath, soldiers carted off Tsy Nuh and Quer a miyah's corpses and a severely wounded Pahsookoo

[1] Carney Saupitty Jr., of the Comanche National Museum and Cultural Center in Lawton, Oklahoma, was extremely kind in translating and explaining the names of these three men from mistranslated, anglicized Comanche in the original documents written by a US Army officer. Their mother went unnamed in the documents; Fort Sill, Indian Territory, Meteorological Register, June 1878, Office of the Chief Signal Officer, War Department, Record Group 370, National Archives at Washington D.C; S.R. Whithall and H.P. Jones to Post Adjutant, Fort Sill, June 30, 1878, 393-403, Roll 384, M234, *Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881*, Record Group 75, National Archives at Washington D.C.

toohooveet to the hospital, almost certainly with a trial to follow. In mourning, Tsy Nuh and Pahsookoo toohooveet's mother set her son's tent ablaze, only for a soldier to extinguish the flames.

In 1896, another Comanche man named Quanah Parker traveled from his home near Cache Creek and spoke in front of a White crowd at Quanah, Texas. Although his speech has not survived, the fragment that remains is revealing. Parker told the non-Native crowd that "my mother raised me like your mothers raised their children, but my father taught me to be brave and learn to fight to become chief of my people."[2] In the aftermath of the Red River War – an 1874-1875 conflict that saw American soldiers storm the Southern Great Plains, overwhelm the Comanches, and force the devastated survivors, including Tsy Nuh, Pahsookoo toohooveet, their mother, and Quer a miyah, onto a small reservation in southwestern Indian Territory – Quanah Parker remade himself into an extremely powerful figure on the southern plains by building relationships with his non-Native neighbors. At this festival, he publicly addressed the mythos around his interracial parents, White Comanche Cynthia Parker and her husband, Quahada Comanche leader Peta Nocona. His statement disarmed White Texans who harbored fears of Comanche people after generations of war between the two groups. In the 1830s, the Republic of Texas was born amid a genocidal war between White settlers and Comanches grappling for power on the Southern Great Plains. That a Comanche – not to mention the child of an interracial marriage between a White Texan and a Comanche – was even present in what was a few decades before ground zero for this horrifyingly bloody war should be astounding. Yet for Quanah Parker, this was business as usual. Harry Koch, editor of the *Quanah Tribune-Chief*, remembered that the Comanche leader "liked to be interviewed and he liked for his picture to

[2] "Old Timers Recall Visit 35 Years Ago of Chief Quanah Parker's Band of Braves to Quanah" Folder 3, Quanah Parker Files, J. Evetts Haley Collection, Nita Stewart Haley Memorial Library and History Center, Midland, TX.

come out in the paper."[3] Using empathy and influence, Parker had conjured the seemingly impossible into reality.

These two Comanche responses – a devastating firefight and quiet diplomacy – reflected dramatic historical change in Indigenous communities not only in the region, but across the continent's western expanse. For much of the nineteenth century, American officials possessed relatively little control over the North American interior; Native peoples controlled most of the continent. In the 1830s, American soldiers and militia ethnically cleansed many Indigenous territories from the Southeast and the Great Lakes. Although some communities evaded removal, most Native peoples in those regions ended up in eastern Indian Territory – a mix of prairie, forests, and mountain ranges – and began rebuilding their communities. Through the 1860s, Indigenous peoples native to the Great Plains ruled western Indian Territory – an expanse of plains sometimes broken up by an occasional canyon, butte, or stream– undeterred by anyone.

In the aftermath of a disastrous but unifying civil war, American officials sought to seize control of the North American interior, including Indian Territory. In the 1870s, they invaded the interior, removing Indigenous peoples such as the Comanches to reserves. By the turn of the twentieth century, American politicians dissolved those reserves and gave most of the land to White settlers. These settlers brought new ideas about race that disenfranchised many Indigenous people. Some – including Tsy Nuh, Pahsookoo toohooveet, their mother, and their friend Quer a miyah – resisted these changes overtly. Others – like Quanah Parker – adopted a more subtle set of strategies, quietly befriending and building ties with their non-Native neighbors.

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[3] Fer Griffin, The Early History of Quanah and Its Surrounding Territory, 1943, Red River War Bibliography File, Panhandle Plains Historical Museum, Canyon, TX.

Quanah Parker and the Comanche Homeland

Until the United States Army removed them to the Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Reservation in the 1870s, Comanche peoples called what is today West Texas their homeland. Beginning in the early eighteenth century, they had dominated the region. In spite of that history, any plains people who attempted to return after the close of the Red River War found their former dominance crushed. The Texas Rangers – a state police force that had been fighting their own total war with Indigenous peoples for decades – presented an existential threat to anyone who crossed the river into the Lone Star State.[4] In January 1879, federal troops from Fort Sill escorted a Kiowa hunting party into Texas. The Kiowas – allies of the Comanches since about 1825 – suffered grievously during the Red River War; hunting was one method by which they sought to return to normal life.[5]

To prevent such hunts, White settlers in the Texas Panhandle requested a company of Texas Rangers to patrol the area. The Rangers did not communicate with the African American US soldiers escorting the hunting party.[6] On January 15, George Washington Arrington – an ex-Klansmen who fled Alabama for Honduras after taking part in an 1868 lynching – and his company of seventeen Rangers happened upon several Kiowa hunters, who immediately fled.[7] Arrington's men caught up to a Kiowa medicine person named White Cowbird, murdered him, and took his rifle. They then pursued the hunting party to a camp full of women and children, cut the camp off from their horses so they could not flee, and prepared to charge. Only the

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[4] Gary Clayton Anderson, *The Conquest of Texas: Ethnic Cleansing in the Promised Land, 1820-1875* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 7-11.
[5] The Comanche-Kiowa alliance has often been dated to 1790, but Comanche linguist Carney Saupitty Jr. notes that this is just an estimate. Saupitty cites Comanche historian Joe Attocknie, who argues that the alliance began in the early nineteenth century. Joe Attocknie, *The Life of Ten Bears: Comanche Historical Narratives*, Edited by Thomas W. Kavanagh (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 38.
[6] James Day and Dorman Winfrey, *Texas Indian Papers, 1860-1916* (Austin: Texas State Library, 1961), 409-10.
[7] Mrs. G.W. Arrington, July 18, 1926, J. Evetts Haley Collection, Nita Stewart Haley Memorial Library and History Center, Midland, TX.

intervention of the 10th Cavalry saved the Kiowa camp from another Washita or Sand Creek. At least one Kiowa artist found this event so jarring that they recorded it as the most notable happening of that season.[8] The Rangers continued to aggressively patrol their state's border, making the journey across the Red River unsafe for the Indigenous residents of western Indian Territory.[9] After his retirement from the Rangers, G.W. Arrington stayed in the Panhandle, where his penchant for unbridled violence towards Indigenous peoples as a county sheriff terrified even some of his White peers.[10]

Quanah Parker, who led another intertribal buffalo hunting encampment near where Arrington's Rangers murdered White Cowbird, spent several decades attempting to reside once again in the lost Comanche homeland.[11] Parker was one of several mixed-race siblings raised by a Comanche man and a White woman adopted into the Comanche Nation. In 1836, Comanche men kidnapped nine-year-old Cynthia Ann Parker from a remote White settlement in Texas and adopted her into their society as a Comanche woman. Over the next two decades, Cynthia Ann Parker became a Comanche person with a husband, children – including Quanah –and an extended family. In 1860, Texas Rangers stumbled upon her while attacking her family's camp and took her back into the United States. Although she always wished to return to Comanche society before dying in captivity in 1871, Cynthia Ann Parker became famous in America as a White woman reclaimed from the supposed (often imagined) horrors of Indigenous life. In fact, the

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[8] Candace S. Greene, *One Hundred Summers: A Kiowa Calendar Record* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 109.
[9] G.W. Arrington to W.H. King, March 3, 1882, 137-39, Book 12: 1881-1882, Box 2Q401, Texas Adjutant General's Office Records, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, Austin, TX.
[10] John Donnelly, Benjamin Williams and J.W. Husleby to O.M. Roberts, c. 1880, 367, Book 11: 1879-1880, Box 2Q401, Texas Adjutant General's Office Records.
[11] A.M. Patch to Post Adjutant, Fort Elliott, January 22, 1879, 27-28, Book 11: 1879-1880, Box 2Q401, Texas Adjutant General's Office Records.

residents of Quanah, Texas – who settled near the site of the 1860 battle that led to Cythnia Ann's capture – named the city after her son.[12] Quanah Parker reached adulthood with the complicated forces behind his mother's capture deeply engrained in his consciousness. Like many other mixed-race Indigenous people faced with a radically changing world, he faced a series of hard choices.[13] In hindsight, part of Quanah Parker's savviness as a politician and businessman came from his understanding of how race increasingly shaped late nineteenth century American culture. Most Comanche people did not think in terms of race, but by the 1880s, Quanah Parker's origins were so well known that this legacy was difficult for the Comanche leader to avoid. Rather than be labeled by his family's history, Parker learned to use that interracial mythology as a tool to reinvent himself and build ties with his newly arrived neighbors.

In the 1880s, the upstart Comanche politician began building a web of alliances through the Southern Plains cattle industry, a business that prioritized economic pragmatism over race.[14] Open range corporations operating on the Southern Plains functioned by releasing cattle onto land which the corporation did not own or monitor for a season so that the animals could grow fat off the surrounding resources before that corporation's workers rounded them up and sent them to Chicago's meatpacking district. Native communities controlled the region's natural

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[12] Fer Griffin, The Early History of Quanah and Its Surrounding Territory, 1943, Red River War Bibliography File; for more on the Parker family, see: Jo Ella Powell Exley, *Frontier Blood: The Saga of the Parker Family* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001).

[13] Anne Hyde, "Hard Choices: Mixed-Race Families and Strategies of Acculturation in the U.S. West after 1848" In David Wallace Adams and Christa DeLuzio, Editors, *On The Borders of Love and Power: Families and Kinship in the Intercultural American Southwest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012): 93-115.

[14] For the cattle industry on the late nineteenth century Great Plains, see: Terry G. Jordan-Bychkov, *North American Cattle Ranching Frontiers: Origins, Diffusion, and Differentiation* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993); Joshua Specht, *Red Meat Republic: A Hoof-to-Table History How Beef Changed America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019).

resources, so open range cattle ranchers regularly coordinated with local Indigenous peoples.[15] For example, company representatives routinely compensated Indigenous parties for seasonal access to resources. Since the open range model focused on extracting economic resources rather than obtaining legal ownership over them, the cattlemen happily sacrificed small sums in their dealings with Indigenous peoples in exchange for much greater profits when they sold their animals in Chicago. Those dealings lent some Native people significant negotiating power. In 1884, Quanah Parker secured a multi-company, intertribal leasing deal of the entire reservation (an area the size of several modern counties) with the cattle industry in exchange for annual monetary compensation – typically administered by the corporations annually at the reservation's federal agency building – for Comanche, Kiowa, and Plains Apache communities.[16] Through these negotiations, the Comanche politician consolidated his influence on the reservation and expanded that influence into the Southern Plains cattle industry, making him one of the region's most powerful figures.

Quanah Parker formed a longstanding alliance with the residents of Quanah, Texas; he lent them the cultural and economic clout of his name in exchange for economic opportunities and further notoriety. In 1885, White settlers named their new town after the famous Comanche politician who lived north of the Red River.[17] In the early 1890s, Quanah suffered a devastating fire and flood within a few years of one another, just the kind of crippling disaster that another town might use to take away the

[15] For an example of negotiations between that industry and Indigenous peoples, see: John Truden "Where Cowboys and Indians Meet: A Southern Cheyenne Web of Kinship and the Transnational Cattle Industry, 1877-1885" *Western Historical Quarterly* 50/4 (Winter 2019): 363-90.
[16] William T. Hagan, *Quanah Parker, Comanche Chief* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 28-39.
[17] Fer Griffin, The Early History of Quanah and Its Surrounding Territory, 1943, Red River War Bibliography File.

community's valuable county seat status. In response, the town's boosters began planning a summer festival to attract visitors and bring in revenue. Beginning in 1895, Quanah Parker and hundreds of his constituents crossed the border to perform at that annual festival. In the immediate term, hundreds of Indigenous performers (Quanah's supporters) received payment. Furthermore, away from the prying eyes of the Office of Indian Affairs, Indigenous people living north of the Red River could conduct commerce with their Texas neighbors while also holding important ceremonies and gathering rare medicinal and religious plants at nearby Medicine Mounds, a site sacred to Comanche people for many generations.[18] Over the long term, Quanah Parker used "the grandest celebration ever held in the Panhandle" to continue gathering influence in a region peopled by White settlers terrified of Comanches.[19]

Quanah Parker's partnership with the town of Quanah led him to another with a small but growing corporation known as the Quanah, Acme, and Pacific Railroad. Originally formed as the Acme, Red River and Northern Railway Company in 1903, the line soon connected a string of West Texas towns that stretched west into the Comanche homeland.[20] In the midst of that growth, Quanah Parker made a deal with railroad executive Charles Sommer. How he met with Sommer is unclear, but almost certainly that pathway led either through Samuel Burk Burnett – a cattleman with longstanding ties to the Comanche politician who was also one of the company's main investors – or the residents of Quanah, Texas, the line's headquarters.[21] In 1907, Quanah Parker agreed to lease his likeness as a companywide logo and namesake for the railway.

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[18] Quanah Chamber of Commerce, *Welcome to Historic Hardeman County* [Quanah, TX: Quanah Chamber of Commerce, c. 2012].
[19] "Old Timers Recall Visit 35 Years Ago of Chief Quanah Parker's Band of Braves to Quanah" *Quanah Tribune-Chief*, c. 1931, folder 3, Quanah Parker Files, J. Evetts Haley Collection.
[20] Charles Sommer to S.G. Reed, August 22, 1936, Roll 36, Quanah, Acme and Pacific Railway Company Records Collection, Southwest Collections, Lubbock, TX.
[21] Don L. Hofsommer, *The Quanah Route: A History of the Quanah, Acme and Pacific Railway* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1991), 143; B.B. Paddock, *History of Texas: Fort Worth and the Texas Northwest, Volume 3* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1922), 92-94.

Sommer did not record how he compensated the Comanche leader. From what records are available, the railway routinely gave Quanah Parker and the people traveling with him free passage where the line ran in West Texas.[22] The Comanche politician's family and constituents used the railway to bypass communities where "considerable prejudice among the white people of that country against your Indians" remained and reach friendly territory.[23] The Quanah, Acme, and Pacific logo projected a silhouette of a Comanche person on its "locomotives, passenger and freight cars, as well as its water tanks and oil storage tanks" into a space violently seized from the Comanches just a few decades earlier.[24] Unlike other instances where settlers appropriated Indigenous images for their own purposes, Quanah Parker maintained ownership over his own by "frequently riding in the cab of a locomotive, ringing the bell and blowing the whistle…and say[ing] to passersby "[that is] my engine [and] my railroad!"[25] Indigenous people remained mobile in the early twentieth century, but Quanah Parker's ability to either call up or catch a ride with a railroad line that connected the Comanche leader's beachhead in Texas to his homeland was unusual.[26]

Quanah Parker's fame and influence on the Southern Plains even shaped the activities and reputation of a US President. In April 1905, Theodore Roosevelt planned a hunting trip in the Big Pasture, a vast, unsettled reserve retained by the federal

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[22] Charles H. Sommer, *Quanah Parker: Last Chief of the Comanches, A Brief Sketch by Charles H. Sommer* (Quanah, Texas: Privately Printed, 1945), 7, 39.
[23] S.B. Burnett to Quanah Parker, October 24, 1908, DOC1006, Fort Sill Museum Archives, Fort Sill, OK.
[24] Sommer, *Quanah Parker*, 7.
[25] Sommer, *Quanah Parker*, 7.
[26] For Indigenous mobility in the early twentieth century, see: Frank Rzeczkowski, *Uniting the Tribes: The Rise and Fall of Pan-Indian Community on the Crow Reservation* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012); Kevin Whalen, *Native Students at Work: American Indian Labor and Sherman Institute's Outing Program, 1900-1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016); Louis Warren, *God's Red Son: The Ghost Dance Religion and the Making of Modern America* (New York: Basic Books, 2017).

government. Roosevelt invited the famous Comanche leader to join his hunting party. For Roosevelt, Parker's presence was a chance to gain political support. As a Republican politician – paradoxically the party of both imperialism and people of color in the early twentieth century United States – working in a time when the American public demanded social reform, Roosevelt trumpeted Quanah Parker's success after the Red River War as depending on Republican reforms.[27] At an April 8 rally in Frederick, Oklahoma Territory, the President exclaimed that "I am glad to see our friend here, the Chief of the Comanches, Quanah Parker…[He] is doing his duty as a decent citizen and cultivating his ground, trying to live as an American ought to [and we should] give him a fair chance."[28] As with the Quanah, Acme, and Pacific Railroad, Quanah Parker almost certainly understood that Theodore Roosevelt was manipulating his Comanche image for personal (in this case political) gain. That power dynamic was inherently uneven. Yet, Parker also understood how to manipulate Roosevelt; no records exist of any personal conversations the two had on the hunt, but he spent much of that event speaking with the President, who urgently wrote Commissioner of Indian Affairs Francis Leupp that "my sympathies have been much excited and I am concerned at the condition of these Indians."[29]

In the end, Roosevelt's attention wavered, but Quanah Parker made similar connections with White Texas businessmen. In 1907, he led the first of four annual intertribal hunting parties from southwestern Oklahoma to the Matador Land and Cattle Company's extensive lands in West Texas.[30] Much of the information that is left about these hunting trips is anecdotal, but

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[27] Nathan Jessen, *Populism and Imperialism: Politics, Culture, and Foreign Policy in the American West, 1890-1900* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2017), 7-9.
[28] Remarks of the [sic] President Roosevelt at Frederick, Oklahoma, April 8, 1905, roll 425, *Theodore Roosevelt Papers*, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
[29] Theodore Roosevelt to Francis Leupp, April 14, 1905, roll 337, *Theodore Roosevelt Papers*.
[30] S.B. Burnett to Quanah Parker, May 24, 1907; DOC987, Fort Sill Museum Archives, Fort Sill, OK; Murdo Mackenzie, Bulletin, June 29, 1910, DOC1019, Fort Sill Museum Archives, Fort Sill, OK.

correspondence from White ranchers S.B. Burnett and Murdo Mackenzie reveals that their ties with the Comanche leader allowed the latter to cross a border that remained quite dangerous. In 1910, Murdo Mackenzie, a Scottish businessman managing the Matador Land and Cattle Company's massive holdings in West Texas, issued the Comanche politician a formal hunting pass he might show to anyone who interfered with his people.[31] These trips almost certainly involved sacred religious ceremonies and activities that should not be recorded, so perhaps it is best that few records survive. Whatever happened, those human connections gave Quanah Parker and his contemporaries their last opportunity to live life in their homeland uninterrupted and unmonitored by federal authorities. Over the course of his life, Quanah Parker built both a literal house in Oklahoma – a mansion known as the Star House – and a metaphorical house in Texas.[32] He used his existing ties across the Red River to make more until his Texas house was strong enough to negate his enemies and make his way back to his homeland.

The Chapman Family and Northwestern Indian Territory

Like Quanah Parker, the Chapmans – a mixed-race Southern Cheyenne family – leveraged their relationships with non-Native neighbors to find a place for themselves in an uncertain world. Unlike Parker, they sought a place to belong rather than to recover a lost homeland. The Red River War disrupted the entire region. In the summer of 1874, American officials launched a year-long military campaign to consolidate power over the Southern Great Plains. Prior to that moment, the United States did not possess the

[31] W.M. Pearce, *The Matador Land and Cattle Company* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), 38; Murdo Mackenzie, Bulletin, June 29, 1910, DOC1019.
[32] C.F. Doan "Regarding a House for Quanah," December 4, 1882, 440, KA47, Kiowa, Comanche and Apache Nation Agency Records, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.

infrastructure or military might in the region to displace Comanche, Kiowa, and Southern Cheyenne communities who refused to recognize American sovereignty. Columns of US soldiers set out from newly built and staffed forts to attack those communities, who skillfully resisted these attacks and counterattacked; Comanche, Southern Cheyenne, and Kiowa warriors possessed superior knowledge of the region's terrain and were motivated to defend their autonomy.

In the 1874 Battle of Buffalo Wallow, Comanche and Kiowa warriors surrounded a small party of US scouts and soldiers traveling to Camp Supply, a US fortification in northwestern Indian Territory, and besieged them.[33] The soldiers barely survived the onslaught. While taking cover in a buffalo wallow (a slight depression in the earth), a wounded soldier became separated. In a feat of extreme bravery, Amos Chapman – a White scout – ran out of cover and picked up the soldier. On the way back to the wallow, an Indigenous sniper aimed at the scout's feet as he ran, leaving Amos Chapman with a mangled stump. The scouting party held out long enough that their Indigenous opponents lost interest; after retreating to Camp Supply, a surgeon replaced Chapman's stump with a wooden leg.[34] The Battle of Buffalo Wallow illustrated the ability of Indigenous combatants to divide and attack individual American soldiers on the ground, but the Red River War as a whole was decided by the vast resources the United States mobilized to crush Indigenous resistance on the Southern Plains. Within a year, Southern Cheyenne, Comanche, and Kiowa communities surrendered under that weight. Intriguingly though, the same cataclysmic series of events created a new family.

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[33] Richard Irving Dodge, *Our Wild Indians: Thirty-Three Years' Personal Experience among the Red Men of the Great West*, 1882, reprint (New York: Archer House, 1959), 628-632.
[34] D. Ivans Fritts to Robert C. Carricker, November 7, 1972, Amos Chapman Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.

According to her grandson, Mary Long Neck – the daughter of Southern Cheyenne chief Stone Calf – met Amos while tending to the scout's wounds.[35] Her father, trying to rebuild the influence he lost in the Red River War, may have encouraged the two to get together at the renamed Fort Supply.[36] Little is known about their courtship but by 1878, "'Stone's' daughter" gave birth to her own, Minnie Chapman.[37] Southern Cheyenne women had exclusive claim to their sons and daughters and Mary Long Neck lived at a place that was both a Southern Cheyenne space and US Army fortification.[38] During the 1880s, Southern Cheyenne people – many of whom camped in the adjacent river valley – were rarely absent from the fort. Stone Calf, using remarkable diplomacy, used the garrison's White officers, African American soldiers, and his own loyal scout, Amos Chapman, to assemble a powerful political coalition that challenged American influence in the region.

After the Red River War, the family made themselves essential to the economy and society of northwestern Indian Territory. At first, their significance evolved out of Amos Chapman's widespread reputation as a source of military intelligence. As early as 1877, Camp Supply's commander praised Chapman as an authority on northwestern Indian Territory's geography and pathways.[39] In 1879, Phillip Sheridan noted the scout as "a very reliable man" and in his mass produced 1881 book, Richard Irving Dodge noted that "one of the best and bravest, the most sober, quiet and genial of all the scouts I have

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[35] Tena Bailey, "Amos Chapman and the Battle of Buffalo Wallow" *True West*, 30/1 (January 1983): 53.
[36] Peter T. Lieneman, January 28, 1938, Indian Pioneer Papers.
[37] Commander, Camp Supply to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of the Missouri, November 18, 1878, 151, letterbook 1, roll 2, *Camp Supply, Letters Sent*, Panhandle Plains Historical Museum, Canyon, TX.
[38] Truden "Where Cowboys and Indians Meet," 377, 381.
[39] Commander, Camp Supply to Quartermaster, Camp Supply, November 11, 1877, 13, letterbook 1, roll 2, *Camp Supply, Letters Sent*.

known is Amos Chapman.[40] The Southern Plains cattle industry soon noted Chapman's significance; cowboys passing through northwestern Indian Territory relied on the scout's advice.[41]

The one-legged scout and his family became associated with a specific location in northwestern Indian Territory, an ecological divide between two forests that Southern Cheyenne people called "Where the woods meet."[42] Adjacent to the North Canadian River and a major cattle trail, the importance of these crossroads led the US Army to create an outpost there. In 1879, Fort Supply's commander relocated Amos Chapman to Cantonment; although the post closed a few years later, the scout and his family remained connected to that space. [43] Some newcomers and Native peoples also associated Amos Chapman's wooden limb – a very literal remnant of the Battle of Buffalo Wallow –with the region. Southern Arapaho people named the nearby town of Seiling "one leg."[44] Chapman reminded his family and any newcomers of his role at Buffalo Wallow by removing and then [waving] "the chalk white stub in the open air."[45] Some younger people at an early-twentieth-century Indigenous gathering questioned whether Amos Chapman really lost his leg in the Red River War, so the former scout unscrewed his removable limb and used it to stir a "boiling" pot of soup.[46]Between 1890 and 1893, Indigenous peoples lost title to almost all of northwestern Indian Territory, now an eighteen-county area.[47] As

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[40] Amos Chapman to E.R. Platt, July 16, 1879, 751, roll 676, *Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881*, National Archives at Washington D.C; Dodge, *Our Wild Indians*, 628.
[41] Howard Wright to J. Evetts Haley, January 16, 1927, Panhandle Plains Historical Museum, Canyon, TX; Ralph H. Records, "Range Riding in Oklahoma" *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 20/2 (Summer 1942): 164; Truden "Where Cowboys and Indians Meet," 381, 383.
[42] Rodolph Petter, *English-Cheyenne Dictionary* (Kettle Falls, WA: Mennonite Church, 1915), 209.
[43] A.S. Dallas to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of the Missouri, May 2, 1879, 214, letterbook 1, roll 2, *Camp Supply, Letters Sent*.
[44] Myrtle Lincoln, November 30, 1971, Dorris Duke Collection, Western History Collections, Norman, OK.
[45] D. Ivans Fritts to Robert C. Carricker, November 7, 1972, Amos Chapman Collection.
[46] "Plan Erection of Monument to Commemorate Battle of Buffalo Wallow, Fought 51 Years Ago" *Dodge City Times* (Dodge City, KS), June 25, 1925.
[47] William T. Hagan, *Taking Indian Lands: The Cherokee (Jerome) Commission, 1889-1893* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 62, 81.

northwestern Indian Territory became Oklahoma Territory in the 1890s, Mary Long Neck and Amos Chapman used their relationships and association with the region to find a new place for themselves. In 1887, the US Congress passed the General Allotment Act – often called the Dawes Act – as part of a broader movement to assimilate Native people into White American culture.[48] Allotment – the process of breaking apart existing reservation lands held in common, assigning tribal citizens much smaller plots of land from the reservation, and then opening up the majority of the land to American citizens and businesses – devastated Indigenous communities. In practice, White Americans gained far more land from the dissolution of reservations than individual Native landowners. In northwestern Indian Territory, allotment disrupted Indigenous communities as well as White ranchers leasing much of the surrounding region. Neither group was prepared to leave. In the early 1890s, Mary Long Neck took her allotment close to Cantonment.[49] As White settlers arrived in northwestern Indian Territory during that decade, they used Mary Long Neck's allotment (most often referred to as Amos Chapman's ranch) as a point of reference.[50] Amos Chapman exploited this moment to help his family build a new home on Mary Long Neck's allotment at Where the Woods Meet. In 1892, the US Army assigned Chapman – a person military officials considered a reliable asset – to clear out the ranchers. What Army officials failed to understand was that Chapman had

[48] For an authoritative study of allotment, see: Janet A. McDonnell, *The Dispossession of the American Indian, 1887-1934* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); for a regional study in Oklahoma, see: David A. Chang, *The Color of the Land: Race, Nation, and the Politics of Landownership in Oklahoma, 1832-1929* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); for a local study in Oklahoma, see: Rose Stremlau, *Sustaining the Cherokee Family: Kinship and the Allotment of an Indigenous Nation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).
[49] "Mrs. Amos Chapman," Farm Surveys, Box 10, E1, Concho Agency, RG 75, National Archives at Fort Worth.
[50] Carolyn Daugherty, *Seiling: Crossroads of Northwest Oklahoma* (Stillwater, OK: New Forums Press, 1998), 265, 295; "Notice" *The Woodward Jeffersonian* (Woodward, OT), March 9, 1895; "The News" *The Woodward News* (Woodward, OT), November 29, 1895.

often manipulated them while working for Stone Calf. He possessed the shrewd disposition of any contemporary spy. He had long negotiated with (and perhaps bribed and threatened) cowboys, cattlemen, and thieves to build up his family's herds. As allotment reshaped the region, Amos Chapman reportedly partnered with a White associate named Lee Moore and began negotiating to – without his superiors' knowledge – with various ranchers to give them more time before moving their herds in exchange for monetary compensation. In 1893, federal investigators collected complaints about the pair in Kansas border towns, but little resulted.[51] Assuming the complaints were true – and they are difficult to prove or disprove – the family could have used the funds Chapman gained from such activity to improve Mary Long Neck's new allotment.

After Fort Supply's closure in 1894, the Chapman family – already woven into the lore of the surrounding region – built a new life on the allotment at Where the Woods Meet. The first settlers to come to Oklahoma Territory's newly incorporated northwestern counties found their homesteads to be too arid for their agricultural expectations and most left.[52] Seiling (a.k.a One Leg), a small town named for a local trader about a mile from Mary Long Neck's allotment, came into being years later.[53] Gradually, the Chapman family became part of the fabric of this community. As the town evolved and grew, the Chapman children became more prominent than their parents. In fact, several members of the family acquired substantial wealth in Seiling. For a time, Amos Chapman Jr. was the most successful Indigenous farmer in the Cantonment sub-

[51] D. Parker to H.C. Corbin, June 11, 1893, 48, Roll 488, *Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General, 1871-80*, National Archives at Washington D.C; J.M. Lee to H.C. Corbin, July 6, 1893, 71-99, Roll 488, *Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General*.
[52] Michael H. Reggio, "Troubled Times: Homesteading in Short-Grass Country, 1892-1900" *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 57/2 (1979): 197-98.
[53] Daugherty, *Seiling*, 17, 21-22.

agency's jurisdiction.[54] In 1925, Amos and his White wife owned a two room house and an extensive farm that included horses, mules, dairy cows, chickens, hogs, turkeys, and fields of wheat, oats, corn, and alfalfa.[55] Another child – Frank Chapman – was the most involved of the family in Seiling. In 1923, he coached the town's baseball team.[56] Two years later, Frank and his White wife were raising ten children – most of whom attended the town's public school – and had a large farm that included a windmill and a "Ford truck."[57] The Chapman family found (and arguably made) a place that where they belonged.

The Uncertainty of Race and Racism in Oklahoma Territory

Indigenous people in the late nineteenth century North American West navigated a series of intensely local and unstable spaces rather than stable communities dominated by state or federal structures. Quanah Parker's return to his homeland in West Texas and the Chapman family's settlement at Seiling illustrated the possibilities present for Indigenous people who understood how to use relationships with their non-Native neighbors to circumvent racial oppression. Their success, while notable, was uncertain across the broader North American West. Late nineteenth century American settlers increasingly subscribed to the idea that at least some racial differences existed between themselves and Indigenous people. However, these predominantly White settlers often disagreed about the significance of race in their relationship to their Indigenous neighbors. Consequentially, Indigenous communities located in the same region lived out

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[54] Cantonment Agency, Annual Report, 1920, 708, roll 8, *Superintendent's Annual Narrative*; Cantonment Agency, Annual Report, 1921, 783, roll 8, *Superintendent's Annual Narrative*; Cantonment Agency, Annual Report, 1922, 818, roll 8, *Superintendent's Annual Narrative*.
[55] "Amos Chapman [Jr.]," Farm Surveys, box 10, E1, Concho Agency.
[56] "Here and There" *The Taloga Times* (Taloga, OK) September 9, 1920; "Local Team Wins Sunday" *Taloga Times-Advocate* (Taloga, OK), August 23, 1923.
[57] "Frank Chapman," Farm Surveys, box 10, E1, Concho Agency.

radically different existences. Richard Davis – a self-described "aristocratic Indian" – thrived in the territorial hub of Kingfisher; a Southern Cheyenne man who spent much of his adolescence and early adulthood at Carlisle Indian Industrial School, Davis made himself into an able rancher, dairy farmer, and newspaperman.[58] From his home in one of the largest towns in early twentieth century Oklahoma Territory, he accrued considerable wealth – including "8 farms [and] a good city house" – and became a leader in the town's Indigenous community.[59] Others lived out far more marginal existences. Hundreds of miles to the west at Hammon, White settlers constructed a society that resembled the Jim Crow South. The town's White residents rigidly segregated themselves, refusing to let Southern Cheyenne people into their school, their homes, or even "eat at the same table with Indians."[60] With few options, Cheyenne people took seasonal work for low pay in the region's booming cotton industry and – unable to pay taxes or improve their land – liquidated their remaining tracts as the federal government lifted trust restrictions on their sale.

In a particularly grisly case just miles from Quanah Parker's mansion in early twentieth century Cache, Tahkahper (or Post Oak Jim) – a Comanche man working as a deputy sheriff – found that the surrounding community considered him to be less than human.[61] In 1901, the federal government dissolved the Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Reservation and redistributed most of those lands to White settlers, who promptly policed that stolen land with municipal and county

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[58] Richard Davis to Joe Miller, January 6, 1911, folder 8, box 1, Miller Brothers 101 Ranch Collection, Western History Collections, Norman, OK; Richard Davis' Family, c. 1892, Richard Davis Student File, Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center, http://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu, accessed January 7, 2021.
[59] Richard Davis to Joe Miller, January 6, 1911, folder 8, box 1, Miller Brothers 101 Ranch Collection.
[60] Red Moon Agency, Annual Report, 1916, 887, roll 115, *Superintendent's Annual Narrative*; Red Moon Agency, Annual Report, 1910, 764, 778, roll 115, *Superintendent's Annual Narrative*; Red Moon Agency, Annual Report, 1914, 852-853, roll 115, *Superintendent's Annual Narrative*.
[61] In earlier drafts of this dissertation, Tahkahper's name was listed as Towoitiba, but Comanche linguist Carney Saupitty Jr. noted in a February 2023 conversation with the author that Tahkahper only acquired the name Towoitiba later in life. See also: Thomas W. Kavanagh, *Comanche Ethnography: Field Notes of E. Adamson Hoebel, Waldo R. Wedel, Gustav G. Carlson, and Robert H. Lowie* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 12.

governments. Tensions ran high in more ways than one. Comanche people quietly began calling the town of Cache *Pecenadma* – roughly translated as "Pus Town" or "Rotten Town" – in reference to a plague of sexually transmitted diseases spread by the city's settler population.[62] The newly created Comanche County sheriff's department hired several Indigenous deputies, including Tahkahper. About a year after the reservation's dissolution, Sheriff's Deputy Tahkahper attempted to arrest several White men.[63] The latter shot the deputy in the throat. Finding their supposed protector mortally wounded, the surrounding settlers refused to help Tahkahper. Instead, with his wife's help and a pair of knitting needles, he extracted the bullet. After surviving to live another day, Tahkahper found that the Comanche County Sheriff fired every Indigenous deputy in the department. The county court subsequently convicted the former deputy of assault.[64] While serving a jail sentence for his supposed "bad disturbance," Tahkahper caught the mumps, a disease which his jailers identified but ignored amid the man's cries to let "me die right here;" a reporter referred to the prisoner's misery in jail as "benevolent assimilation."[65] White settlers used Tahkahper to send a message to surrounding Indigenous communities about the region's new racial hierarchy: White men were now in charge. Quietly, Tahkahper resisted – finding a new position as an OIA policeman,

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[62] Comanche linguist Carney Saupitty Jr. identified this information while discussing Post Oak Cemetery – a site in Cache misidentified and misspelled in Works Progress Administration documentation as "Pecedarno" – with the author in February 2023. Saupitty noted that the name refers to the city, not the cemetery. For the WPA misidentification see: Helene Lake, Post Oak Cemetery, April 11, 1938, folder 9, box 10, WPA Historic Sites and Federal Writers Project Collection, Western History Collections, Norman, OK.

[63] Robert B. Thomas, "Story of Post Oak Jim" October 5, 1937, Indian Pioneer Papers, Western History Collections, Norman, OK; "His Own Surgeon. Indian Dug Bullet Out of His Own Neck and Saved His Life." *Daily Ardmoreite* (Ardmore, IT), October 15, 1902; An Indian Arrested" *Norman Democrat-Topic* (Norman, OT), December 26, 1902; "Case Dismissed in Lawton Court: Bribery Case Involving Mayor Turner-Post Oak Jim Found Guilty" *Weekly Oklahoma State Capital* (Guthrie, OT), April 30, 1903.

[64] "Case Dismissed in Lawton Court" *Weekly Oklahoma State Capital*, April 30, 1903.

[65] "Oklahoma Paragraphs" *Weekly Oklahoma State Capital*, June 20, 1903; "Oklahoma Paragraphs" *Weekly Oklahoma State Capital*, June 14, 1903.

marrying three Indigenous women, and even becoming an influential elder in time – but Indigenous people remained unable to join the sheriff's department.[66]

Like Quanah Parker, the Chapman family built ties with their neighbors that circumvented race on a local level but where those ties ended, racial hatred took precedent and many people discriminated against the Chapmans. As White supremacy became more prominent across the Southern Plains during the 1920s, White settlers retold their histories in ways that glorified themselves and ignored Indigenous peoples.[67] Especially in spaces where Indigenous peoples had once been dominant but were no longer present, these settlers crafted new and largely undisputed stories centered around themselves. In the Texas Panhandle, US soldiers cleared the area during the Red River War and Texas Rangers aggressively pushed out or murdered those who tried to return. When White settlers rewrote history at the beginning of the twentieth century, no Indigenous people were left to criticize or question these new stories.

Memorials were a common way early twentieth century White women and men affirmed their racial superiority over people of color. In West Texas, the Panhandle Plains Historical Society (PPHS) gathered public support by erecting memorials to White people who fought in the Red River War. When the time came to erect a memorial at Buffalo Wallow, the most notable participant – Amos Chapman – was as one local White historian characterized "essentially an Indian," so the memorial's supporters worked to discredit the scout.[68] From his home in Seiling, Frank Chapman reminded a new generation of his father's role at Buffalo Wallow, laughing at negative reports. He showed Joseph Thoburn – a White man and

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[66] An Indian Arrested" *Norman Democrat-Topic*, December 26, 1902; "Post Oak Jim Stabbed" *Crowder City Advertiser (*Juanita, IT), September 23, 1904; "Indians Thrill with War Dance Given as Sample" *Frederick Leader* (Frederick, IT), September 13, 1921; Kavanagh, *Comanche Ethnography*, 12.
[67] Joseph A. Hill, *The Panhandle-Plains Historical Society and Its Museum* (Canyon, TX: West Texas State College Press, 1955), 28-30.
[68] W.P. Hickok to Joseph Thoburn, June 24, 1921, folder 5, box 13, Joseph Thoburn Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.

foundational figure in the Oklahoma Historical Society – the scout's medal of honor granted by the US Congress after the skirmish, and gave him a portrait of Amos Chapman.[69] When Thoburn later wrote his White Texan contemporary Olive K. Dixon – an accomplished reporter, regional historian affiliated with the PPHS, and former wife of Billy Dixon, Amos Chapman's fellow scout at Buffalo Wallow – he called Frank "a great big lubberly half breed" and Amos a liar.[70] After meeting the scout, Olive Dixon also dismissed Amos Chapman's perspective in favor of her former husband, whom she valorized in a 1914 biography.[71] Legitimate questions about Amos Chapman's version of Buffalo Wallow as well as Olive Dixon's investment in her husband's story exist, but Billy Dixon's Whiteness and Chapman's lack thereof proved definitive in shaping the commemoration of the skirmish.[72] When the PPHS acquired the support to erect a monument in 1927, the organization's first president praised Billy Dixon, ignored Amos Chapman, and while speaking at the monument's dedication noted that "our history begins when a band of soldiers were sent across the Panhandle…[to] keep the R*dskins back."[73] The monument itself read "stand silent, heroes here have been who cleared the way for other men."[74]

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[69] Joseph Thoburn to Olive K. Dixon, April 10, 1920, folder 8, box 8, Joseph Thoburn Collection; Paul F. Lambert, *Joseph B. Thoburn: Pioneer Historian and Archaeologist* (Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma Heritage Book Center, 1980), 63; General Orders No. 28, January 24, 1875, Billy Dixon Papers, Panhandle Plains Historical Museum, Canyon, TX.
[70] John L. McCarty, *Adobe Walls Bride: The Story of Billy and Olive Dixon* (San Antonio, TX: The Naylor Company, 1955), 246, 249; Joseph Thoburn to Olive K. Dixon, April 10, 1920, folder 8, box 8, Joseph Thoburn Collection; Joseph Thoburn to Olive K. Dixon, March 14, 1921, folder 8, box 8, Joseph Thoburn Collection.
[71] W.P. Hickok to Joseph Thoburn, July 24, 1921, folder 5, box 13, Joseph Thoburn Collection; Olive K. Dixon, *Life of Billy Dixon, Plainsmen, Scout, and Pioneer* (Guthrie, OK: Co-Op Publishing Co., 1914).
[72] Z.T. Woodall to Billy Dixon, January 4, 1889, Billy Dixon Papers; T.V. Reeves to Joseph Thoburn, January 31, 1925, folder 5, box 28, Joseph Thoburn Collection.
[73] Duane F. Guy, "The Panhandle-Plains Historical Society: The Formative Years, 1921-1940" *Panhandle Plains-Historical Review* 69 (1996): 2; Thomas F. Turner, Talk at the unveiling of the Buffalo Wallow Monument, September 20, 1927, Panhandle Plains Historical Museum, Canyon, TX.
[74] "Unveil Buffalo Wallow Monument" *Canadian Record* (Canadian, TX), September 29, 1927.

As the United States consolidated its hold over the North American interior in the late nineteenth century and settlers followed in their wake in the hundreds of thousands, many Indigenous people built new relationships to manage in a world changing at an almost inconceivable rate. Between 1870 and 1910, the United States crushed Indigenous military resistance in the West, removed Native peoples to reserves, and in Indian Territory redistributed most of those lands to White Americans. With their governments suppressed and ineffectual because of American interference, many Indigenous people relied on the resources they had on hand: people. These stories show individuals, families, and communities partnering together for mutual gain. These relationships were messy, tenuous, and often inequitable. A stopgap measure, they reflected one set of strategies Indigenous peoples used to navigate enormous change at a moment of unprecedented vulnerability. While not the only pathway that Oklahoma's many Indigenous peoples walked in this difficult time, the stories gathered here reflect the ingenuity and desperation of individuals and small Indigenous communities who – for a variety of reasons – chose to pursue relationships with their non-Native neighbors.

Chapter II: Making Fortunes

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A midsummer night's eve, Tulsa.[1] As she rode her horse and buggy towards the city, Elizabeth "Lotta" Charley must have felt a mix of conflicting emotions. Embarrassment. Betrayal. Anxiety. Perhaps she reflected on her life and remembered that things had not always hurt so much. A citizen of the Cherokee Nation, Lotta McGinnis grew up in Turley, Indian Territory, a small Cherokee town just north of the Mvskoke ranching community of Tulsa.[2] At nineteen, she married Sam Charley, a wealthy Shawnee man in his mid-twenties who also hailed from Turley. They moved to Owasso, another Cherokee town near Tulsa. While raising their son William, Lotta and Sam became further enmeshed in the city's wealthy Indigenous community.[3]

As Tulsa transformed into a metropolis fueled by oil and grit, Lotta Charley's husband began having extramarital affairs with other women. To her great humiliation, he did not hide these affairs, even going so far as to take a series of carriage rides with one woman and meet another several times at a hotel in nearby Claremore.[4] A jovial character known for his misadventures around Tulsa, Sam was apparently quite threatening in the quiet of the Charley household.[5] Lotta claimed that her husband

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[1] Wilson Seawright (Holisso, Chickasaw Nation), Richard Ellwanger (Seminole Nation Museum), and Ted Underwood (Seminole Nation Historic Preservation Office) read drafts this chapter during the drafting process.
[2] A.Z. English, Marriage License, September 12, 1902, In Re Application for Enrollment of Minor Child: Athia Lucile Charley, January 28, 1907, Dawes Card 3928, Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, Five Civilized Tribes Agency, Applications for Allotment, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, RG75, National Archives at Fort Worth, TX.
[3] In Re the Death of Athia Lucile Charley, July 12, 1907, Dawes Card 3928, Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, Five Civilized Tribes Agency, Applications for Allotment, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.
[4] "Horsewhipped Girl in Downtown Cafe" *Tulsa Daily World*, July 24, 1912; "Sam Charley is Sued for Divorce" *Tulsa Daily World*, September 6, 1913.
[5] "Cowboy Injured" *Daily Chieftain* (Vinita, IT), September 6, 1901; "Spoiled His Wedding" *Daily Chieftain*, September 12, 1902.

routinely brandished "guns and knives," threatened her, and did not hesitate to pick a fight, even brawling with another man in front of her in their home "over a[nother] woman."[6] Unable to confront her husband directly, Lotta Charley attacked Etta Bradley, one of Sam's mistresses. On the evening of July 22, 1912, she found the White woman at a crowded chili cafe on Second Street. In front of dozens of people, Lotta "rode up in the buggy, jumped out and ran into restaurant with a whip," called out a battle cry that "you have been riding around in a buggy with my husband," and then attacked Etta.[7] Their fight sprawled out into the street before local police arrived and arrested them both.

While this saga of domestic violence, extramarital affairs, and vengeance is intriguing on its own, it also underscores an intriguing idea: the supremacy of class over race in eastern Oklahoma. The day after Lotta Charley attacked Etta Bradley, both women went before a judge in Tulsa's municipal court. Black eyed but dressed in elegant clothing that reflected her wealth, Lotta Charley presented herself as "a pretty woman of middle age" victimized by her adulterous husband and his lover, a "young white girl."[8] Taking this into consideration, the judge fined Lotta a mere $5 (roughly $145 in 2020) and Etta Bradley $2.50. Lotta Charley paid her fine and went on her way. Granted, Tulsa's residents generally considered non-lethal assault – particularly whipping or fist fighting – to be an acceptable response to social dispute; even so, the judge's fine was essentially a slap on the wrist.[9] Moreover, a person of color attacked a White woman in Jim Crow America. White settlers committed heinous acts of racial violence over much less: a dirty look, a rumor or nothing at all. The Tulsa Race Massacre – a twenty four hour period in mid-1921 during which Tulsa's White residents murdered hundreds of African

[6] "Sam Charley is Sued for Divorce" *Tulsa Daily World*, September 6, 1913.
[7] "Horsewhipped Girl in Downtown Cafe" *Tulsa Daily World*, July 24, 1912.
[8] "Horsewhipped Girl in Downtown Cafe" *Tulsa Daily World*, July 24, 1912.
[9] "Whipping Caused Girls to Leave" *Tulsa Weekly Democrat*, July 25, 1912.

Americans living in the city's wealthy Black neighborhood and burned down the entire area in one of the most egregious acts of racial violence in US history – began over an African American boy (allegedly) accidentally stepping on a White woman's foot.[10] Lotta Charley lived in this universe; why did she face so few repercussions?

In short, Lotta Charley was part of an Indigenous gentry, a class of people who wielded enormous wealth and influence in Tulsa and across eastern Indian Territory. Less a formal group than a class of wealthy Native families who identified with the American upper class as well as their own Indigenous nations, the gentry's embrace of capitalism distinguished them from an Indigenous majority who related to one another through kinship. In earlier centuries, these families rejected the long established idea that property was inherently communal and embraced English conceptions of individual property ownership.[11] While they always represented a minority within Indigenous societies, the gentry grew to wield enormous economic and political power through heavy investments in the American institution of chattel slavery.[12] Greenwood

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[10] For analyses of the Tulsa Race Massacre, see: R. Halliburton Jr., "The Tulsa Race War of 1921" *Journal of Black Studies* 2/3 (January 1972): 333-357; Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921, Tulsa Race Riot: A Report (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921, 2001); Scott Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); Randy Krehbiel, *Tulsa 1921: Reporting a Massacre* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019); Karlos K. Hill, *The 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre: A Photographic History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2021); for studies that place the massacre in a longer context, see: Hannibal B. Johnson, *Black Wall Street: From Riot to Remembrance in Tulsa's Historic Greenwood District* (Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 1998); James S. Hirsch, *Riot and Remembrance: The Tulsa Race War and its Legacy* (Boston,: Houghton Mifflin, 2002); Chang, *The Color of the Land*; Chris M. Messer, Thomas E. Shriver, and Alison E. Adams, "The Destruction of Black Wall Street: Tulsa's 1921 Riot and the Eradication of Accumulated Wealth" *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 77/3 and 4 (May-Sep. 2018): 789-819; Jovan Scott Lewis, *Violent Utopia: Dispossession and Black Restoration in Tulsa* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022); for a comparative study, see: Hollie A. Teague, Bullets and Ballots: Destruction, Resistance, and Reaction in 1920s Texas and Oklahoma" *Great Plains Quarterly* 39/2 (Spring 2019): 159-177; for studies of the massacre's commemoration: Alfred L. Brophy, *Reconstructing the Dreamland: The Tulsa Riot of 1921 – Race, Reparations, and Reconciliation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Hannibal B. Johnson, "Tulsa, Then and Now: Reflections on the Legacy of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre" *Great Plains Quarterly* 40/3 (Summer 2020): 181-185; Karlos K. Hill, "Community-Engaged History: A Reflection on the 100th Anniversary of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre" *American Historical Review* 126/2 (June 2021): 670-684.

[11] For this transition, see: Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[12] For the institution of American chattel slavery in southeastern Indigenous cultures, see: Daniel F. Littlefield and Mary Ann Littlefield, "The Beams Family: Free Blacks in Indian Territory" *Journal of Negro History* 61/1 (1976):

LeFlore, a powerful Choctaw politician, built a massive planation in antebellum Mississippi on the bloody, scarred backs of hundreds of enslaved African Americans.[13] These families wielded significantly more power and influence than their peers, giving them access to a wider range of choices as the United States expanded westward. For example, LeFlore signed a removal treaty with the United States but used his influence to remain in Mississippi while the federal government pushed his people out. Many less affluent families could not avoid removal to Indian Territory, but their wealth helped them avoid the worst hardships of the Trail of Tears. The Civil War saw much of the gentry – now a class of people with a common interest in preserving chattel slavery but also in protecting the sovereignty of their own nations – ally and fight alongside the Confederacy.[14] Stand Watie, a Cherokee man whose family and friends died in a series of reprisals for signing a removal treaty that mirrored the one Greenwood LeFlore championed in the Choctaw Nation, was perhaps the most notable member of the Indigenous gentry to fight in the war, surrendering in 1865 as a Confederate brigadier general.[15] Slavery's

16-35; Daniel F. Littlefield and Lonnie E. Underhill, "Slave 'Revolt' in the Cherokee Nation, 1842" *American Indian Quarterly*, 3/2 (Summer 1977): 121-131; Theda Perdue, *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540-1866* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1979); Tiya Miles, *Ties That Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Fay A. Yarbrough, *Race and the Cherokee Nation: Sovereignty in the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Tiya Miles, *The House on Diamond Hill: A Cherokee Plantation Story* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Christina Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Barbara Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters: Slavery, Emancipation, and Citizenship in the Native American South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

[13] Donna Akers, "Greenwood LeFlore" In Donald L. Fixico, ed, *Treaties with American Indians: An Encyclopedia of Rights, Conflicts, and Sovereignty, Volume 3* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2008): 843-844.

[14] For general overviews of the American Civil War in Indian Territory, see: Annie Heloise Abel, *The Slaveholding Indians, Volumes 1-3* (Cleveland, OH: A.H. Clark, 1915-1925); Mary Jane Warde, *When the Wolf Came: The Civil War and the Indian Territory* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2013); Bradley R. Clampitt, ed, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Indian Territory* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015).

[15] For Stand Watie, see: Wilfred Knight, *Red Fox: Stand Watie and the Confederate Indian Nations during the Civil War Years in Indian Territory* (Glendale, CA: A.H. Clark Co., 1988); Edward Everett Dale, *Cherokee Cavaliers: Forty Years of Cherokee History as told in the Correspondence of the Ridge-Watie-Boudinot Family* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1939).

collapse after the Civil War forced these wealthy families to reinvent themselves, even as the Afro-Indigenous people they enslaved charted new paths.[16]

In the late nineteenth century, the gentry's growing wealth increasingly reflected a stratified Gilded Age, an era of unregulated capitalism and industrialization in the late nineteenth century United States. As in the US, a tiny minority gained control of most of the wealth in eastern Indian Territory, largely by hiring American and European laborers as sharecroppers, cowboys, and miners to transform the region's collectively held natural resources into capital.[17] In essence, the gentry made an economic deal that enriched them but destabilized the region's governments over the long run. Non-citizens could not legally reside in Indian Territory without a nineteenth century version of a work visa issued by the tribal government on whose land they resided on. Most tribal citizens were cut out of this economic exchange, but they still suffered the consequences of increasing American and European immigration after the United States. This lack of solidarity may seem surprising, but that surprise is itself a product of troubled American preconceptions about indigeneity and race that obscures the realities of a much more complicated situation.[18]

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[16] For Afro-Indigenous communities in post-Civil War Indian Territory, see: Gary Zellar, *African Creeks: Estelvste and the Creek Nation* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007); Kevin L. Mulroy, *The Seminole Freedmen: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007); Cecilia E. Naylor, *African Cherokees in Indian Territory: From Chattel to Citizens* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Kendra Taira Field, *Growing Up with the Country: Family, Race, and Nation after the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018); Alaina E. Roberts, *I've been here all the while: Black Freedom on Native Land* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021).

[17] The labor history of Indian Territory is limited but has been most thoroughly explored in relationship to the coal industry in the Choctaw Nation: I.C. Gunning, *When Coal Was King: Coal Mining Industry in the Choctaw Nation* ([McAlester?]: Eastern Oklahoma Historical Society, 1975); Glenna Matthews, "An Immigrant Community in Indian Territory" *Labor History* 23/3 (1982): 374-394; Michael J. Hightower, "Cattle, Coal, and Indian Land: A Tradition of Mining in Southeastern Oklahoma" *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 62/1 (March 1984): 4-25; Don F. Badinelli, "Struggle in the Choctaw Nation: The Coal Miner's Strike of 1894" *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 72/3 (September 1994): 292-311; Devon A. Mihesuah, *Choctaw Crime and Punishment, 1884-1907* (Noman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009).

[18] For example, see: Kim Tallbear, *Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

Though they claimed citizenship in the same nation, many upper class Indigenous people had little in common with their lower class peers, just as the contemporary elite in the United States had little in common with the factory workers and farmers they exploited.

In the immediate term, the gentry's concentration of wealth brought them enormous political power. In the Muscogee Nation, two men from the Perryman family – Mvskoke cattle ranchers whom Angie Debo once called members of an "aristocracy" – led their nation as Principal Chiefs, while the whole family shaped the development of Tulsa.[19] White Texan migrant William H. Murray – future speaker of the state constitutional convention, congressional representative, state governor, and US Presidential candidate – got his start working as Chickasaw Governor Douglas H. Johnston's lawyer and later married into the family.[20] The gentry's influence was particularly well known in Chickasaw, Cherokee, Mvskoke, and Choctaw communities, but wealthy Seminole, Kanza, and Potawatomi families (among others) also came to prominence in this era. These families regularly (and comfortably) straddled Indigenous and American cultures. For example, Tishomingo's Daughters – an elite "civic, social and cultural" club in the Chickasaw Nation's capital city – saw its Indigenous and White members both perform acts of service designed to stoke Chickasaw nationalism and recite contemporary American stories such as "A Coney Island Dilemma."[21] J.B. McAlester – the son of a well-connected Chickasaw woman and a White coal baron – both served as mayor of

[19] Angie Debo, *The Road to Disappearance: A History of the Creek Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1941), 285; John Bartlett Meserve, "The Perrymans" *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 16/2 (April 1937): 170; Angie Debo, *Tulsa: From Creek Town to Oil Capital* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1943), 19.
[20] For an authoritative biography of William H. Murray, see: Robert L. Dorman, *Alfalfa Bill: A Life in Politics* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2018).
[21] "The History of Tishomingo's Daughters 1903-1974" Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK; "Tishomingo Daughters Entertain," *Johnston County Democrat*, June 3, 1908.

McAlester and led the Pittsburg County Indian Association.[22] The Indigenous gentry's wealth and influence in their respective nations translated into political capital in the new state of Oklahoma, perhaps most notably with Johnston Murray's (William Murray's son and Douglas Johnston's namesake) ascension to the state governorship.

A minority – the subject of this chapter – within the gentry played an important part in shaping a mass transfer of Indigenous wealth into settler hands. From the 1890s through the late 1920s, Indigenous communities across the region weathered an enormous loss of land and life at the hands of their settler neighbors. Fraud abounded across Indian Territory, Oklahoma Territory, and what speaker of the Oklahoma constitutional convention William H. Murray called "Greater Oklahoma."[23] An incredibly diverse array of white-collar criminals used an even more varied set of fraudulent schemes to drain Indigenous communities of their wealth that included land, petroleum, natural gas, coal, water, timber, and livestock. Many poor Indigenous people participated in this criminal industry as informants, canvasing neighborhoods, and assembling information for grafters in exchange for payment.[24] A much smaller number – politically prominent, wealthy Indigenous men willing to orchestrate unscrupulous acts in the pursuit of further wealth – constructed fraudulent schemes and shaped federal Indian policy in ways that have been overlooked or perhaps more accurately, carefully ignored. The relationships those men built within the fraud industry – ties made on a shared interest in obtaining political and economic capital – shaped a mass transfer of Indigenous wealth into settler institutions.

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[22] "Mrs. Rebecca McAlester," folder 22, box 15, J.J. McAlester Collection, Western History Collections, Norman, OK; "Colorful Pioneer Events Recalled with Current Review Also at Indian Picnic" September 1925, Scrapbook c. 1926-1938, Outsize Box 1, Ohoyohoma Club Collection, Western History Collections, Norman, OK.
[23] Oklahoma Constitutional Convention, *Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the Proposed State of Oklahoma Held at Guthrie, Oklahoma, November 20, 1906-November 16, 1907* (Muskogee, OK: Muskogee Printing Company, 1907), 16.
[24] Angie Debo, *And Still the Waters Run: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), 106.

The historiography of this subject (like much of Oklahoma History) is underwhelming, but quite storied. In her pathbreaking 1940 work *And Still the Waters Run*, Oklahoma historian Angie Debo famously labeled this economic, political, and criminal event an "Orgy of Exploitation" after the Indian Rights Association's investigative 1924 report *Oklahoma's Poor Rich Indians: An Orgy of Graft and Exploitation of the Five Civilized Tribes – Legalized Robbery*.[25] Since Debo released her work to considerable backlash that ruined her career, the most prominent voices to write about this era have been Tanis C. Thorne's 2003 analysis of the Jackson Barnett scandal, Alexandra Harmon's 2010 exploration of Osage wealth in the context of the Osage Reign of Terror, Katherine Ellinghaus' 2017 study of how American conceptions of blood quantum influenced federal Indian policy, and most recently David Grann's popular account of the Osage Reign of Terror.[26] While all these works broadened the way historians understand this era, none addressed the gentry. Indigenous people engaging in fraud constituted a tiny minority even within the upper-class families in Indian Territory that they came from – regardless of class, most people were unwilling to defraud their fellow citizens – but they powerfully shaped this event in ways that have been significantly overlooked.

Before moving further, it is critical to distinguish between those who Indigenous people possessed the knowledge and inclination to navigate Gilded Age capitalism (which emphasized the accumulation of wealth over all else) and those who did not. The gentry fit firmly into the first category. Mamie Porter, daughter of Principal Chief of the Muscogee Nation Pleasant

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[25] Angie Debo, *And Still the Waters Run*, x; Zitkala-Ša, Charles H. Fabens, and Matthew K. Sniffen, *Oklahoma's Poor Rich Indians: An Orgy of Graft and Exploitation of the Five Civilized Tribes – Legalized Robbery* (Philadelphia, PA: Office of the Indian Rights Association, 1924).

[26] Tanis C. Thorne, *The World's Richest Indian: The Scandal over Jackson Barnett's Oil Fortune* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Alexandra Harmon, *Rich Indians: Native People and the Problem of Wealth in American History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Katherine Ellinghaus, *Blood Will Tell: Native Americans and Assimilation Policy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017); David Grann, *Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI* (New York: Doubleday, 2017)

Porter, reflected the gentry's "familiarity with American legal and economic culture" that helped them avoid losing their wealth to fraud.[27] The Porters built their wealth on the backs of enslaved Afro-Mvskoke people, then diversified that wealth after the Civil War.[28] Mamie Porter grew up far from her hometown of Muskogee in a boarding school at Nashville, Tennessee.[29] In 1904, she traveled to New York City to study music. Highly intelligent, gifted with a "magnificent soprano voice," and described by her non-Native peers as "tall and graceful with jet black hair and a complexion of a dark tint," Porter skillfully navigated the city's upper echelons as any elite White woman might have in her day.[30] She refused to be marginalized because of her tribal citizenship, instead speaking back with biting sarcasm. Clearly annoyed by a reporter's ambush outside of her apartment – or "brownstone tepee" as the writer later termed it – half a block from Central Park, Porter retorted "yes I'm an Indian and I suppose for that reason I'll have to submit to treatment at your hands, just the same as other Indians who have been swiped by the whites ever since Columbus came over here."[31] After answering the reporter's questions about her relationship with a White man, Porter reoriented the interview towards her goal of being "useful…to the Creek Nation [and to] devote my life to [bringing] the beauties of the Indian folk-songs before the American people."[32] Mamie Porter's forceful defense on the streets of Manhattan reflected not just her individual

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[27] Harmon, *Rich Indians*, 136.
[28] Ralph Goodwin, "Pleasant Porter, Tribal Statesman" (MA thesis: University of Oklahoma, 1953), 11, 36.
[29] Pleasant Porter to Mamie Porter, January [11?], 1896, 13-14, AMD 105, Pleasant Porter Papers, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.
[30] "Mainly about Women" *The Washington Post* (Washington D.C.), April 15, 1905; "Just About Women" *Trenton Times* (Trenton, NJ), April 21, 1905; Pleasant Porter to Mamie Porter, April 1, 1904, 198, AMD 105, Pleasant Porter Papers; Pleasant Porter to Mamie Porter, December 19, 1904, 230, AMD 105, Pleasant Porter Papers.
[31] Clarence B. Douglas, "Miss Mamie Porter in New York" *Muskogee Phoenix*, April 16, 1905; Pleasant Porter to Mamie Porter, March 14, 1905, 252, AMD 105, Pleasant Porter Papers.
[32] Clarence B. Douglas, "Miss Mamie Porter in New York" *Muskogee Phoenix*, April 16, 1905.

determination, but the societal position of the Indigenous upper class society from which she originated.

In contrast, most Indigenous people in Indian Territory were not prepared or not inclined to engage with Gilded Age capitalism. In eastern Indian Territory, many late nineteenth century Indigenous communities oriented themselves around kinship, the establishment and maintenance of extended familial ties through the expectation that others will reciprocate.[33] In other words, generosity towards kin was more important than acquiring capital. When members of these communities suddenly gained significant wealth, they still maintained that orientation. Jackson Barnett, a Mvskoke man who spent much of his childhood as refugee displaced and orphaned by the Civil War, migrated around the Muscogee Nation as an adult, often staying with friends and working as a laborer. While illiterate and reserved, he was also well-traveled, politically astute, and spoke several languages. In 1903, the Office of Indian Affairs created an allotment for Barnett near Drumright, Oklahoma, some seventy miles to the northwest of where the Mvskoke man lived in Henryetta. The allotment happened to be atop a massive oil deposit called the Cushing Field and when the OIA authorized a company to drill for oil about a decade later, Barnett suddenly found himself fabulously wealthy from the royalties. As a typical Mvskoke person, Jackson Barnett was quite generous with his wealth. Such donations eventually attracted thieves, conmen, and a particularly persistent White gold digger who wanted the Henryetta man's money for themselves. Their attempts to manipulate Barnett's generosity became a national scandal that stretched on for decades.

[33] Thorne, *The World's Richest Indian*, 17-35, 49-69.

In the Gilded Age United States, fraud – the practice of separating people from their wealth through deception – was commonplace, poorly regulated, and maybe even celebrated.[34] In particular, the American upper class perceived the widening stratification of wealth between the rich and the poor that characterized the Gilded Age as a consequence of the natural order, a reflection of an individual's character.[35] Much of the Indigenous gentry shared in that belief.[36] Neither group believed that fraud represented a significant societal problem but White settlers and the Indigenous gentry did differ in their perception of federal restrictions on the sale of Indigenous lands. The 1887 General Allotment Act (often termed the Dawes Act) specified that under most conditions the federal government would hold individual allotments in a trust for twenty-five years. These lands could not be sold until the removal of the federal trust on each allotment, often termed a restriction in the nomenclature of the day. Although they never united on how unilateral the removal of restrictions should be or to whom it should apply, the gentry understood the restrictions as the federal government's necessary but highly paternalistic and often misapplied effort to protect landowners who possessed less familiarity with capitalism. In contrast, settlers typically perceived those same restrictions as an unfair, artificial impediment on the fair market.

In practice, the removal of these federal restrictions facilitated an enormous amount of fraud and an even broader transfer of Indigenous land into settler hands.[37] Before the first sale of

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[34] For an authoritative history of fraud in the United States, see: Edward J. Balleisen, *Fraud: An American History from Barnum to Madoff* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).
[35] Edward J. Balleisen, "The 'Sucker List' and the Evolution of American Business Fraud" *Social Research: An International Quarterly* V85, N4 (Winter 2018): 713.
[36] Harmon, *Rich Indians*, 146-47.
[37] For allotment, see: Janet A. McDonnell, *The Dispossession of the American Indian, 1887-1934* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); Bonnie Lynn-Sherow, *Red Earth: Race and Agriculture in Oklahoma Territory* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004); Chang, *The Color of the Land*; Rose Stremlau, *Sustaining the Cherokee Family: Kinship and the Allotment of an Indigenous Nation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina

allotments in 1903, the US government held 15.8 million acres in trust on behalf of individual Choctaw, Chickasaw, Mvskoke, Cherokee, and Seminole citizens.[38] Over the next twenty years, the US government removed trust status from 13.7 million acres (or 87%), leaving just over 2 million (or 13%) acres in trust according to a 1923 accounting by the Office of Indian Affairs.[39] Indigenous landowners could remove restrictions in several ways. They could wait the full twenty-five years specified by the Dawes Act. They could also request to have their restrictions removed through the Department of the Interior. However, the US Congress removed the lion's share (90%) of restrictions from the 13.7 million acres. This federal legislation had little relationship to whether individual landowners wanted their restrictions removed; the US Congress did not give them the chance to make that decision. One OIA official estimated that nine out of ten landowners sold their lands after the removal of trust status. If that percentage is extrapolated to the 13.7 million acres, an abysmally low 1.4 million (or 9%) acres was still in Indigenous hands two decades later. Taking trust and non-trust land into account, by 1923 the citizens of the Five Tribes only possessed about 3.4 million acres (or 22%) of land base they possessed twenty years earlier. As the same OIA official phrased the situation, "a race of landlords…have been transformed into a race of tenants."[40]

Indigenous Fraud Operations and Operators

Several members of the gentry took advantage of this opportune breeding ground for fraud to craft ill-gotten fortunes for themselves. Robert L. Owen, a prominent Cherokee lawyer

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Press, 2014); Daniel Justice and Jean O'Brien, *Allotment Stories: Indigenous Land Relations under Settler Siege* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2021).

[38] Debo, *And Still the Waters Run*, 88-89; US House, Committee on Indian Affairs, Subcommittee. *Five Civilized Tribes in Oklahoma*. 68th Cong. 1st sess. HR 6900. March 22, 1924, 4.

[39] US House, Committee on Indian Affairs, Subcommittee. *Five Civilized Tribes in Oklahoma*. 68th Cong. 1st sess. HR 6900. March 22, 1924, 5.

[40] US House, Committee on Indian Affairs, Subcommittee. *Five Civilized Tribes in Oklahoma*. 68th Cong. 1st sess. HR 6900. March 22, 1924, 5.

based in Muskogee, was quite active in the grafting industry. Born into a family that built up an enormous amount of wealth through the railroad industry, Owen grew up in Virginia and graduated valedictorian from Washington and Lee University in 1877.[41] Although his mother was a Cherokee citizen, the Virginian did not step foot in the nation until adulthood. After emigrating to the Cherokee Nation in 1879, Robert L. Owen built himself into a powerful and respected entity with connections to the nation and ties to Indian Territory's bankers, ranchers, bar association, and the region's nascent branch of the Democratic Party. In the 1890s, Owen became well established as a banker and lawyer in Muskogee, a central crossroads that connected Indian Territory's many communities.

In 1898, the Dawes Commission ruled that Mississippi Choctaws whose ancestors escaped removal seventy years earlier could file for allotments in Indian Territory if they relocated.[42] Many Choctaw people in Mississippi practiced Catholicism and with the encouragement of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, they sought to claim their allotments near a Catholic property in Antlers. However, most Mississippi Choctaws did not have the means to transport themselves to the Choctaw Nation. Grafters saw an opportunity. For example, Hudson and Arnold – a law firm based in the Chickasaw Nation – signed contracts with Mississippi Choctaw families, offering to resettle and house them in exchange for a portion of their allotments.[43] The firm transported the families to Ardmore – a town well outside the Choctaw Nation – housed them in unlit,

[41] Grant Foreman, "Robert Latham Owen" c. 1947, folder 18, box 1, Robert L. Owen Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.
[42] Charles Roberts "The Second Choctaw Removal, 1903" in Samuel J. Wells, ed, *After Removal: the Choctaw in Mississippi* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1986): 94-107.
[43] "Mississippi Choctaws" *Daily Ardmoreite,* (Ardmore, IT), September 25, 1900.

derelict structures with no working plumbing or air circulation, and then promptly dissolved the firm.[44] Plans for a resettled Catholic Choctaw community quickly collapsed. In 1903, one Catholic official wrote that "the Indian Mission in Antlers is dead."[45] In the aftermath, the displaced Mississippi Choctaws scattered.[46] Many returned to their homeland, while others wandered.[47] In 1935, an OIA employee working western Oklahoma discovered a man slowly starving to death in a dugout.[48] This man – who identified himself as a Mississippi Choctaw from Antlers – lived all alone some two hundred miles northwest of that town; his only support came from his impoverished African American neighbors who had not been able to spare food for five days.

Robert L. Owen devised his own fraudulent transportation scheme. In 1900, he and his partner Charles S. Winton began offering Choctaw people living in Mississippi passage to the Choctaw Nation in exchange "for half of their property."[49] While such legal agreements clearly violated principles long established since the US Supreme Court's 1823 ruling in *Johnson v. McIntosh* that non-federal entities could not purchase Indigenous land held in trust by the federal government, private contacts that ignored that ruling generally seem to have been enforced as long as they went unchallenged in court. For example, Robert Sloat – an Absentee Shawnee man – willed his "rich bottom land" allotment to his lawyers in 1898 in exchange for successfully

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[44] Jake Earnest Williams, April 13, 1937, Indian Pioneer Papers, Western History Collections, Norman, OK; "Dissolution Notice" *Daily Ardmoreite*, September 4, 1901.
[45] Aug. Breck to W.H. Ketcham, May 4, 1903, 567, roll 32, Ketcham: 1901-1920, Series 1-1: BCIM Correspondence and Meeting Minutes, Record Group I: Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Records, Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI.
[46] Roberts "The Second Choctaw Removal, 1903," 103-107.
[47] John Holbrook Peterson, "The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians: Their Recent History and Current Social Relations" (PhD Dissertation: University of Georgia, 1970), 97.
[48] F. J. McKinley to Charles H. Berry, November 10, 1935, folder – Cheyenne and Arapahoe Agency, box 1 B-C, E4-Correspondence, Cheyenne and Arapahoe Agency, Southwest Branch, National Archives, Fort Worth, TX.
[49] Aug. Breck to Eugene Easton, January 23, 1903, 546-47, roll 32, Ketcham: 1901-1920, Series 1-1: BCIM Correspondence and Meeting Minutes, Record Group I: Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Records; *Winton et al v. Amos et al*, 255 US 373 (March 7, 1921): 380.

arguing his death sentence down to five years in the Kansas State Penitentiary.[50] Although Owen and Winton's claims were legally dubious, they doggedly pursued the compensation specified in the 700 or so contracts they signed with Mississippi Choctaw allottees. When Owen began representing the State of Oklahoma as a US Senator years later, he "pushed through legislation allowing the United States Court of Claims to review [the] case."[51] After decades of litigation, the US Supreme Court affirmed a $175,000 settlement (about 2.5 million in 2020 dollars) with the Virginian and his deceased partner's estate.[52]

Seminole Nation Governor John F. Brown used a different set of strategies to gather wealth through fraud.[53] Through his mercantile firm, Brown mixed legitimate trading and investments with predatory lending in plain sight. Between 1861 and 1865, the American Civil War deeply divided the Seminole Nation. Seminole people killed one another, while opposing Union and Confederate armies invaded and ravaged the landscape. In 1866, the United States forced the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Mvskoke, and Seminole nations to free enslaved Afro-Indigenous people and recognize them as citizens. That year, the Seminole Nation designated Wewoka – established as an Afro-Seminole town and named "barking waters" after a nearby waterfall before the war – the nation's post-war capital.[54] Afro-Indigenous people such as J. Coody Johnson – an Afro-Mvskoke translator and businessman who founded the Black Panther Oil Company

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[50] "Williams and Wolf Get the Sloat Claim" *Norman Transcript*, June 17, 1898.
[51] Kenny L. Brown, "A Progressive from Oklahoma: Senator Robert Latham Owen, Jr." *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 62/3 (September 1984): 244.
[52] *Winton et al v. Amos et al*, 255 US 373 (March 7, 1921): 396; Roberts, "The Second Choctaw Removal" 98.
[53] L. Susan Work's *The Seminole Nation of Oklahoma: A Legal History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010) notes subsequent Seminole litigation related to John F. Brown. While the research here is original, it would not have been possible without Work's prior scholarship.
[54] Mulroy, *The Seminole Freedmen*, 135; C. Guy Cutlip, "Wewoka – Barking Waters" folder 24, box 2, C. Guy Cutlip Collection, Western History Collections, Norman, OK.

and the Black Panther Hotel – remained in Wewoka, but the city's growing role as the epicenter of the Seminole Nation's government and commerce gradually overshadowed their former prominence.[55] From the time he took office in 1877, Brown worked to heal a people scarred by an extraordinarily destructive war. Over the course of his political career, he acquired a sterling reputation as a statesman and a ferocious defender of the Seminole treaty rights.[56] For much of the next forty years, he remained governor.

For much of his political career, John F. Brown ran the Wewoka Trading Company (WTC), a mercantile firm based in the Seminole Nation's capital city. Taking advantage of John Brown's influence among Seminole customers, the WTC gained a trading "monopoly [that] was absolute" throughout the turn of the century Seminole Nation.[57] Frequently, the company mixed legitimate and illegitimate business. On the legitimate side of things, Brown's company became an important source of specialized, manufactured goods.[58] The company also invested in the region's emerging industries, buying, processing, and selling hundreds of thousands of pounds of cotton and establishing some of the first drilling operations in what later became a nationally significant oil producing region.[59] Moreover, the WTC store gained a reputation as the most secure in the region. In 1895, bandits raided and broke into the facility but could not open the company safe.[60]

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[55] John R. Hargrave, "Johnson, J. Coody," *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, www.okhistory.org; E. K. Gaylord, "Few Landmarks of Seminole Tribe Still Stand" *Oklahoman*, December 5, 1926.
[56] John F. Brown to the *Catholic Columbian*, May 5, 1887, folder 6, box 1, John F. Brown Collection, Western History Collections, Norman, OK; John F. Brown to Henry Dawes, May 9, 1894, folder 9, box 1, John F. Brown Collection; "News Item of J.H. Brown and Micco Hulbutte" *Muskogee Phoenix*, July 26, 1894; "Wewoka Trading Company" *Wewoka Democrat* (Wewoka, OK) August 14, 1913.
[57] Virgil Berry, Experiences of a Pioneer Doctor in Indian Territory, c. 1939, folder 1, Box B-10, Dr. Virgil Berry Collection, Western History Collections, Norman, OK.
[58] C. Guy Cutlip, "Wewoka – Barking Waters" folder 24, box 2, C. Guy Cutlip Collection
[59] "Doing Good Cotton Business" *Stillwater Gazette* (Stillwater, OT) November 5, 1903; "News of the Oil Field" *Morning Examiner* (Bartlesville, OK), December 18, 1909.
[60] "Eufaula, I.T." *Talihina News* (Talihina, IT) August 1, 1895.

On the illegitimate side of things, Brown's company made much of its income through predatory lending. Since the WTC safe was such a secure location, the United States began sending annual annuity payments – money guaranteed from treaties, leases, and other agreements between individual Seminole citizens or the Seminole Nation and the US government – directly to the company's Wewoka facility. Throughout the year, the company issued scrip (referred to in Seminole as *chokasutka*) on credit to customers in anticipation of that annual distribution; when federal officials distributed payments through the Wewoka Trading Company, "it was not unusual for the [entire] sum…to be due to the company."[61] Since WTC clerks handled the actual distribution of funds, John Brown's employees could collect on the scrip debt each citizen incurred throughout the year; this arrangement allowed Brown to siphon federal funds into his company before distribution rather than attempting to collect from customers who failed to repay their debt afterward. In essence, John F. Brown used the Seminole public's trust in him and his connections to the US government through his elected office to take advantage of his constituents through a long running predatory lending operation.

The Wewoka Trading Company's relationship with the Seminole school system existed in a shadowy middle ground. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Seminole Nation operated eight day schools and two academies, Mekusukey and Emahaka. For much of this period, John F. Brown, A.J. Brown, and S.E. Brown controlled the Seminole Nation's governorship, treasury, and school superintendency respectively.[62] Though it is

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[61] Virgil Berry, Experiences of a Pioneer Doctor in Indian Territory, c. 1939, Folder 1, Box B-10, Dr. Virgil Berry Collection; C. Guy Cutlip, "Wewoka – Barking Waters" Folder 24, Box 2, C. Guy Cutlip Collection; Work, *The Seminole Nation of Oklahoma*, 97; Molly Yeager and Sissy Fenton, May 10, 1967, Doris Duke Collection, Western History Collections, Norman, OK.

[62] Joe C. Jackson, "The History of Education in Eastern Oklahoma from 1898 to 1915" (PhD Dissertation: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950), 214.

difficult to confirm whether he ever formalized the policy into law because most of the nation's documents were destroyed in a subsequent fire, in practice John F. Brown created a state sponsored monopoly by mandating that Seminole schools receive all of their supplies and pay their personnel through the WTC. The Seminole Nation's school system was big business.[63] In one instance on June 30, 1906, superintendent S.E. Brown cut four checks to the Wewoka Trading Company totaling $5,759.34 – about $168,000 in 2020 dollars – for various school related expenses.[64] Not fraud but certainly an enormous conflict of interest, the WTC's relationship with the Seminole school system reflected John F. Brown's own complicated ties to the nation.

In an even bolder scheme, John F. Brown stole the property rights to the Seminole Nation's capital city. Imagine if a US President convinced Congress to give them the property rights to Washington D.C., chopped the city apart, and then sold these bite sized properties back to private buyers while still maintaining the city as the US capital. This would guarantee the president an enormous profit. In anticipation of the federal government breaking apart their collectively held lands, the Seminole Nation legislature created the Wewoka Townsite Commission in 1897 to give Seminole citizens living in Wewoka ownership over their own homes and businesses within the city (until that time, the Seminole Nation owned the entire city).[65] The legislature gave Governor Brown's brother A.J. Brown – the nation's treasurer and secretary of the commission – one fourth interest (or 1,102 lots) in the townsite.[66] Over the

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[63] Jackson, "The History of Education in Eastern Oklahoma from 1898 to 1915," 235.
[64] S.E. Brown to Wewoka Trading Company, June 30, 1906, 302, SM2, Seminole National Records, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK; S.E. Brown to Wewoka Trading Company, June 30, 1906, 303, SM2, Seminole National Records; S.E. Brown to Wewoka Trading Company, June 30, 1906, 304, SM2, Seminole National Records; S.E. Brown to Wewoka Trading Company, June 30, 1906, 305, SM2, Seminole National Records.
[65] General Council of the Seminole Nation, *An Act to provide for the appointment of Townsite Commissioners and the location of a town and other purposes*, April 23, 1897, 73, Roll SM1, Seminole National Records.
[66] General Council, *An Act to provide for the appointment of Townsite Commissioners*, April 23, 1897, 77, Roll SM1, Seminole National Records.

following three years, the Wewoka Townsite Commission sold a suspiciously meager seven lots in a city bustling with commerce.[67] In 1900, Governor John F. Brown convinced the legislature to sell the remaining unsold lots – 3,127 in all – to him for an equally meager $12,000.[68] Despite concerns raised by both the Seminole government and the US Department of the Interior in the aftermath, the US Congress eventually substantiated the sale.[69] In the meantime, the Brown brothers quickly funneled the lots into a shell corporation, the Wewoka Realty and Trust Company. In 1902, that corporation contracted with an advertising firm to sell the lots to American settlers.[70] Newspaper advertisements across the twin territories described the city as a center of commerce with modern railroad transportation, an anticipated county seat, and the center of the Seminole Nation's politics and business; moreover, settlers could buy lots outright instead of having to select and homestead a claim for five years.[71] Predictably enough, thousands of settlers flocked to Wewoka; the Browns eventually made $500,000 from the townsite lots. After quietly defrauding his entire constituency, John F. Brown remained Governor and maintained his reputation from his mansion in Sasakwa, Oklahoma.[72]

John F. Brown's fraud, while considerable in its breadth and depth, was far from unique. As part of the lengthy allotment process across Indian Territory, federal officials authorized a series of townsite commissions to allow thousands upon thousands of settlers who made

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[67] *Seminole Nation v. United States*, Opinion of the Commission, April 22, 1952, Indian Claims Commission (Docket 53).
[68] General Council of the Seminole Nation, *Sale of Wewoka*, April 18, 1900, 83, Roll SM1, Seminole National Records.
[69] Frank L. Campbell to E.A. Hitchcock, March 4, 1904, 348-356, Roll DC72, Dawes Commission Records, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK; US Congress, *Act of March 3, 1905* (PL 58-212)
[70] "Wewoka A Big Success" *Weekly-Times Journal* (Oklahoma City, OK), November 28, 1902
[71] "Wewoka, I.T. Special Sale of Town Lots!" *Tulsa Democrat* (Tulsa, IT), October 31, 1902; "Wewoka Capital of the Seminole Nation" *Oklahoma State Capital* (Oklahoma City, OT), November 4, 1902.
[72] "Governor John F. Brown Dead" *Wewoka Capital-Democrat* (Wewoka, OK) October 23, 1919.

improvements on urban reservation communities but had no other claim to it – in essence, squatters – to purchase that land at half price.[73] As one historian noted, "the possibilities for graft were enormous" and quite widespread.[74] Charles Haskell – Oklahoma's first governor – was famously indicted while in office for his role in trafficking Muscogee Nation lands connected to the city of Muskogee. A judge threw out the case due to a statute of limitations, but not before federal officials working the case removed the initial jury on charges that "it was being unduly influenced by the defendants."[75] Closer to home, "a class of cold hearted land gobblers" began defrauding Seminole and Afro-Seminole people almost as soon as the federal government began allotting Seminole lands; in 1906, one commentator described the collective loss then occurring as "a burning shame in the sight of God."[76] That same year, federal officials seized control over Emahaka Academy, an ultra-modern school facility for Seminole girls constructed by the nation about a decade earlier at the cost of about $45,000 (about 1.36 million in 2020 dollars).[77] Walter Ferguson, a White federal employee assigned to run Emahaka secretly bought the land the campus sat on for a mere $1,900 (just over $53,000 in 2020 dollars) from a Mvskoke allottee (due to a survey error, the school was just over the border in the Muscogee Nation) and then attempted to sell that land back to the United States. While Ferguson was unsuccessful in selling the property, he was never prosecuted for this enormous conflict of interest, retained the buildings and land, and "emerged from the Emahaka affair a respected businessman in Wewoka."[78]

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[73] Kent Carter, "A Faithful Public Servant: J. George Wright and the Five Civilized Tribes" *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 81/1 (Spring 2003): 58-59.
[74] Carter, "A Faithful Public Servant," 58.
[75] "Haskell Charges Stated by Rush in Federal Court" *Vinita Daily Chieftain* (Vinita, OK), September 27, 1910; "Haskell Case Suddenly Terminates at M'Alister" *Vinita Daily Chieftain,* September 30, 1910.
[76] Violet P. Crain to the Secretary of the Interior, May 5, 1906, 649, Roll SM2, Seminole National Records.
[77] Michael Edward Welsh, "The Road to Assimilation: The Seminoles in Oklahoma, 1839-1936" (PhD Dissertation: University of New Mexico, 1983), 205-207.
[78] Welsh, "The Road to Assimilation," 207.

As John F. Brown defrauded the Seminole Nation, Edward Bryant "E.B." Johnson – an upper-class Chickasaw member of the Indigenous gentry – established his household on the border of the Chickasaw Nation and Oklahoma Territory. Johnson came from an influential family who made their wealth ranching in the Chickasaw Nation's western rangelands. Although he spent much of his life in the nation, by adulthood E.B. Johnson had traveled as far as Brooklyn's western tip and Florida's northeastern coast.[79] While their influence was largely centered in the nation – Governor Douglas H. Johnston was among the clan's staunchest allies from his office in Tishomingo – the family also partnered with powerful foreign entities such as the Kansas City Live Stock Commission, Governor of New York Grover Cleveland, and US President William McKinley.[80] In 1898, E.B. Johnson moved his family across the border to Norman, Oklahoma Territory; he quickly became influential in that city, lobbying the state legislature on behalf of the Norman Commercial Club to give more funding to the University of Oklahoma and even endorsing a US congressional candidate.[81] Over the following thirty years, the Norman-based rancher further diversified the family fortune, wheeling and dealing ranch lands while also investing in agriculture, timber, mining, banking, communications, and

[79] Neil R. Johnson, *The Chickasaw Rancher, Revised Edition* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2001), 116-20, 153-68.
[80] Douglas H. Johnston to Edward Bryant Johnson, August 12, 1906, folder 6, box 1, Edward Bryant Johnson Collection, Western History Collections, Norman, OK; Private Secretary, Governor of New York to Edward Bryant Johnson, August 15, 1884, folder 1, box 1, Edward Bryant Johnson Collection; The Kansas City Live Stock Commission Company to Edward B. Johnson, April 14, 1899, folder 1, box 1, Edward Bryant Johnson Collection; William McKinley to Montford Johnson, c. 1900, folder 1, box 1, Edward Bryant Johnson Collection.
[81] U.S. Hamilton to Edward Bryant Johnson, January 10, 1903, folder 1, box 1, Edward Bryant Johnson Collection, Western History Collections, Norman, OK; Reford Bond to Edward Bryant Johnson, June 24, 1906, folder 6, box 1, Edward Bryant Johnson Collection.

hospitality.[82] Collectively, the family's assets extended over roughly 60,000 acres across Oklahoma and the Texas Panhandle.[83]

As a part of diversifying his wealth, E.B. Johnson partnered with the Union Investment Company (UIC), an innocuously named grafting firm operating in eastern Indian Territory. In 1903, four White men – a local politician, a doctor, a real estate broker, and a trader – incorporated the company at South McAlester, an industrial mining hub in the central Choctaw Nation.[84] In essence, the UIC was an investment firm that operated entirely within the quasi-legal world of the grafting industry. In 1904, E.B. Johnson contracted with the firm and over the next two years routinely communicated with UIC representative A.E. Becker, "a prominent real estate man" in South McAlester.[85] Their correspondence blithely described schemes to defraud an enormous variety of Indigenous people. In every instance, they targeted classes of people who existed on the margins of American society: orphans, federal prisoners, Mvskoke villagers resisting allotment, Mississippi Choctaws resettling in the Choctaw Nation, and those deemed incompetent by a federal court. Johnson and Becker had several methods.[86] Sometimes, Becker attempted to con Indigenous landowners into signing illegal contracts outright. He canvased

[82] C.B. Campbell to Edward Bryant Johnson, December 8, 1902, folder 1, box 1, Edward Bryant Johnson Collection; Joseph P. Smith to Edward Bryant Johnson, December 13, 1902, folder 1, box 1, Edward Bryant Johnson Collection; William Cary Renfrow to William Miller Jenkins, May 31, 1901, folder 1, box 1, Edward Bryant Johnson Collection; P.C. Dings to Edward Bryant Johnson, December 20, 1905, folder 4, box 1, Edward Bryant Johnson Collection; A.E. Becker to Edward Bryant Johnson, April 18, 1904, Sketch of E.B. Johnson, folder 2, box 16, Edward Bryant Johnson Collection; F. [Harrington?] to Edward Bryant Johnson, March 12, 1903, folder 2, box 1; Johnson, *The Chickasaw Rancher*, 279-80.
[83] Johnson, *The Chickasaw Rancher*, 299.
[84] "South McAlester" *Stroud Star* (Stroud, OT), November 6, 1903; "To Win in the Fourth District" *Sapulpa Evening Light* (Sapulpa, OK), September 24, 1910; "Hard Drinker a Suicide" *Red Rock Opinion* (Red Rock, OK), February 17, 1911; "Dr. W.W. Tooker" *Indianola Herald* (Indianola, OK), April 13, 1911; "Bill Irvin Case Goes to Trial" *Hartshorne Sun* (Hartshorne, OK), November 22, 1917.
[85] "Hard Drinker a Suicide" *Red Rock Opinion*, February 17, 1911.
[86] A.E. Becker to Edward Bryant Johnson, July 28, 1904, folder 3, box 1, Edward Bryant Johnson Collection; A.E. Becker to Edward Bryant Johnson, September 4, 1904, folder 3, box 1, Edward Bryant Johnson Collection; A.E. Becker to Edward Bryant Johnson, September 29, 1904, folder 3, box 1, Edward Bryant Johnson Collection; A.E. Becker to Edward Bryant Johnson, May 19, 1904, folder 3, box 1, Edward Bryant Johnson Collection.

communities, then selected his targets.[87] In one letter to E.B.'s cousin and business confidante C.B. Johnson, he explained that he would "go and see [John] Baggett Saturday. I intend to drop in there as though I was not looking for him…then I can give him the friendship racket."[88] Johnson and Becker were particularly interested in using the "old friend" tactic to con Mississippi Choctaw allottees, whose recent arrival and lack of familiarity with Indian Territory made them especially vulnerable to deception.[89]

Edward Bryant Johnson wielded considerable influence through his work with the Dawes Commission, the entity designated by the US Congress to carry out allotment in eastern Indian Territory. Johnson probably found his way onto the commission through his longtime political alliance with Governor Douglas Johnston. Tams Bixby, head of the Dawes Commission and described by Johnson's biographer as a "warm friend[,]…urged" Johnson to allot Mississippi Choctaw migrants on his own ranch.[90] For Edward Bryant Johnson, the Mississippi Choctaws stranded in Ardmore by Hudson and Arnold were ideal prey – physically weakened, sick, desperate, isolated and still legally binding in their commitments – but the Chickasaw grafter did not exist in a vacuum. The grafting industry was highly competitive, with many different actors vying for Indigenous wealth. In 1902, the shadowy Mississippi Choctaw Association emerged in Ardmore and began recruiting nearby members of the diaspora to file allotment applications with the Dawes Commission. The MCA – led by a White doctor and connected financially to Ardmore National Bank – was highly secretive. Although the association openly advertised itself to Mississippi Choctaw people in Ardmore through the *Daily Ardmoreite*, the same newspaper

[87] [A.E. Becker] to C.B. Campbell, January 14, 1906, folder 5, box 1, Edward Bryant Johnson Collection.
[88] A.E. Becker to C.B. Campbell, January 14, 1906, folder 5, box 1, Edward Bryant Johnson Collection.
[89] A.E. Becker to Edward Bryant Johnson, April 18, 1904, folder 3, box 1, Edward Bryant Johnson Collection; A.E. Becker to Edward Bryant Johnson, May 19, 1904, folder 3, box 1, Edward Bryant Johnson Collection; P.C. Dings to Edward Bryant Johnson, December 20, 1905, folder 4, box 1, Edward Bryant Johnson Collection; Debo, *And Still the Waters Run*, 97-98.
[90] Johnson, *The Chickasaw Rancher*, 271.

reported that "the [organization's] secretary refused to give the absolute aims and objects of the association" after its closed meeting.[91] In 1903, the MCA sent some of its members – including some Kentuckians – to Muskogee to file allotment applications with the Dawes Commission.[92] More than likely, the association was a front not only to manipulate Mississippi Choctaw allottees but perhaps also to get White settlers declared to be Choctaws – eligible for allotments – by the Dawes Commission. In the abstract, Edward Bryant Johnson and the Mississippi Choctaw Association were in a race, a contest to see who could manipulate the potential allottees first.

The same Dawes Commission officials "offered E.B. the exclusive right" to obtain guardianship over Indigenous people incarcerated in federal institutions outside of Indian Territory.[93] A.E. Becker suggested to Edward Bryant Johnson that he should "allot [those prisoners] on your grass lands."[94] Under the Atoka Agreement in 1898, the federal government assumed exclusive criminal jurisdiction over eastern Indian Territory and – lacking a federal prison in the unorganized territory – began shipping Indigenous convicts to other parts of the United States.[95] In 1903, US officials sent Solomon Hotema – a Choctaw citizen convicted of murder – to a federal penitentiary in Atlanta, Georgia.[96] Although the actual letters have not survived, a correspondence log maintained by the prison administration shows that Becker contacted the Choctaw prisoner.[97] By allotting federal prisoners on his ranchlands, Edward

[91] "Mississippi Choctaws, Attention!" *Daily Ardmoreite*, May 13, 1902; "The Mississippi Choctaws" *Daily Ardmoreite,* September 23, 1902.
[92] "More Claims Filed" *Mustang Mail* (Mustang, OT), January 9, 1903.
[93] Johnson, *The Chickasaw Rancher*, 271; A.E. Becker to Edward Bryant Johnson, December 18, 1905, folder 4, box 1, Edward Bryant Johnson Collection.
[94] A.E. Becker to Edward Bryant Johnson, September 4, 1904, folder 3, box 1, Edward Bryant Johnson Collection.
[95] Clara Sue Kidwell, *The Choctaws in Oklahoma: From Tribe to Nation, 1855-1970* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 2007), 149-50.
[96] J.J. Clark to James Morrison, March 2, 1971, File No. 483 (Solomon Hotema), Inmate Case Files, 1902-1922, US Penitentiary, Atlanta, Office of the Superintendent of Prisons, Department of Justice, RG129: Records of the Bureau of Prisons, National Archives at Atlanta, GA.
[97] Letters Received, [1903?], File No. 483 (Solomon Hotema), Inmate Case Files, 1902-1922.

Bryant Johnson stopped others from homesteading or allotting on the land while maintaining control of the range by selecting a plot on his own land for allottees who lived far away. He was not the only person to use this technique. In the northwestern Cherokee Nation, Robert L. Owen used the same tactic – allotting Indigenous people who lived far away on his own lands – to protect his 10,000-acre ranch in the Little Caney River Valley from being broken apart into allotments and homesteads.[98] With his rangelands now protected by federal trusts, Johnson could raise and sell livestock uninterrupted while the allottees rotted in prison.

Edward Bryant Johnson's dealings with the Union Investment Company reflected an important reality about a notable criminal minority within the gentry. Johnson – along with Owen and Brown – considered grafting a smaller part of a broader business portfolio. These Indigenous men and their White peers made up a broader class of people who considered fraud morally acceptable, even if federal authorities declared such activities illegal. Often, they mixed legitimate and illegitimate business. When Edward Bryant Johnson acquired allotments through fraudulent exchanges, he seized the opportunity (one made time sensitive by either the original allottees or rival grafters in federal court) to transform his ill-gotten gains into respectable capital.[99] In doing so, he both expanded his fortune and protected it from prying eyes. This could involve hiring miners or lumbermen to dig out coal or chop down trees located on or under the allotment, leasing the plot to a tenant farmer, or stocking the pasture with cattle. By either selling raw resources such as timber and coal or the allotment's secondary (cattle to be auctioned and processed at a stockyard) or tertiary (a percentage of the tenant's income after selling her crop)

[98] Angie Debo, *And Still the Waters Run*, 99.
[99] For example, see E.B. Johnson's interactions with John Baggett: A.E. Becker to C.B. Campbell, January 11, 1906, folder 5, box 1, Edward Bryant Johnson Collection; US Indian Agent, Ardmore to Edward Bryant Johnson and C.B. Campbell, January 31, 1906, folder 5, box 1, Edward Bryant Johnson Collection.

products, E.B. Johnson could launder his money.[100] It was infinitely more difficult for the original owners to regain resources sold to another party, even if Johnson did so with questionable legal authority. Even when Johnson lost an individual battle in court, his diverse portfolio of criminal and legal enterprises kept money flowing into his accounts and into the pockets of his lawyers.

Robert L. Owen, John F. Brown, and Edward Bryant Johnson rarely fell under suspicion because those in power choose to selectively enforce the law rather than face the repercussions of crossing these men. So many powerful people were tied to the grafting industry that it became more convenient to simply silence someone making too much noise. M.L. Mott – the Muscogee Nation's brilliant leading attorney – clawed back stolen lands from White and Indigenous speculators almost as quickly as the latter looted them. His efforts led to the indictment of then-Oklahoma Governor Charles Haskell over that man's trafficking of Mvskoke lands at the bustling metropolis of Muskogee earlier in the decade.[101] Mott raised an enormous clamor, revealing fraudulent exchange after fraudulent exchange; in response, powerful figures driven by the grafting industry destroyed his career.[102] When Kate Banard –an influential White reformer heading Oklahoma's Department of Charities and Corrections – began investigating how White landowners acquired the allotments of Indigenous orphans under questionably legal circumstances, state legislators defunded her agency and removed her from office.[103] University

[100] J.E. Colbert to Edward Bryant Johnson, April 25, 1904, folder 3, box 1, Edward Bryant Johnson Collection; A.E. Becker to Edward Bryant Johnson, April 18, 1904, folder 3, box 1, Edward Bryant Johnson Collection; P.C. Dings to Edward Bryant Johnson, December 20, 1905, folder 4, box 1, Edward Bryant Johnson Collection.
[101] "Haskell Charges Stated by Rush in Federal Court" *Vinita Daily Chieftain* (Vinita, OK), September 27, 1910; John Downing Benedict, *Muskogee and Northeastern Oklahoma, Volume 1* (Chicago, IL: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1922), 166-168.
[102] Warren K. Moorehead, *The American Indian in the United States* (Andover, MA: Andover Press, 1914), 137; Debo, And Still the Waters Run, 250-252.
[103] For the reprisals that destroyed Banard's career, see: Connie Cronley, *A Life on Fire: Oklahoma's Kate Banard* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2021), 137-210.

of Oklahoma graduate Angie Debo – far and away the most brilliant historian ever produced by that institution – found her book contract with the university press blocked after influential White settlers learned of her efforts to publish a damning expose that might stain their legacies and place their property in jeopardy.[104] In 1947, Grant Foreman – a historian who authored a number of foundational works about Oklahoma and the Five Tribes – wrote in US Senator Robert L. Owen's obituary that he was "a shrewd observer of events and their significance, repeatedly warn[ing] the people, and particularly the Indians, that a change was imminent and [advising] them to prepare for it."[105] Foreman, an influential White historian of Indigenous communities in Indian Territory, would not have dared to criticize Owen. He and his contemporaries knew what happened to Angie Debo. Had he been brave enough to speak freely, perhaps he would have remarked that Owen understood how to exploit the moment he was in for his own gain.

Indigenous US Congressmen and Federal Indian Policy

Even more than the wealth they amassed through fraud, Indian Territory's Indigenous gentry had a lasting impact on Oklahoma's politics. Through both the 1905 Sequoyah Convention (a near successful attempt to craft an Indigenous state) and the state constitutional convention – which adopted the failed State of Sequoyah's constitution – the following year, the gentry and their allies shaped the foundations of the new state. For example, the state constitutional convention – made up of both White settlers and Indigenous people – adopted a version of the state constitution that included Native people as under the umbrella legal category of White.[106] In practice, this arrangement – unique among state constitutions in the United States – applied only to the wealthy Indigenous families that made up the gentry. Most Native people

[104] Patricia Laughlin, *Hidden Treasures of the American West: Muriel H. Wright, Angie Debo, and Alice Marriott* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005): 95-105.
[105] Grant Foreman, "Robert Latham Owen" c. 1947, folder 18, box 1, Robert L. Owen Collection.
[106] State of Oklahoma, *Constitution of the State of Oklahoma* (Washington D.C: GPO, 1908): 68.

still encountered some informal racial discrimination from White settlers, although even that varied considerably across the state. As of the 2020 election cycle, the State of Oklahoma has sent eight Indigenous men to the US Congress over the course of its history.[107] No other US state has had so much Indigenous congressional representation; the states next highest in representation – Kansas and New Mexico – fielded two Indigenous congressional officials each and three of those congresspeople have been elected since 2018.[108] Between 1915 and 1925, three out of Oklahoma's ten congressmen were tribal citizens. All three were wealthy members of the Indigenous gentry. By 1930, "about 100 Indians" were working in "state house" in Oklahoma City.[109] Oklahoma voters also elected two Indigenous men and several White men who married into the gentry as five of their governors.[110]

The Indigenous men who White Oklahomans sent to Washington D.C. in the early twentieth century – Robert L. Owen, Charles D. Carter, and William Wirt Hastings – came from the gentry. All were civil servants in their respective nations before seeking federal office. In fact, Owen was superintendent of the Cherokee National Male Seminary when Hastings graduated from that institution in 1889.[111] After statehood, each believed that federal protections on trust lands inhibited their own economic success. To an extent, each was comfortable seeing those protections removed even if that meant some of their fellow tribal citizens might lose their lands. The three also differed to an extent. Each man drew slightly different motivations for

[107] US Senator Robert L. Owen (Cherokee) and US Representatives Charles D. Carter (Chickasaw), William Wirt Hastings (Cherokee), William Stigler (Choctaw), Clem McSpadden (Cherokee), Brad Carson (Cherokee), Tom Cole (Chickasaw), Mark Wayne Mullin (Cherokee).
[108] In Kansas, US Representative/US Senator Charles Curtis (Kaw/Osage/Potawatomi) and US Representative Sharice Davids (Ho-Chunk); in New Mexico, US Representative Deb Haaland (Laguna Pueblo) and US Representative Yvette Herrell (Cherokee).
[109] Lee F. Harkins, "The Indians' Vote" *The American Indian* (Tulsa, OK), March 1930.
[110] For Indigenous governors: Johnston Murray and J. Kevin Stitt; for settlers married into the Indigenous gentry who became governors: Charles Haskell, Lee Cruce, and William H. Murray.
[111] "The Cherokees Banked on Decisions by Hastings" *Daily Oklahoman*, April 10, 1938.

seeking congressional office. Owen existed in his own class, both in terms of his elite eastern education and in his status as a charlatan and a thief well before becoming a US Senator. On the other end of the spectrum, Hastings held serious class biases but stood up for his Indigenous constituents while in office to an extent that his peers did not. Raised and educated in the Cherokee Nation and equipped with a law degree from Vanderbilt, he helped the nation and its citizens navigate the allotment era for the better part of twenty years, even serving as attorney general and later legal counsel. Unlike Carter and Owen, Hastings won his position as a US Representative by rallying Indigenous voters in his district rather than primarily courting a White constituency. W.W. Hastings' influence brought both a state university and a hospital for Indigenous people to the Cherokee Nation's capital city of Tahlequah; he was also instrumental in the preservation of Muskogee Agency records that are now located in the Oklahoma Historical Society.[112] Still, while Hastings is remembered more fondly in his community of origin – the Cherokee Nation – than Charles Carter or Robert Owen in their respective nations, the former man had more in common with the latter two men than not.

These three men reflected a self-selecting minority within the gentry who were willing to help White settlers acquire Indigenous property. In reviewing his long career as a US Senator, Robert L. Owen generally did not concern himself with federal Indian policy. In a 1937 letter to his biographer describing his accomplishments, he made no mention of Indigenous affairs.[113] When he ran for office the first time thirty years earlier, the opposite was true; Owen won political office on his campaign promise to remove

[112] Will Chavez, "Cherokee Historic Profile William W. Hastings: Supporter of Cherokee Nation and its people" *Cherokee Phoenix* (Tahlequah, OK), June 2008.
[113] Robert L. Owen to Edward E. Keso, May 31, 1937, folder 1, box 1, Edward E. Keso Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.

federal protections on Indigenous property.[114] In a March 14, 1907 speech to the public subsequently distributed across the state – a speech really intended to reach newly elected state legislators who (in a pre-Seventeenth Amendment world) would vote to send two individuals to Washington City – this was the first issue he mentioned. Owen stated (likely to considerable applause) that "the restrictions on the sale and lease of lands belonging to our citizens, whether of Indian blood or not, should be removed and the persons who are truly incompetent should be protected by the probate law."[115] He followed this with another, noting that "I believe it should be the duty of the Senators of the New State **to insist upon Congress immediately removing the restrictions**…and thus removing the Federal Officials who now dominate Indian Territory under instructions from Washington," a seemingly simple idea so important to his case that the printer boldened a portion of the phrase.[116] Robert L. Owen – a well educated lawyer with extensive experience litigating federal Indian policy – deliberately played into commonplace settler misconceptions that trust protections were monopolies propped up by a corrupt federal government, a common Gilded Age idea that White men in Oklahoma applied to steal Indigenous property for themselves.[117]

Those Indigenous men who either agreed with this sentiment (or perhaps were willing to look the other way as long as their own property was safe) saw significant opportunities open up at statehood. While it existed as an incorporated territory between 1890 and 1906, Oklahoma Territory was treated as one at-large congressional district and sent one non-voting delegate to the US Congress. Indian Territory – an unincorporated territory whose residents were not

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[114] Robert L. Owen, "An Address of Robert L. Owen to the Voters of the New State" March 14, 1907, folder 2, box 1, Robert L. Owen Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.
[115] Owen, "An Address of Robert L. Owen to the Voters of the New State" March 14, 1907.
[116] Owen, "An Address of Robert L. Owen to the Voters of the New State" March 14, 1907.
[117] Alexandra Harmon, "American Indians and Land Monopolies in the Gilded Age" *Journal of American History* 90/1 (June 2003): 106-33.

American citizens – did not have any congressional representation at all. The Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Muscogee, and Seminole Nations within Indian Territory were independent of the United States, so this was not necessarily a problem. In fact, Robert L. Owen's attempt to organize the Democratic Party in the territory and lobby for US Congressional representation in 1890 drew condemnation from the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation C.J. Harris, who argued that such a delegate would weaken Cherokee sovereignty.[118] When Oklahoma became a state in 1907, two seats in the US Senate and five seats in the US House of Representatives suddenly became available. However, not many members of the Indigenous gentry were willing to play ball. Though they perceived allotment as inevitable, most were unwilling to carry out the kind of policies that White settler voters – now the majority electorate – wanted to use to transfer Indigenous lands into White hands.[119] That impasse winnowed a vast field of influential and experienced Indigenous political candidates who might have represented the new state. One wonders what Alexander Posey – the influential Mvskoke editor of the *Eufaula Indian Journal* and secretary of the Sequoyah Constitutional Convention – might have accomplished as a US congressman.[120]

Moreover, any defense of trust protections constituted political suicide for even the most powerful congressmen. US Representative Charles Carter, a Chickasaw man elected alongside Owen in 1907, maintained throughout his career that only the most vulnerable Indigenous people were entitled to federal protections.[121] After ten terms,

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[118] "Letter of C.J. Harris to the Cherokee People" *Cherokee Advocate* (Tahlequah, CN), September 14, 1892.
[119] Harmon, *Rich Indians*, 136.
[120] For biographies of Posey, see: Daniel F. Littlefield, *Alex Posey: Creek Poet, Journalist, and Humorist* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992); Jeffrey M. Widener, "From Bard to Speculator: Alexander Lawrence Posey and the Muscogee Nation, 1902-08" *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 90/1 (Spring 2012): 4-27.
[121] For example, see: US Senate. *Report of the Select Committee to Investigate Matters Connected with Affairs in the Indian Territory, Volume 2*. 59th Cong, 2nd sess. Report 5013 (November 22, 1906): 1175.

Carter tried to convince voters that a tiny minority of Indigenous people needed those protections; his constituency promptly booted him out of office.[122] The US Representative's swift removal might seem harsh considering his many years of service, but it was both normal and necessary to protect prying eyes from investigating and reclaiming stolen property; to White settler politicians who acquired Indigenous property, any question of their legitimate title to the land was an existential threat.

Over his twenty years as a US Representative from Oklahoma, Carter – an upper-class Chickasaw citizen – helped dismantle federal institutions that protected Indigenous landowners. Unlike Robert L. Owen, Carter's consistent opposition to federal oversight was less about greed than his own beliefs that US interference in the business of individual landowners was an evil that outweighed the threat of graft. His convictions came from his life experiences. While relatively successful and certainly part of the Indigenous gentry, Charles Carter was not born into exorbitant wealth. He came into the world in the western Choctaw Nation but grew to adulthood in the Chickasaw Nation's capital city of Tishomingo.[123] His father was a civil servant, the superintendent of the Chickasaw Nation's school system. Charles Carter – a homegrown product of that system – did not attend a prestigious eastern university but instead obtained his degree from a small college located just over the border in Sherman, Texas. He worked for a living. At various times in his life, Carter found employment as a cowboy, a store clerk, an insurance salesman, and a banker. That work brought him to Ardmore, the community that the future congressman would come to be most associated with. Following in his father's footsteps, he entered the Chickasaw Nation's civil service, first as an auditor and then superintendent of schools. In 1897, Chickasaw citizens elected him to the nation's legislature.

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[122] Debo, *And Still the Waters Run*, 358-59.
[123] Luther Harrison, "Necrology: Charles David Carter" *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 7/3 (September 1929): 343-44.

Long before he assumed his position as a US Representative, Carter resented federal regulations that governed how he and his peers in the gentry could use their allotments. Although he was not born into the gentry, the Ardmoreite's financial success and growing political influence meant that it made economic sense for him to enter Indigenous high society. In doing so, he adopted the gentry's values. In 1906, he testified at a US congressional hearing that "restrictions [should] removed by some competent authority when it can be shown that [the landowner] is competent to attend to his own affairs."[124] Charles D. Carter's classism – a projection of his own problems as an upper-class person onto all Indigenous landowners in Indian Territory instead of considering how the release of restrictions would disastrously affect most Indigenous landowners in Indian Territory – was on full display. In the hearing, he blamed the federal government for creating an opportunity for fraud rather than the actual perpetrators. Like his peers in the American upper class, Carter believed that restrictions unfairly inhibited the free market. He speculated that "I think a great majority of [the allotments] will pass out of the hands of the original allottee and will become taxable, and some provision should be made to allow those lands to be sold at as early a date as possible in justice to both the Indian and the white man."[125] Carter believed that the federal government's priorities should be to create a fairer market; he saw federal restrictions as an unfair and unnecessary impediment on capitalism. If he had simply remained a businessman, these beliefs – relatively common among upper class Americans – might have been inconsequential, but Carter did not remain a businessman.

In 1907, the people of Oklahoma chose Charles Carter as one of their representatives to the US Congress. In Washington D.C., Carter carved out a niche for himself within the House of Representatives as an authority on Indigenous affairs. As

[124] US Senate. *Report of the Select Committee*, 1175.
[125] US Senate. *Report of the Select Committee*, 1177.

with any congressional official, his colleagues deferred to him on matters pertaining to Oklahoma. Carter was also a westerner and could speak to western affairs; in fact, he reminded his colleagues that he spent several years as a cowboy on the Diamond Z Ranch in the Chickasaw Nation. Most notably, Charles Carter's indigeneity lent him enormous authority on Indigenous affairs from his colleagues. In Carter's first term, one newspaper reported the impression the "a clean-cut, square-shouldered, handsome young chap over on the Democratic side" made on the US House.[126] In perhaps his first speech in that body, Carter "told the House many things about the Indian problem the House even after years of study, didn't know…He had lived among the Indians all his life and he knew. They gave him a liberal round of applause and began to look for him for Indian information."[127] That influence translated into a career-long appointment on the US House Committee on Indian Affairs. Between 1917 and 1919, he chaired that committee, a position that reflected his prominence and perceived expertise. In fact, the congressman's biographer noted in 1929 that "no more important chairmanship has ever been held by a citizen of the state than that of the Committee on Indian Affairs."[128]

Charles Carter helped his constituents legalize what otherwise would have been a fraudulent transfer of Indigenous wealth into settler institutions. Even before Carter went to Washington, many settler communities in the region relied heavily on a brisk trade with Indigenous people. Norman – more often remembered for its significance as a university town – began principally as a point of exchange between White settlers and neighboring Shawnee, Potawatomi, Chickasaw, and Kickapoo communities. In the first decade of the town's existence,

[126] "Beauty Prize" *McAlester News-Capital*, c. 1909, folder 19, box 5, Frederick Barde Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.
[127] "Beauty Prize" *McAlester News-Capital*, c. 1909, folder 19, box 5, Frederick Barde Collection.
[128] Harrison, "Necrology: Charles David Carter," 344.

"the Norman Indian trade" was a central part of the city's economy.[129] From 1907 onward, Carter's desire to loosen or outright remove federal restrictions on the sales of Indigenous lands – an understanding of the world through his own classism – brought him popular support among the new state's majority White, male citizenry. Over the course of his career, the Ardmoreite removed "restrictions on more than half of the [federally protected] allotted lands of the Five Civilized Tribes."[130] This removal directly enriched his White, male settler constituents and they knew it. In 1908, Muskogee's residents celebrated the removal of one set of federal restrictions with a "resurgence of buying and prosperity."[131] In the spring of 1912, Charles Carter introduced a bill that threatened to remove restrictions on an even wider population of Indigenous landowners. The bill passed both chambers in the late summer before going to the desk of President William Howard Taft. On the advice of Interior officials, Taft vetoed the legislation because he believed that law would validate fraudulent land transactions.[132]

As a service to his constituents, the congressman secured loans borrowed from "individual Indian restricted funds" stored in financial institutions by the Office of Indian Affairs for his constituents.[133] Exactly when the practice of predominantly White American settlers privately borrowing funds from Indigenous accounts controlled by the OIA began is unclear but that it was taking place at all is unsettling. In 1923, Carter attempted to help the owners of the *Daily Ardmoreite* borrow $10,000 (about $150,000 in

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[129] "Local News" *Norman Transcript* (Norman, OT) March 15, 1890; "Additional Local" *The People's Voice* (Norman, OT) May 26, 1899.
[130] "Death Claims Charles D. Carter" *Oklahoma City Times*, April 9, 1929.
[131] Grant Foreman, *Muskogee: The Biography of an Oklahoma Town* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1943), 140.
[132] US President William Howard Taft. *Veto Message Relating to the Inherited Estates in the Five Civilized Tribes in Oklahoma*. Document No. 899, 62nd Cong. 2nd sess. August 6, 1912, 1-3.
[133] Charles Burke to Charles Carter, June 16, 1923, File – Indian, CN 043A, Charles Carter Congressional Administrative Archives, Chickasaw Council House Museum, Tishomingo, OK.

2020) from one of these accounts through the OIA office at Muskogee.[134] In drawing from these funds, the newspapermen used legitimate means to borrow Indigenous funds supposedly safeguarded by the OIA. The assistant superintendent was unable to grant the loan but was also unsure why the OIA was no longer lending funds (which would indicate that this was a normal practice before the change in policy).[135] As it turned out, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs decided to permanently end the practice of lending out funds from these accounts to parties other than their owners.[136] Despite this change in policy, Carter further lobbied the Interior Department to invest "funds belonging to the Osage and Five Civilized Tribes" (who would likely have had little say in the matter) into "state, county, and municipal bonds."[137] In response to a request from the Exchange National Bank of Ardmore, he attempted to have federal officials lower the existing 3.5% interest rate on Indigenous saving accounts stored in that institution by the Office of Indian Affairs.[138]

Over the course of Charles D. Carter's career, the nascent oil industry grew into a behemoth that dominated the new state's economy. By far the most significant oil production in Carter's district happened just west of his adopted home city, Ardmore. White settlers began drilling for petroleum or crude oil in Oklahoma just as demand for this raw material rose dramatically in the first two decades of the twentieth century with the creation and popularization of the internal combustion engine.[139] After commercial drilling began in the Healdton Field in

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[134] Charles D. Carter to Clark Wasson, May 24, 1923, File – Indian, CN 043A, Charles Carter Congressional Administrative Archives.
[135] Clark Wasson to Charles D. Carter, May 26, 1923, File – Indian, CN 043A, Charles Carter Congressional Administrative Archives.
[136] Charles Burke to Charles Carter, June 16, 1923, File – Indian, CN 043A, Charles Carter Congressional Administrative Archives.
[137] Charles Carter to Robert Work and Charles Burke, August 12, 1924, File – Indian, CN 043A, Congressional Administrative Archives.
[138] Fred D. Carr to Charles D. Carter, January 21, 1927, File – Indian, CN 043A, Charles Carter Congressional Administrative Archives.
[139] Kenny A. Franks, *The Oklahoma Petroleum Industry* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 23-25.

1913, oil workers across what later became known as the Greater Healdton-Hewitt Field often extracted more petroleum than they had the capacity to safely store, instead pouring the liquid into poorly constructed wooden or earthen containers.[140] In a number of instances, a stray spark or a lightning strike caused the oil to ignite into flames that consumed much of the surrounding area.[141] Still, the money from the oil sales kept the field booming. Despite the chaos and danger, petroleum extraction "had a tremendous impact on the county's development."[142]

White settlers demanded that Charles Carter protect the wealth they acquired by extracting oil from Indigenous lands. Much of the Greater Healdton-Hewitt Field – situated in the northwestern Chickasaw Nation – was still held in trust by the federal government. To acquire oil located underneath a Chickasaw allotment, oil companies signed a lease with the allottee through the Office of Indian Affairs. Once approved, the company could drill on the allotment and the allottee collected a percentage of the profits made from that operation as royalties. In 1915, the legislature empowered the state government to tax the oil revenue on allotments held in trust, including Chickasaw allotments in the Greater Healdton-Hewitt Field. In 1922, the US Supreme Court ruled in *Gillespie v. Oklahoma* that the law was unconstitutional, alarming many White settlers who saw taxation from oil revenue as an important means to fund public works. On a broad scale, the clamor that erupted over the *Gillespie* ruling reflected the beliefs of White settlers that Indigenous wealth belonged in White hands.[143] Commentators in

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[140] Kenny A. Franks, *Ragtown: A History of the Greater Healdton-Hewitt Oil Field* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Heritage Association, 1986), 41, 68-71.
[141] Elizabeth E. Freeman, "Ragtown: Wirt, Oklahoma, and the Healdton Boom" *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 87/1 (Spring 2009): 40-46.
[142] Freeman, "Ragtown" 35.
[143] Mark Boxell, "From Native Sovereignty to an Oilman's State: Land, Race, and Petroleum in Indian Territory and Oklahoma" *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 20 (2021): 217.

regional papers such as the *Daily Ardmoreite* loudly requested legislation that would restore the state's ability to tax sales of oil drawn from trust lands since "a large part of the revenue of the state is derived from the revenue on oil production…on Indian lands" and "the Indian of the oil areas is entirely able to pay his way as he goes and in many cases…[has] more money with which to provide for taxes than his white neighbor."[144] Charles Carter made similar demands than ten years earlier for different reasons, arguing in a congressional hearing that most Indigenous people in Oklahoma "ought to be more competent [in managing their affairs] because he has had better educational facilities and he is better educated" than White settlers.[145] Governor J.B.A. Robertson immediately asked Carter to introduce a rider on the annual Indian Appropriation Bill to serve as a *Gillespie* fix, which the US Representative did about a month later.[146]

William Bliss Pine – an obscure White businessman from Okmulgee who became a US Senator – epitomized the enormous power petroleum wrought from Indigenous lands could bring. Born in Illinois and introduced to the oil industry through his time working in the Southeast Kansas oilfields in the 1890s, Pine learned how to use geology – a science which most of the petroleum industry did not understand at the time – to find oil.[147] In 1909, he relocated to Okmulgee, Oklahoma and over the next twenty years became "one of the wealthiest oil men" in

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[144] R.D. Elkins, "Gillespie Tax Case" *Daily Ardmoreite*, February 12, 1922; "Amend the Bill" *Daily Ardmoreite*, February 12, 1922.
[145] US Congress, House, Committee on Indian Affairs. *Removal of Restrictions on Indian Lands in Oklahoma*. 60th Cong, 1st sess. H.R. 15641. February 25, 1908, 48.
[146] J.B.A. Robertson to Charles D. Carter, January 31, 1922, File – Indian, CN 043A, Charles Carter Congressional Administrative Archives; US House. *To regulate the leasing of Indian lands in Oklahoma*. H.R. 10668 67th Cong. 2nd sess. March 1, 1922.
[147] Maynard J. Hanson, "Senator William B. Pine and His Times" (PhD Dissertation: Oklahoma State University, 1983), 6, 10; see also, Stephen Jones, *Once Before: The Political and Senatorial Careers of Oklahoma's First Two Republican United States Senators: John W. Harreld and W.B. Pine* (Enid, OK: The Dougherty Press, Inc., 1986).

the state.[148] Okmulgee is in the heart of the oil-rich Muscogee Nation and Pine made much of his wealth by leasing and then drilling for oil on Mvskoke allotments across the region. He was also a cutthroat businessman willing to deny his employees worker's compensation and extort his natural gas customers by turning their heat off until they paid higher rates.[149] After longtime US Senator Robert L. Owen decided to retire in 1924, Pine – who had little political experience – threw himself into the race for the seat. Though a completely unfamiliar figure to the public, William Bliss Pine won on the argument that his business career made him a model citizen. The Ku Klux Klan – an extraordinarily powerful White supremacist organization with whom Pine shared an uncomfortable, arm's length relationship – lent its weight to the oilman because his opponent in the race was anti-Klan candidate and former Governor John "Jack" Walton.[150] As a US Senator, Pine remained almost completely unknown to his constituents. In 1927, Rex Harlow – business manager of the Oklahoma political magazine *Harlow's Weekly* – described him as "not a man who seeks the spotlight; the plaudits of the mass have little appeal to him. He goes on his own way quietly, influenced by few persons, directed by his own judgements and decisions…seldom has a public statement of his appeared in the newspapers."[151] Even though this sentence reads as a criticism in the abstract, Harlow was actually praising the US Senator for

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[148] Rex Harlow. *Successful Oklahomans: A Compilation of Biographical Sketches* (Oklahoma City, OK: Harlow Publishing Company, 1927), 56.
[149] Hanson, "Senator William B. Pine and His Times," 16-19.
[150] "The Ku Klux Klan and the Senatorship" *Harlow's Weekly*, September 13, 1924; for the Klan's influence in Oklahoma politics, see: Charles C. Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965); Sheldon Neuringer, "Governor Walton's War on the Ku Klux Klan: An Episode in Oklahoma History, 1923 to 1924." *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 45/2 (September 1967): 153-179; Carter Blue Clark, "A History of the Ku Klux Klan in Oklahoma" (Master's Thesis: University of Oklahoma, 1976); David C. Boles, "Effect of the Ku Klux Klan on the Oklahoma Gubernatorial Election of 1926" *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 55/4 (December 1977): 424-432; Janel A. Mattingly, "Mrs. Oliver O. (Mamie) Hammonds: The 'She-Svengali' of Oklahoma" *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 77/2 (June 1999): 196-207; Michael M. Jessup, "Consorting with Blood and Violence: The Decline of the Oklahoma Ku Klux Klan" *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 78/3 (September 2000): 296-315; Suzanne H. Schrems, "The Ultimate Patriots: Oklahoma Women of the Ku Klux Klan" *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 79/2 (June 2001): 182-99; Brad L. Duren, "'Klanspiracy' or Despotism? The Rise and Fall of Governor Jack Walton, Featuring W.D. McBee" *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 80/4 (December 2002): 468-485.
[151] Harlow, *Successful Oklahomans*, 57.

his supposed independence from his apparently grubby constituents. In other words, the reputation Pine enjoyed due to his enormous economic success in the petroleum industry – success made possible by the US Congress releasing restrictions on Mvskoke lands – won him political office.

Some White settlers were willing to commit violent crimes to obtain Indigenous oil wealth. In McCurtain County, a White businessman sought to steal a five-year-old Choctaw girl's birthright. In 1921, Ledcie Stechi lived with her elderly grandmother in dire poverty near the mountainous village of Smithville.[152] As the Greater Healdton-Hewitt field continued to boom, the Office of Indian Affairs leased a Carter County allotment (almost 200 miles away) Stechi inherited from her deceased mother to an oil company. The orphan's account began to fill with money, but since she was a minor, federal officials assigned Stechi a legal guardian to manage the funds. William Jordan Whiteman – a McCurtain County businessman – removed this guardian and had himself assigned to Ledcie Stechi through a "combination of force, persuasion, and promises of reward."[153] Between 1921 and 1923, he visited Stechi once but constantly badgered the OIA for $25,000 as payment to take care of her.[154] When the federal officials refused to comply, Whiteman threatened to sell the girl's extremely valuable Carter County allotment as blackmail. That tactic worked. To stop the sale, OIA officials agreed to send the guardian monthly payments; once he gained access to the girl's funds, Whiteman pocketed almost 40% of every payment.[155] Amazingly, he became even more neglectful of Stechi's essential needs. After the seven year old began to seriously decline from a combination of

[152] US House, Committee on Indian Affairs, Subcommittee. *Five Civilized Tribes in Oklahoma*. 68th Cong. 1st sess. HR 6900. March 22, 1924, 17-18.
[153] US House, *Five Civilized Tribes in Oklahoma*, 17.
[154] US House, *Five Civilized Tribes in Oklahoma*, 60-61.
[155] US House, *Five Civilized Tribes in Oklahoma*, 18, 69.

malnutrition and malaria in mid-1923, Whiteman sent the girl and her grandmother to a doctor in Paris, Texas.[156] A concerned OIA official intercepted them on the way back at Idabel and briefly enrolled Stechi at a neighboring federal boarding school, at which point Whiteman swiftly reclaimed his charge and spirited her away. In August, Ledcie Stechi died from chronic malnutrition.

In February 1924, disturbing accusations of widespread probate fraud – what some called "an orgy of graft and exploitation" – shook the state.[157] In 1923, three non-governmental organizations partnered together to conduct a five-week watchdog investigation in eastern Oklahoma.[158] Three individuals (one from each organization) quietly conducted their inquiry that fall. The investigators – most notably Yankton Dakota intellectual Zitkála-Šá (Gertrude Bonnin) – explored a predatory pattern of White settlers seizing relationship Indigenous estates through county courts in eastern Oklahoma.[159] A brilliant renaissance woman who captivated audiences for decades with her considerable intellect and creativity, Zitkála-Šá powerfully reframed complex debates, statistical data, and dissonant experiences into easily accessible stories.[160] Her indigeneity lent her an enormous degree of credibility with the American public on Indigenous affairs. The sensational report she and her two non-Native colleagues published in the new year – *Oklahoma's Poor Rich Indians* – shocked the world. Detailing "conditions…unbelievable in a civilized country" through a series of morbid examples they argued were representative of greater problems, they identified a

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[156] "Wealth Searched for This 'Poor Little Rich Girl,' Who Inherited Oil Fortune, *Oklahoman*, July 1, 1923.
[157] Bonnin, Fabens, and Sniffen, *Oklahoma's Poor Rich Indians*, 1.
[158] Bonnin, Fabens, and Sniffen, *Oklahoma's Poor Rich Indians*, 3.
[159] For a biography of Zitkála-Šá, see: Tadeusz Lewandowski, *Red Bird, Red Power: The Life and Legacy of Zitkala-Ša* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016).
[160] For example, see: Gertrude Bonnin, *American Indian Stories* (Washington D.C: Hayworth Publishing, 1921).

widespread pattern of White settlers using county courts in eastern Oklahoma to steal Indigenous property.[161] The Society of Oklahoma Indians – a newly formed statewide coalition of Indigenous leaders – soon met in Tulsa and endorsed *Oklahoma's Poor Rich Indians*, stating in a resolution that "many Indians in this state have been defrauded and robbed of their property."[162] These real world horror stories seized the attention of the American public. The *Muskogee Times Democrat* published installments of the report as headline news for over a week.[163] Matthew K. Sniffen – Secretary of the Indian Rights Association and one of the report's non-Native authors – launched his organization's newsletter in the wake of the report; the first issue followed up on the investigation.[164] National newspapers such as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Los Angeles Times* even covered the initial report.[165]

As one Indigenous lawyer warned in an ominous letter to Charles Carter, *Oklahoma's Poor Rich Indians* signaled "the death knell to your public career."[166] The criminal neglect of Ledcie Stechi – a prominent story within the broader report – particularly concerned the US Representative because the crime happened in his district.[167] Moreover, the Ardmoreite's largely White constituency viewed the widely distributed report as an insult. Prior to public relations disaster they suffered during the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl, many Oklahomans regarded their state as an up-and-coming place with the potential to equal any in the union. In

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[161] Bonnin, Fabens, and Sniffen, *Oklahoma's Poor Rich Indians*, 3.
[162] Society of Oklahoma Indians, Resolution, February 26, 1924, File – Indian, CN 043A, Charles Carter Congressional Administrative Archives.
[163] "Court System Robs Indians, Charge" *Muskogee Times Democrat*, February 6, 1924; "Carter Shoves Robbery of Indians Upon 'Cheap Skate' Federal Lawyers" *Muskogee Times Democrat*, February 15, 1924.
[164] M.K. Sniffen, [Joint Report], *Indian Truth*, February 1924.
[165] "Charge Open Robbery of Indian Tribes" *New York Times*, February 8, 1924; "Relief for Indians Proposed by Burke" *Washington Post*, February 9, 1924; "Protection of Indian Tribes' Estates Urged" *Los Angeles Times*, February 9, 1924.
[166] Aug. A. Breuninger to Charles Carter, February 20, 1924, File – Indian, CN 043A, Charles Carter Congressional Administrative Archives.
[167] US House, Committee on Indian Affairs, Subcommittee. *Five Civilized Tribes in Oklahoma*. 68th Cong. 1st sess. HR 6900. March 28, 1924, 52.

1927, the *Oklahoman* began publishing an immensely popular series of comic strips that began with Spanish conquistador Francisco Coronado's sixteenth century expedition into the Southern Great Plains and explored the region's history through the lens of "an awakening of an abundant state pride" grounded in a "pioneer past."[168] The report left a stain on that vision of the future (which of course obscured a long history of settlers dispossessing Indigenous people). White settlers across Carter's district to protect their good name.

Charles Carter, alarmed at the potential damage these charges could do to the state's reputation along with his own career, leapt into action. Within days of the report's publication, he notified Governor Martin Trapp, organized the Oklahoma congressional delegation, and introduced a joint resolution in the US House that called for a formal congressional investigation into the legitimacy of *Oklahoma's Poor Rich Indians*.[169] This may have been the most significant moment of Charles Carter's career as a US Representative. Carter also began a long campaign of publicly discrediting the report. In an interview with the *Muskogee Times Democrat* on February 15, Charles D. Carter stated "I don't believe these specific irregularities are indicative of any general condition…This sensational report…greatly exaggerates…[and] contains some very grave misstatements."[170] Carter maintained this posture as he and his colleagues carried out their investigation. From the beginning, he meant to clear Oklahoma's name rather than seriously considering the disturbing charges leveled by the report.[171]

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[168] L.P. Thompson, *The Daily Oklahoman's Outline of Oklahoma History* [Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Publishing Company, 1929], 1-2.
[169] M.K. Sniffen, [Joint Report], *Indian Truth*, February 1924.
[170] "Carter Shoves Robbery of Indians Upon 'Cheap Skate' Federal Lawyers" *Muskogee Times Democrat*, February 15, 1924.
[171] Charles Carter to Joseph C. Stone, February 23, 1924, File – Indian, CN 043A, Charles Carter Congressional Administrative Archives.

Over the next year, the Ardmoreite worked alongside his colleagues on the Committee on Indian Affairs to discredit the report. The congressmen used familiar tactics to quietly strangle and then bury the investigation. First, the committee manipulated the conditions of the hearings. They chose where to meet, what witnesses to call to the meeting, what topics to discuss, what questions to ask, how to ask those questions in ways that supported their goals, and how to dictate the threat of perjury and contempt to limit what their witnesses could and could not say. Second, the committee muddled the credibility of the report. They openly dismissed federal statistics and introduced their own sets of facts, shifted blame for probate fraud onto federal officials, characterized investigative journalism as "heresay," and claimed that only absolute firsthand experience was a legitimate source of evidence.[172]

The most significant way the committee manipulated their investigation's outcome was by imposing an arbitrary limitation on its scope. *Oklahoma's Poor Rich Indians* identified a clear fifteen-year pattern of county courts and settlers committing probate fraud that began in 1908. The Committee on Indian Affairs rejected that interpretation. Homer Snyder, a manufacturer from upstate New York then serving as chair of the committee, declared that "we do not want any long stories or legends about Indian lore…[or cases from] 5 or 10 years ago."[173] Sidney Roach, a banker and lawyer from Missouri further specified that the committee would not examine cases from "the misty ages of the past."[174] William Wirt Hastings – a prominent citizen of the Cherokee Nation and Carter's only Indigenous colleague in the US House for the entirety of his career – called ten year old cases "ancient history."[175] This seemingly innocuous and

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[172] Subcommittee. *Investigation of the Administration of Indian Affairs in the State of Oklahoma*, 11.
[173] US House, Committee on Indian Affairs, Subcommittee. *Investigation of the Administration of Indian Affairs in the State of Oklahoma*. 68th Cong. 1st sess. November 11, 1924 to December 12, 1924. 1.
[174] Subcommittee. *Investigation of the Administration of Indian Affairs in the State of Oklahoma*, 4.
[175] US House, Committee on Indian Affairs, Subcommittee. *Five Civilized Tribes in Oklahoma*. 68th Cong. 1st sess. HR 6900, March 22 and 28, 1924, 38.

largely unofficial requirement removed any remnants of a serious investigation. Most of the cases cited in the report were not recent enough to meet the standard. Matthew Sniffen – the only one of the report's three authors to testify – was clearly unaware of this requirement before he met with the committee. When Sidney Roach asked the White witness to limit his testimony to those cases from the "past year," the secretary balked. He replied, "You do not want anything like a background…following the act of 1908?"[176] Roach – clearly annoyed – ground down on his witness: "We are not dealing now in generalities. We want you to select some specific instance where [graft] is being done now and detail present conditions to the committee."[177] For Sniffen, the hearing went downhill from there. He had nothing immediate to cite.

During the hearings, Charles Carter and W.W. Hastings wielded their authority on Indigenous (and therefore Oklahoma) affairs to great effect. In one instance, the two congressmen discovered that "many objections the Oklahoma delegation has against the bill were entirely lost sight of" at a hearing they were unable to attend.[178] At their next meeting, W.W. Hastings reminded his colleagues that "we appreciate that the members…do not live in Oklahoma, and, of course, cannot be as familiar with conditions there as we who have lived there all our lives."[179] A central part of his argument that the report's charges were unfounded was that "it is a matter of common knowledge that the members of the Five Civilized Tribes actively participate in all matters in Oklahoma."[180] This statement reflected Hastings' classism; while privileged members of the Five Tribes were certainly influential, he glazed over the turmoil the release of restrictions caused in most Indigenous communities in eastern Oklahoma. Just as

[176] Subcommittee. *Investigation of the Administration of Indian Affairs in the State of Oklahoma*, 3.
[177] Subcommittee. *Investigation of the Administration of Indian Affairs in the State of Oklahoma*, 3.
[178] Subcommittee. *Five Civilized Tribes in Oklahoma*, 37.
[179] Subcommittee. *Five Civilized Tribes in Oklahoma*, 37.
[180] US House. *Indian Affairs in Oklahoma*. 68th Cong. 2nd sess. Report No. 1527. February 19, 1925, 24.

importantly, the committee never called on Zitkála-Šá – whom Carter referred to as "a high-class lady of Indian blood" in passing – to speak publicly.[181] It is not unreasonable to assume that Carter and Hastings made a conscious choice to exclude her as well as any Indigenous leaders, landowners, and community advocates who might have challenged the influence the two men wielded as the only Indigenous people in the room.

In February 1925, the US House Committee on Indian Affairs publicly concluded its investigation. Just a few days shy of a year elapsed between the release of *Oklahoma's Poor Rich Indians* and the committee's own report to the US Congress. The congressmen reminded their supporters and constituents that "sensational charges which were made…upon the integrity of the courts and the people of the State of Oklahoma."[182] While they heard many witnesses between November 1924 and January 1925, Charles D. Carter and his allies called these people – mostly judges and attorneys – to help the committee disprove the report's accusations. They ambushed and assassinated the character of their only substantial witness, Matthew K. Sniffen. The committee rephased this concerted attack as a mundane exchange, noting that "after a lengthy examination of the witness we were unable to secure from him any definite proof."[183] Instead, Carter's fraudulent inquiry succeeded in dismissing the charges laid out in February 1924 as "unfounded and untruthful."[184]

The controversy that arose out of this moment eventually led to reforms at the federal level. Well before the investigation, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Charles H. Burke was concerned. Much of the research his staff at Muskogee prepared became a part of *Oklahoma's*

[181] Committee on Indian Affairs. *Administration of Indian Affairs in the State of Oklahoma*, 4.
[182] US House. *Indian Affairs in Oklahoma*. 3.
[183] US House. *Indian Affairs in Oklahoma*. 4.
[184] US House. *Indian Affairs in Oklahoma*. 18.

Poor Rich Indians.[185] Over the course of the 1920s, Burke reversed many of the policies of his predecessors.[186] Simultaneously, private organizations and actors like John Collier and Zitkála-Šá continued to lobby for change; alongside the OIA, their activism prompted US President Calvin Coolidge to order a national investigation into Indigenous affairs.[187] In 1928, Coolidge's successor Herbert Hoover released the results, a report that reflected the destructive impact of allotment on Indigenous societies across the United States. The Hoover administration did not actually implement changes recommended in the Meriam Report. Upon entering the White House in 1933, that task fell to Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his newly selected Commissioner of Indian Affairs, John Collier. Roosevelt and Collier worked with their allies in the US Congress to pass the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) the following year. The IRA repudiated a half century of allotment policy, stopped allotments from falling out of trust, supported Indigenous cultural and religious practices, authorized a land buyback program, and offered Native communities far more control over their own affairs. The same legislation also tied tribal government administration created through the act closer to the Office of Indian Affairs, reinforcing a colonial relationship between the United States and Indigenous communities. Still, the Indian Reorganization Act marked a new day in federal Indian policy.

Federal reforms did not change the devastating losses that many Indigenous people in Oklahoma suffered. By the time the US House Committee on Indian Affairs concluded its investigation in 1925, White settlers had already exhausted the supply of

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[185] Jon S. Blackman, *Oklahoma's Indian New Deal* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), 34.
[186] Ellinghaus, *Blood Will Tell*, 57.
[187] Lewandowski, *Red Bird, Red Power*, 171; Blackman, *Oklahoma's Indian New Deal*, 38-39.

Indigenous lands in eastern Oklahoma. Most of the Five Tribes' holdings were already lost and by the time federal reforms came, they were too late. Only about ten percent of Indigenous people in the state organized their governments under the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act, a modified version of the IRA passed in 1936 after the state's congressional delegation (including William Wirt Hastings) exempted Indigenous communities in Oklahoma from much of the Indian Reorganization Act.[188] The prospect of the federal government restoring or acquiring new land for Indigenous communities never grew past infancy.[189] Between 1934 and 1946, the US Congress authorized funds that bought seven tribal governments in Oklahoma some 35,000 acres in total.[190] By far the largest beneficiary was the Cherokee Nation – which reclaimed 21,000 acres – but Choctaw, Chickasaw, Eastern Shawnee, Quapaw, and Seneca communities regained smaller amounts of land too. Considering that the Five Tribes alone lost roughly 12,400,000 acres through allotment, that infinitesimal investment was painfully inadequate.[191] Moreover, the United States government seized some 76,000 acres of trust land between 1934 and 1975 for federal projects in Oklahoma, erasing the meager gains made through the nascent buyback program.[192]

Upper class Indigenous people played important, largely unacknowledged roles in shaping the epidemic of fraud that raged across Oklahoma in the early twentieth century. They made a much greater impact than their tiny numbers let on. Their reputation within surrounding communities – non-Native and Native alike – allowed them to circumvent race and even declare themselves White in the state constitution, a legal circumstance that was unique across the

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[188] Blackman, *Oklahoma's Indian New Deal*, 10, 75-77.
[189] Blackman, *Oklahoma's Indian New Deal*, 146.
[190] Theodore W. Taylor, *Report on Purchase of Indian Land and Acres of Indian Land in Trust, 1934-1975* (Washington D.C: Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1976), 44-45, 70.
[191] US House, Committee on Indian Affairs, Subcommittee. *Five Civilized Tribes in Oklahoma*. 68th Cong. 1st sess. HR 6900. March 22, 1924, 4.
[192] Taylor, *Report on Purchase of Indian Land and Acres of Indian Land in Trust*, 86, 88.

United States. This relationship to the rest of Oklahoma's citizenry was why Lotta Charley paid $5 in municipal court after publicly whipping a White woman, why Edward Bryant Johnson could live comfortably in a sundown town, and why Charles D. Carter won ten terms in the US Congress from a largely White constituency. Their relationships – really the respect with which they were viewed – gave them enormous power and influence in the new state.

Chapter III: After the Land Rush

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Oklahoma Territory, September 22, 1891.[1] Thomas Wildcat Alford readied his horse. The clock was about to strike noon. An endless line of people, some with wagons or horses and some on foot, stood alongside him, waiting. In front of this largely White crowd lay Indigenous lands the United States offered as homesteads for US citizens. The smell of feces, sweat, and red dirt rolled through the crowd, many of whom had been camping nearby. Perhaps wrinkling their noses, US soldiers held them back until one raised his gun to the sky and fired a shot. The crowd surged forward over the imaginary line. They began pounding wooden stakes into the ground to claim the land. Alford made the run too and filed (and later sold) two claims.[2] The federal government required a homesteader to reside on a claim for five years before that same person legally owned the land, but the practice of selling claims was extremely common in chaos of the land run.[3] Alford's actions were significant for another reason; as a White Turkey Shawnee, he was manipulating the end product of allotment in the region to his advantage.[4] The region's Indigenous communities surrendered to the federal government's allotment policy and broke apart their lands under severe duress; their reservations – forcibly redistributed to White

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[1] R. Blake Norton (Curator, Citizen Potawatomi Cultural Heritage Center) and Juaquin Hamilton (Historical Researcher, Sac and Fox Nation of Oklahoma) graciously read drafts of this chapter.
[2] Thomas Wildcat Alford, *Civilization and the Story of the Absentee Shawnees* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1936), 170-71.
[3] Berlin B. Chapman, *Federal Management and Disposition of the Lands of the Oklahoma Territory, 1866-1907* (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 255.
[4] Alford's extraordinary story has been analyzed in great detail elsewhere: Jacqueline Fear-Segal, *White Man's Club: Schools, Race, and the Struggle of Indian Acculturation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 136-156; Rebecca A. Kyes, "Thomas Wildcat Alford" *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 95/2 (Summer 2017): 154-181.

homesteaders in the second land run – became two new counties in southeastern Oklahoma Territory. For those communities, a more difficult existence followed. White settlers in the two new counties treated Indigenous people as a racial underclass, created county governments that discriminated against and deliberately overtaxed Indigenous property, and wielded legal and illegal violence to intimidate, extort, drive out, and even murder Alford's friends and peers.

Thomas Wildcat Alford's anecdote about Second Land Run reflected his people's repeated encounters with removal, stories that have often been ignored in favor of more familiar narratives about Indigenous peoples from the Southeast. In eastern Indian Territory Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Mvskoke, and Seminole communities removed to the region in the 1830s built vast European-style civil bureaucracies. Although American and European citizens often interfered in their affairs, these peoples maintained their independence, much like Mexico or Haiti in the same period. In the early twentieth century, US officials curtailed (but never erased) that independence by suppressing each nation's government, allotting their land, and reassigning much of the remnant to White settlers. In western Indian Territory, Comanche, Kiowa, Plains Apache, and Southern Cheyenne villages retained military control over the region until the Red River War (1874-75). Within a generation, federal officials broke treaties recognizing Indigenous title to the region, assigned an allotment to each tribal citizen, and then opened most of the landscape to White settlers. Thomas Wildcat Alford's peers – Sac and Fox, Potawatomi, Shawnee, Kickapoo, and Iowa communities in central Indian Territory – grappled with removal far more often and for much longer than either Southern Plains or Southeastern Indigenous communities.[5] Displaced from their homelands in the Great Lakes and Ohio Country regions between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, most of these Algonquian and Siouan

[5] For a general study of the repeated removal of these peoples, see: John P. Bowes, *Land Too Good for Indians: Northern Indian Removal* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016).

language speaking peoples moved (or often were forcibly removed by US troops or White settlers) multiple times. All spent generations elsewhere before their arrival in central Indian Territory. For example, many communities resettled in Kansas – a space the US government initially set aside as part of Indian Territory before doubling back on that promise – and lived there for several generations before White settlers pushed them south into central Indian Territory.[6] Under protest from Sac and Fox, Potawatomi, Shawnee, and Iowa leaders, federal officials forced these communities to allot their reservations in preparation for the Second Land Run.[7] While it is hard to say whether other Indigenous people staked homestead claims alongside Thomas Wildcat Alford on September 22, 1891, subsequent struggles over taxation, town building, and landownership show that surrounding Native communities drew on generations of experience with removal to navigate the consequences of the Second Land Run.

Moses Keokuk and Taxation in Lincoln County

On the day Alford made the run, most of the Sac and Fox and Iowa reservations became County A, Oklahoma Territory. While Sauk, Mesquaki, and Iowa people were US citizens after taking allotments, White men made up the vast majority of the eligible voting population in the new county.[8] One of these men was D.W. Ulam. He and his family came to Oklahoma Territory

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[6] For removal from Kansas to Indian Territory between the 1850s and the 1880s, see: Anne Heloise Abel, "Indian Reservations in Kansas and the Extinguishment of their Title" *Collection of the Kansas Historical Society* 8 (1904): 72-109; H. Craig Miner and William E. Unrau, *The End of Indian Kansas: A Study of Cultural Revolution, 1854-1871* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1978); William E. Unrau and H. Craig Miner, *Tribal Dispossession and the Ottawa Indian University Fraud* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985); Joseph Murphy, *Potawatomi of the West: Origins of the Citizen Band*, Edited by Patricia Sulcer Barrett (Shawnee, OK: Citizen Band Potawatomi Tribe, 1988); Joseph B. Herring, *The Enduring Indians of Kansas: A Century and a Half of Acculturation* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1990); Ronald D. Parks, *The Darkest Period: the Kanza Indians and their Last Homeland, 1846-1873* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014).

[7] For a detailed analysis of this process, see: William T. Hagan, *Taking Indian Lands: The Cherokee (Jerome) Commission, 1889-1893* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003).

[8] T.J. Morgan to S.L. Patrick, March 18, 1892, 4491, SFSA25, Sac and Fox and Shawnee Agency Records, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.

on the day of the Second Land Run.[9] The Ulams – originally from Iowa –resettled in Kansas and then lived under officials appointed by the territorial governor to maintain order in County A.[10] At the time, county governments operated by drawing revenue from taxing real property (real estate) and personal property (everything else). Since almost all of the county was made up of homesteads (which were in a federal trust for five years) and allotments (which were in a federal trust for twenty-five years), territorial officials struggled to fund the government.[11] In fact, the lack of tax revenue threatened to shutter the nascent county government's operations.

For D.W. Ulam – voted treasurer in November 1892 as part of the renamed Lincoln County's first popularly elected government – the obvious (and generally popular) solution was to take from the neighboring Sauk, Mesquaki, and Iowa communities.[12] Unlike the Indigenous gentry in eastern Indian Territory, Native people living in Lincoln County were not White (at least not in the view of White settlers like D.W. Ulam) and therefore inferior and undeserving. These racist attitudes profoundly influenced how White settlers collected taxes in the new county. In a March 1892 memorandum, Commissioner of Indian Affairs T.J. Morgan noted that because Indigenous people who took allotments were US citizens, they had to pay personal property taxes.[13] As part of his role as treasurer, Ulam was responsible for appraising the value of real and personal property so that the county government could tax its citizens fairly. He made a conscious choice to deliberately overestimate the value of Indigenous personal property in Lincoln County.[14] When those Indigenous property owners did not (or more likely could not)

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[9] "Botkin-Ulam" *The Chandler News* (Chandler, OT), May 21, 1903: "P.L. Ulam Dead" *The Chandler Tribune* (Chandler, OK), March 4, 1915; "Clara Bell Botkin, 78, Early-Day Publisher at Chandler, Is Dead" *Sooner State Press* (Norman, OK), January 8, 1955.
[10] Hobert D. Ragland, "Some Firsts in Lincoln County" *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 29/4 (Winter 1951-52): 425-26.
[11] Helen B. Herring, "A History of Lincoln County" (Master's Thesis: University of Oklahoma, 1943), 15-16, 21.
[12] Ragland, "Some Firsts in Lincoln County" 425.
[13] T.J. Morgan to S.L. Patrick, March 18, 1892, 490-491, SFSA25.
[14] D.M. Browning to Moses Keokuk, January 24, 1895, 540, SFSA25.

pay, the treasurer sent out US Marshals to seize their personal property and bring it back to the county's facilities at the county seat, Chandler.[15] In the words of Commissioner of Indian Affairs D.M. Browning, Indigenous people found themselves "robbed [of their property] by the authorities of the Territory."[16] Browning acknowledged that Lincoln County blatantly "extort[ed] ponies from the ignorant Indians," auctioned those animals at Chandler (likely to White settlers at a much reduced price), and then collected the revenue.[17] With that money, Ulam solved the county's debt crisis, funded new personnel and infrastructure, and paid the US Marshals; he (and his fellow elected officials in the county government) brought prosperity for his White constituents in Lincoln County, Oklahoma Territory by incentivizing a cycle of race-based extortion. He was so popular in his role that his peers reelected him for a second term.[18]

Moses Keokuk – one of the people targeted by the county treasurer – lived most of his life in the shadow of removal. When Keokuk was just a boy, his father – a prominent Sauk leader – had two choices: fight American expansion like his contemporary Black Hawk or move westward; the father chose to relocate his community from their homeland in Illinois to Iowa Territory.[19] Several decades later, their village moved again from Iowa Territory to a reserve in Indian Territory. After his father died in Indian Territory, Keokuk replaced him as one of the most powerful figures in Sauk and Mesquaki communities in the region. In 1854, the federal government redesignated a portion of Indian Territory – including the land surrounding Keokuk's reservation – as Kansas Territory. Especially after the conclusion of the American

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[15] D.M. Browning to Edward L. Thomas, April 19, 1894, 523, SFSA25; D.M. Browning to Moses Keokuk, January 24, 1895, 540, SFSA25; for a study of how US Marshals policed race in the twin territories, see: Jonathan Obert, "Inlaws, Outlaws, and State Formation in Nineteenth-Century Oklahoma" *Social Science History* 45 (2021): 439-67.
[16] D.M. Browning to Moses Keokuk, January 24, 1895, 539, SFSA25.
[17] D.M. Browning to Moses Keokuk, January 24, 1895, 542, SFSA25.
[18] "Just a Little Timely History" *Chandler Publicist* (Chandler, OK), July 19, 1907.
[19] Thomas J. Lappas, "'A Perfect Apollo:' Keokuk and Sac Leadership during the Removal Era" In *The Boundaries Between Us: Natives and Newcomers along the Frontiers of the Old Northwest Territory, 1750-1850*, edited by Daniel P. Barr (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2006), 231.

Civil War a little more than a decade later, White settlers flooded into the territory and agitated for the opening of Indigenous reserves in Kansas. Writing some forty years after the fact, eminent historian Anne Abel noted that "in the later '60's, the anti-Indian feeling in Kansas was exceedingly bitter."[20] White settlers schemed to steal Indigenous lands. In 1868, a group of White settlers purposefully got the middle aged Sauk leader drunk, convinced him to sign another removal treaty, and then claimed that the treaty was legitimate.[21] Keokuk attempted to go to Washington City to stop the treaty from taking effect but a local OIA official had him detained at Lawrence. Although the treaty passed and Sauk and Mesquaki people were forced to move again to central Indian Territory, Keokuk did successfully sue the agent in civil court for $1000 (about $20,000 in 2020 dollars) in damages incurred from his wrongful detention. In Indian Territory, Keokuk settled at the Sac and Fox Agency, the OIA's administrative hub for the broader Sac and Fox Reservation and an important Indigenous community in its own right. In 1876, he adopted the name Moses after converting to Baptist Christianity.[22] Despite repeated removal from one reserve to another, Moses Keokuk accrued significant capital.[23] By the 1890s, he lived in "a "one-story frame home" with a shingled roof, a porch, and glass windows, all surrounded by a combination of small trees, greenery, and a white fence.[24] He also built a "large barn well stocked with horses, cattle, and hogs."[25] Already well established as a trader, Moses Keokuk formally registered with the Office of Indian Affairs in 1891 and erected a large trading

[20] Abel, "Indian Reservations in Kansas," 92.
[21] Charles R. Green, *Early Days in Kansas: In Keokuks Time on the Kansas Reservation* (Olathe, KS: Self-Published, 1913), 27.
[22] R. Morton House, "'The Only Way' Church and the Sac & Fox Indians" *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 43/4 (March 1966): 444.
[23] Green, *Early Days in Kansas*, 56.
[24] House, "'The Only Way' Church," 459, 466.
[25] House, "'The Only Way' Church," 466.

post just north of the Sac and Fox Agency.[26] Business was very good. Keokuk employed three men just to run the trading post.[27]

In 1893, Moses Keokuk got in D.W. Ulam's way. To an elected official eager to win votes from his fellow White men, the elderly Sauk merchant and politician was an obvious choice to rob. Ulam demanded $200 (about $5800 in 2020 dollars) in personal property taxes from Moses Keokuk, largely due to the latter man's vast holdings as a trader.[28] Since his trading post was on federal land, Keokuk argued that the county treasurer had no authority to tax his trading inventory or any other personal property. In response, Ulam sent out the county sheriff with a warrant to seize the trader's substantial holdings, which the Sauk leader swiftly blocked with a temporary restraining order and a subsequent legal battle in county, district, and territorial supreme courts.[29] To Moses Keokuk's considerable frustration, Office of Indian Affairs agents in Washington D.C. supported the Sauk leader's claims that Lincoln County's campaign of harassment was blatantly illegal but did not intervene.[30] In 1894, the Supreme Court of the Territory at Guthrie ruled in *Keokuk v. Ulam* that county officials could tax Indigenous personal property (though not Indigenous real property).[31] Although he lost his case, Moses Keokuk reclaimed his seized trading goods – $3700 worth of merchandise ($116,500 in 2020 dollars) – and his legal fight brought unwanted attention to Lincoln County.[32]

A robust federal intervention might have pushed the case in a different direction. Further south in Pottawatomie County, the county assessor continued to harass Indigenous people until

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[26] Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Samuel L. Patrick, May 11, 1891, 843, file – Moses Keokuk, SFSA59, Sac and Fox and Shawnee Agency Records, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.
[27] House, "'The Only Way' Church," 462.
[28] "More Decisions" *Weekly Oklahoma State Capital* (Guthrie, OT), September 15, 1894.
[29] D.M. Browning to E.L. Thomas, February 8, 1895, 546, SFSA25; C.R. Brooks to E. L. Thomas, February 22, 1895, 547, SFSA25.
[30] D.H. Browning to E.L. Thomas, March 1, 1896, 856 SFSA59.
[31] "More Decisions" *Weekly Oklahoma State Capital* (Guthrie, OT), September 15, 1894.
[32] Frank Anderson to E.L. Thomas, December 28, 1895, 556, SFSA25.

the US Department of Justice got involved. Rather than overestimate real property values, Pottawatomie County officials reclassified improvements (buildings, fencing, animals provided by the federal government etc.) on allotments as personal property. This reclassification allowed the county sheriff to seize Indigenous assets for back taxes. In one egregious 1896 example, the county treasurer sent out the county sheriff – both White male settlers elected by other White male settlers – to collect unpaid personal property taxes from Little Captain, a White Turkey Shawnee man. When the sheriff showed up, his target was not present, so the county official seized Little Captain's horse without telling his owner. In an 1896 letter to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Shawnee men – reportedly advised by Sac and Fox leaders – recounted this incident and argued that "We know we are Indians and it is not right to tax us that way."[33] As with Lincoln County, OIA officials clearly articulated that the practice of counting improvements as personal property was not legal, but Pottawatomie County officials did so anyway.[34] In one 1898 description, an agent reported that "when tax-paying time comes a tax warrant is issued for the Indians taxes and [the assessors] at once proceed to rob him."[35] The following year at the request of the Department of the Interior, the US Attorney General's Office ordered the US Attorney for Oklahoma at Guthrie to stop "taxation by the officials of Pottawatomie…of the personal property of Indian allottees and of the improvements on Indian allotments"[36] The practice immediately ceased.

In 1908, the State of Oklahoma – undoubtedly with the support of county assessors like those in Lincoln and Pottawatomie counties – resurrected the improvement scheme. Through a 1908 law, the legislature passed a law to formally reclassify improvements on real property as

[33] Billy Little Ax et al to D.M. Browning, March 30, 1896, 562, SFSA25.
[34] Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Lee Patrick, February 2, 1899, 578, SFSA25.
[35] W.A. Jones to Lee Patrick, April 15, 1898, 567, SFSA25.
[36] W.A. Jones, to Lee Patrick, Sac and Fox Agent, July 12, 1899, 582, SFSA25.

personal property; this change opened a pathway for county treasurers and assessors to tax improvements made on lands held in trust by the federal government and then seize those lands for unpaid taxes.[37] In a threatening letter sent to the Sac and Fox Agency, Lincoln County's treasurer noted that the administration hired a "tax ferret" to seek out "all personal property that has not been assessed for taxation and on which taxes have not been paid for the years which they were due."[38] The treasurer, whose letter included a list of properties that he would soon begin collecting taxes on, gave the agent just eight days to respond. As in earlier struggles over taxation in lands opened up by the Second Land Run, local officials did not relent until the federal government forced them to do so. In a 1910 letter to his agent at Shawnee, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs commented that an existing US Supreme Court ruling contradicted the 1908 law; Oklahoma did not have the authority to tax improvements on allotments held in trust by the federal government.[39] The US Attorney General's Office challenged Lincoln County's renewed campaign to seize Indigenous property and in a 1911 decision, a federal judge banned the Lincoln County Board of Commissioners from seizing allotments held in trust for back taxes.[40]

Catherine Greiffenstein's Town, Pottawatomie County

Even before the taxation struggle, tensions ran high in Pottawatomie County. Shawnee and Potawatomi communities – economically and politically diverse, Algonquian language speaking communities displaced from the Ohio Country and the Great Lakes regions respectively – spent much of the 1880s watching for White invaders. Shawnee and Potawatomi people removed these "boomers, unscrupulous, unprincipled and trespassers on Indian land" by pointing

[37] Robert Valentine Affairs to F.A. Thackery, June 10, 1910, 624, SFSA25.
[38] L.C. Elliott to W.C. Kohlenberg, November 22, 1908, 594, SFSA25.
[39] Robert Valentine Affairs to F.A. Thackery, June 10, 1910, 625-626, SFSA25.
[40] Ernest Knaebel to the Secretary of the Interior, April 18, 1911, 676, SFSA25.

the squatters out to federal officials.[41] For example, a Potawatomi man named A.J. Navarre contacted the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1885 about a small group of White families ranching illegally on the western border of the Potawatomi reservation. "Father Wilson" – as Navarre ominously referred to their leader – led squatters who openly "def[ied] us to eject them from [the reservation]."[42] Four days later, Commissioner John D.C. Atkins ordered his local agents to investigate; presumably either OIA police or US soldiers removed this small settlement.[43] Navarre and Atkins' teamwork reflected an informal but functioning partnership that weakened after the federal government forced Shawnee and Potawatomi communities to sign allotment agreements. The US Congress ratified those agreements in March 1891, indicating that federal officials would likely offer the remainder to American homesteaders.[44] In anticipation of that event, thousands of White squatters began entering the reservations illegally.[45] Naturally, many Indigenous people became frustrated. In June 1891, a local OIA official sent out a police officer to arrest and remove select "obnoxious intruders" and bandits. At Shawneetown – an important trading center for surrounding Shawnee and Potawatomi communities – "a crowd…gathered around the policeman and told him it meant every body and must be served on all – and at that he went to notifying intruders generally."[46]

In Oklahoma Territory's County B (subsequently renamed Pottawatomie County), the consequences of the Second Land Run for Shawnee and Potawatomi communities were dire. The concerns raised by the Indigenous crowd at Shawneetown months before the 1891 run were warranted. Once established, Pottawatomie County used many of the same predatory tactics as

[41] A.J. Navarre to John D.C. Atkins, December 5, 1885, 290-292, SFSA46, Sac and Fox and Shawnee Agency Records, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.
[42] A.J. Navarre to John D.C. Atkins, December 5, 1885, 290-292, SFSA46.
[43] John D.C. Atkins to Moses Neal, December 9, 1885, 295-296, SFSA46.
[44] Chapman, *Federal Management*, 254.
[45] Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs to S.L. Patrick, March 31, 1891, 323-324, SFSA46.
[46] Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs to S.L. Patrick, August 1, 1891, 326, SFSA46.

neighboring Lincoln County to seize Indigenous property. Threatened with having their allotments seized for back taxes, some White Turkey Shawnees relocated – a longstanding strategy within Shawnee communities – to the Muscogee Nation as early as 1894, leaving White settlers to claim their allotments in Oklahoma Territory.[47] Other Indigenous people found themselves in court after White settlers even began filing homestead claims on their allotment.[48] Many lost their property to the Pottawatomie County assessor's attempts to tax the improvements allottees made on their allotments.

Yet, some Indigenous people saw this chaos as an opportunity. Not unlike Thomas Wildcat Alford or Moses Keokuk, Catherine Greiffenstein – an enterprising Citizen Potawatomi woman – drew on her own experiences to ride out and profit from the Second Land Run. Catherine's father was Abram Burnett, an influential, well-educated Potawatomi politician.[49] Burnett spent his early childhood in the Potawatomi homeland near Lake Michigan's eastern shore before attending school under influential Baptist missionary and Indian Territory architect Isaac McCoy in Indiana. As an adult, Abram Burnett rose to political power among his fellow Potawatomi and negotiated several removal treaties that led his family to Topeka, Kansas. Burnett married a German immigrant while still in Indiana and in 1851, they had a daughter named Catherine. Born eleven years after her family's 1840 forcible removal from northern Indiana by US soldiers, Catherine Burnett grew up speaking Potawatomi, German, and English on the Great Plains.[50] For a time, the Burnetts were one of the most prominent families in Topeka, a cosmopolitan crossroads. In the 1850s, Catherine's family lived on an estate so

[47] D.M. Browning to Edward L. Thomas, April 19, 1894, 523, SFSA25.
[48] D.M. Browning to Edward L. Thomas, March 20, 1895, 432, SFSA46.
[49] "Abram B. Burnett, Pottawatomie Chief" *Collections of the Kansas State Historical Society* 13 (1913-14): 371-73.
[50] Bowes, *Land Too Good for Indians*, 172.

elaborate that looters later scoured the entire area looking for buried treasure.[51] In particular, North Topeka was a key point of exchange for an extremely diverse population, including removed Potawatomi people.[52] Although Topeka's cosmopolitan status declined as White settlers poured into Kansas after the Civil War and most nearby Indigenous communities moved south into Indian Territory, the Burnett family still wielded considerable political influence.[53]

In 1869, eighteen year old Catherine Burnett married William Greiffenstein, a forty year old German political refugee.[54] Greiffenstein came from a middle class family in Frankfort on the Main, then an independent city-state in what is now Germany.[55] He fled Europe in 1848 after accusations surfaced of his participation in revolutionary activity. In Indian Territory and Kansas, Greiffenstein reinvented himself into a prominent trader with Indigenous communities. As part of his trading career, he became fluent in several Indigenous languages and married a Southern Cheyenne woman who died of tuberculosis in 1868.[56] "Dutch Bill" – as he became known across the region – accrued considerable capital through his trade and began buying up former Osage and Wichita lands at the confluence of the Arkansas and Little Arkansas in southern Kansas.[57] After marrying Catherine Burnett in 1869, he platted out the city of Wichita and quickly became prominent in its development. As mayor of the rapidly growing metropolis between 1880 and 1884, he presided over an enormous economic expansion that made himself and many others fabulously wealthy.[58] In 1887, William Greiffenstein completed construction on a sixteen room mansion valued around $75,000 (about 2.1 million in 2020 US dollars).

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[51] "Abram B. Burnett, Pottawatomie Chief," 372.
[52] Charles Curtis, Article No. II, 5, "Life of Charles Curtis," LM938, Kansas Historical Society, Topeka, KS.
[53] Charles Curtis, "History of North Topeka," *North Topeka Times* (Topeka, KS), December 27, 1878.
[54] "Widow of WM. Greiffenstein is Dead at 65" *Wichita Daily Eagle* (Wichita, KS), October 21, 1918.
[55] Robert Hugh McIsaac, "William Greiffenstein and the Founding of Wichita" (Master's Thesis: University of Wichita, 1937), 3.
[56] McIsaac, "William Greiffenstein and the Founding of Wichita" 8-15.
[57] McIsaac, "William Greiffenstein and the Founding of Wichita" 29-34, 37.
[58] McIsaac, "William Greiffenstein and the Founding of Wichita" 51, 62-63.

Like many Indigenous women who chose to marry to White or European men, White historians ignored Catherine Greiffenstein. In their analysis of fur trading families, numerous scholars have argued for much more nuanced portraits of Indigenous women and their partnerships with White settler men.[59] Catherine Greiffenstein's significant contributions to the economic and political influence William Greiffenstein wielded deserve such analysis. First, Catherine Burnett was one part of an enduring political and familial partnership that lasted for thirty years. The Burnett family was both wealthy and politically influential; in marrying Catherine, William Greiffenstein was moving upward. Unlike her husband, Catherine Greiffenstein possessed a legal right to reside on the Citizen Potawatomi Reservation as a Potawatomi citizen. Second, her political connections within Potawatomi communities allowed the family to establish and run cattle exclusively over a 400,000 acre ranch in Indian Territory for five years (1883-1888).[60] Third and perhaps most importantly, Catherine Greiffenstein used her resources to help her husband resurrect his economic and political reputation after suffering an almost total loss in the collapse of the Wichita real estate market.[61] As a Potawatomi citizen, she had a legal right to reside on the Citizen Potawatomi Reservation if she chose to do so. When the federal government allotted that reservation, she claimed a tract in a lush, gently-rolling

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[59] For this conversation about the role of Indigenous women in the fur trade, see: Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980); Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980); Glenda Riley, *Building and Breaking Families in the American West* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996); Karen M. Morin, *Frontiers of Femininity: A New Historical Geography of the Nineteenth-Century American West* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2008); Anne Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families: A New History of the North American West, 1800-1860* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011); David Wallace Adams and Crista DeLuzio, eds, *On the Borders of Love and Power: Families and Kinship in the Intercultural American Southwest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Andrew Graybill, *The Red and the White: A Family Saga of the American West* (New York: Liverwright Publishing Corporation, 2013); David C. Beyreis, *Blood in the Borderlands: Conflict, Kinship, and the Bent Family, 1821-1920* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020); Anne Hyde, *Born of Lakes and Plains: Mixed-Descent People and the Making of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2022).

[60] Larry O'Dell, "UF Ranch" *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=UF001, Accessed January 5, 2021.

[61] McIsaac, "William Greiffenstein and the Founding of Wichita," 66-67.

valley ideal for a town. This spot is quite picturesque even today. Gentle hills covered in grasslands gradually slope down to the Little River. Drawing on lessons learned in the Wichita real estate market over the past twenty years, she strategically selected land that intersected with a river but also the anticipated center of the county as the site of a planned city, Burnett.[62] The Commissioner of Indian Affairs later noted that the Potawatomi woman – not her German husband – "laid out and platted the town" on her 160-acre allotment; she then began selling individual lots while her husband promoted "the trade center of Pottowatomie county" to settlers preparing to enter the region.[63]

Burnett reflected not only the couple's experiences in real estate, but their exposure to growing settler demands for Indigenous lands in Indian Territory. At the tail end of a national depression in 1879, Cherokee entrepreneur Elias Boudinot advertised in the *Chicago Times* that central Indian Territory was opened to homesteaders.[64] Boudinot – long a political pretender in the Cherokee Nation – was attempting to disrupt the Cherokee government and seize political power while also profiteering from the rush.[65] He wrote his friend Jim Bell that "they will pour into the Creek and Seminole ceded lands, and…[we] will be their neighbors on our own soil; we will stick together and all Hell cannot prevail against us."[66] Boudinot's scheme was not unreasonable; his contemporaries – including Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation Charles Thompson – pointed out that White settlers had only recently surged into the Great Sioux Reservation in 1876, triggering a war with the Lakota that ended with their subjugation by the

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[62] Burnett, Oklahoma" *El Reno Herald* (El Reno, OT), August 14, 1891.
[63] D.M. Browning to Edward L. Thomas, April 19, 1894, 523, SFSA25; "The Growing City of Burnett" September 3, 1891, folder 5, box 39, John Womack Collection, Western History Collections, Norman, OK.
[64] Carl Coke Rister, *Land Hunger: David L. Payne and the Oklahoma Boomers* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1942), 41.
[65] James W. Parins, *Elias Cornelius Boudinot: A Life on the Cherokee Border* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 195-96.
[66] Elias C. Boudinot to J.M. Bell, April 1, 1879, file 4983, roll 43, Cherokee Nation Papers, Western History Collections, Norman, OK.

United States.[67] White settlers did begin crossing over the Kansas border into Indian Territory, but aggressive federal intervention stopped them from forming permanent settlements. Most American citizens realized they had been misled and left, but a fanatical minority remained active. Between 1880 and 1884, David Payne – a White man mentored by Elias Boudinot – led a Wichita-based political movement whose members repeatedly attempted to settle in central Indian Territory.[68] Though the city was experiencing sustained economic boom in those years and federal troops removed every settler every single time, the so-called Boomers remained doggedly invested in their mission.[69] Catherine Greiffenstein, a woman of significant wealth and status, almost certainly read about Payne's exploits in the local paper and talked with her friends about this local loon and his crazed movement.

When the federal government opened the lands in central Indian Territory that Payne had so coveted to the American public on April 22, 1889, Catherine Greiffenstein was still living in Wichita. Numerous violent confrontations broke out between individuals claiming the same homestead or town lot. Long after April 22, 1889, these legal contests that often turned into armed conflicts were common.[70] In 1890, Oklahoma City's first popularly elected mayor – and David Payne's former right hand man – died in one such dispute.[71] On September 22, 1891,

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[67] Charles Thompson to B.L Burney, May 19, 1879, file 1539, roll 18, Cherokee Nation Papers; "The Indian Territory" *Kansas City Times*, May 2, 1879.
[68] Parins, *Elias Cornelius Boudinot*, 199-200.
[69] Rister, *Land Hunger*; Genevieve Moss, "C.P. Wickmiller 'Doc' Wickmiller: Boomer with a 'hatfull of pills" *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 63/2 (June 1985): 192-203; Mary Jane Warde, "Fight for Survival: The Indian Response to the Boomer Movement" *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 67/1 (March 1989): 30-51; Michael Lovegrove, "Free Homes: David L. Payne and the Oklahoma Boomer Movement, 1879-1884" (Master's Thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1996); Gregory James Brueck, "Breaking the Plains: Indians, Settlers, and Reformers in the Oklahoma Land Rush" (PhD Diss., University of California at Davis, 2012); John Truden, "Settler Colonialism on the Southern Plains: Squatters and the Construction of a Settler State in Indian Territory, 1879-1901" (Master's Thesis: University of Oklahoma Press, 2018).
[70] Carol H. Welsh, "Deadly Games: The Struggle for a Quarter-Section of Land." *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* Volume 72, Number 1 (Spring 1994): 36-51.
[71] "W.L. Couch Home" folder 5, box 9, WPA Historic Sites and Federal Writers Project Collection, Western History Collections, Norman, OK.

homesteading in Oklahoma Territory was still quite a dangerous endeavor. The territorial governor noted that the Second Land Run reflected its predecessor in the number of participants and level of chaos.[72] That level of desperation and widespread violence made Burnett a highly attractive alternative. Catherine Greiffenstein could offer her residents an orderly space to sign a notarized contract with the owners (who had undisputed rights over the entire tract) and live in or conduct business in Burnett without fear of legal disputes or gun battles with other settlers contesting their claims.

The new city had much in common with other settler communities established under legally tenuous circumstances in Indian Territory. Even though it was illegal for American citizens to reside on lands held in a federal trust, many did so anyway and some even organized their own settlements. On April 19, 1892, federal officials opened the remnants of the allotted Cheyenne and Arapaho Reservation to thousands of American settlers; due to an error in the instructions federal officials gave them, a group of several hundred White settlers erected the town of Mountain View over the border on the Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Reservation.[73] Although their town was located on the reservation lands held in trust by the federal government, Mountain View's residents loudly argued that they were actually in the newly annexed portion of Oklahoma Territory.[74] They disrupted the US government's attempts to say otherwise for as long as they could, threatening federal surveyors, removing stone markers, and suing the Office of Indian Affairs in territorial court.[75] In 1899, a federal employee unsuccessfully attempting to survey the border described the residents of Mountain View as "people [who]…exhibit cheerful

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[72] Chapman, *Federal Management*, 255.
[73] Michael H. Reggio, "Cheyenne-Arapaho Opening," *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=CH031, accessed September 10, 2022; A.W. Barber to Binger Hermann, August 19, 1899, 453, KA71, Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache Nation Agency Records, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.
[74] A.W. Barber to Binger Hermann, August 24, 1899, 457, KA71.
[75] A.W. Barber to Binger Hermann, August 19, 1899, 453-455, KA71.

confidence that the Government will never interfere with them. They openly rely on their neighbors, and their brazen defiance of the laws."[76] The Department of the Interior belatedly determined that Mountain View was located on the reservation in 1900, but by that time the opening of the reservation was imminent.[77] As part of the process of redistributing the remnants of the reservation to White settlers through a lottery in 1901, the US Congress made an exception for the residents of Mountain View and gave them "preference rights" for one month so they could select the tracts they already lived on.[78]

Burnett thrived in a similarly ambiguous space because Catherine Greiffenstein understood how to manipulate federal apathy and settler greed while protecting herself. In 1892, a surveyor recorded just over 350 lots, a town square, planned streets, a brick yard, and a barn in the town, all on one allotment. In their contracts with settlers who bought town lots, the Greiffensteins retained real property rights if the occupant left.[79] This clause prevented anyone but the Greiffensteins from gaining title to the town. Catherine Greiffenstein also knew that dismantling a prosperous, otherwise law abiding village was a low priority for overwhelmed Office of Indian Affairs employees based in Shawnee. Unlike Mountain View, Burnett was firmly located in Oklahoma Territory, a place where the town's White and Potawatomi residents had a clear right to reside. If the US Army moved people off the allotment, they could not simply relocate them out of the region as they had with the Boomers; one wonders if the displaced residents of Burnett might have grown violent or even defended their town. Certainly, the situation would have quickly grown politically inconvenient for both the Office of Indian Affairs

[76] A.W. Barber to Binger Hermann, August 19, 1899, 453, KA71.
[77] J.M. Johnson "Indian Lands-Kiowa and Comanche Reservation" c. 1900, 599, KA71; James F. Randlett to William A. Jones, December 11, 1900, 651, KA71.
[78] US President, Presidential Proclamation No. 460, July 4, 1901; For the lottery system on the Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Reservation, see: Chapman, *Federal Management*, 274-283.
[79] William Wesselhoft, "Burnett – Okla." June 6, 1892, folder 5, box 39, John Womack Collection.

and the US Army. The Greiffenstein family's wealth added yet another barrier. By 1900, Burnett was a bustling city made up of about 600 White tenants and forty Potawatomi citizens.[80] When the railroad unexpectedly bypassed the town in 1903, most of Burnett's inhabitants moved another town located on an allotment, Macomb.[81] Although Catherine Greiffenstein died in 1918 and her namesake town lay completely abandoned by the late 1920s, Macomb remains a rural hub in southwestern Pottawatomie County a century later.[82]

The Big Jim Band and Self-Governance in Cleveland County

Not far from Catherine Greiffenstein's townsite, the Big Jim Band of Absentee Shawnees contemplated their next move. In the eighteenth century, Shawnee communities stretched across eastern North America, sharing a common culture and language, but acting independently.[83] Between the 1790s and the 1810s, Shawnee leaders such as Blue Jacket, Tenskwatawa, and Tecumseh battled an expansionist United States, while other communities chose to move south and west to escape encroachment on their lands.[84] By the 1830s, many Shawnee people lived in Mexican Texas. Big Jim, born to one such family, quickly became a refugee in a multinational conflict as the Republic of Texas seceded from the Republic of Mexico in 1836 and simultaneously began waging a genocidal war against Indigenous peoples.[85] Big Jim's family fled across the international border into Indian Territory, settling in the Muscogee Nation. For a

[80] Burnett Township, Pottawatomie County, Oklahoma Territory, US Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.
[81] Bessie Cope, "Macomb" *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, https://www-okhistory-org.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=MA003, Accessed January 5, 2021.
[82] "Macomb Now Rises on Old Townsite of 'Magic City'" *Daily Oklahoman*, December 26, 1927; "Macomb was Boom Town – 75 Years Ago" *County-Wide News* (Tecumseh, OK), July 22, 1982.
[83] Sami Lakomäki, *Gathering Together: The Shawnee People through Diaspora and Nationhood, 1600-1870* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014).
[84] Stephen Warren, *The Shawnees and Their Neighbors, 1795-1870* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005).
[85] Berlin B. Chapman, "The Pottawatomie and Absentee Shawnee Reservation" *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 24/3 (Autumn 1946): 301; See also: Gary Clayton Anderson, *The Conquest of Texas: Ethnic Cleansing in the Promised Land, 1820-1875* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005).

generation, the Absentee Shawnees – labeled so by American diplomats because they were not present during an 1854 treaty negotiation between Shawnee communities and the United States in Kansas Territory – avoided colonization.[86]

Beginning in the 1870s, Americans increasingly interfered in Absentee Shawnee affairs in central Indian Territory, creating a crisis that split the community into two camps. Some Shawnees – including many of Big Jim's relatives – believed cooperation with an increasingly powerful United States was essential to their continued existence.[87] They settled near modern Shawnee, Oklahoma, and later became known as the White Turkey Band after their eponymous leader. Led by Sam Warrior in 1876, Big Jim's people moved about thirty miles north to a likeminded Kickapoo village on the Deep Fork of the Canadian River. For a decade, both communities lived relatively quiet lives, building cabins and ranching cattle along the lush North Fork of the Canadian River.[88] During this period, Big Jim took Sam Warrior's place as leader of the community. Although their new home was ideal for ranching and farming, Big Jim and his supporters could see radical change on the horizon. While they were still living on the Deep Fork, the Boomers began building nearby townsites. David Payne met at least four Shawnee men and boys while huddling in a cold dugout during the chilly months of early 1882.[89] The following year, the Boomer prophet propositioned Big Jim, asking to settle his colonists alongside the Absentee Shawnees and claim homesteads together.[90] It is difficult to tell why Payne did this. In 1879, the Boomer's mentor Elias Boudinot formed a deliberately biracial

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[86] Chapman, "The Pottawatomie and Absentee Shawnee Reservation" 301-302.
[87] American Indian Institute Oral History Project, "Shawnee Indian History Class and History of the Absentee Shawnees: History of the Absentee Shawnees (Continued)," April 9, 1969, 2, Doris Duke Collection, Western History Collections, Norman, OK.
[88] American Indian Institute Oral History Project, "Shawnee Indian History Class," 3; Grant Foreman, *The Last Trek of the Indians* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), 178-79.
[89] David Payne, Diary, February 26, 1882, folder 12, box 1, David Payne Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK; David Payne, Diary, March 2, 1882, folder 12, box 1, David Payne Collection
[90] E.L. Stevens to J.V. Carter, July 17, 1883, 613-616, SFSA46.

colony of Cherokee citizens and White US migrant workers in the Cherokee Outlet, predicting that neither the Cherokee Nation nor the federal government would have the legal authority to remove the colony.[91] However, David Payne was also fighting a long running propaganda war with Indigenous leaders in eastern Indian Territory; he may have simply wanted to recruit allies.[92] Big Jim's response to Payne's deal has been lost but the Boomer leader died in 1884, his followers kept building shanty towns, and US soldiers continued removing them. In 1886, US soldiers – under orders from officials in Washington D.C. to move the Shawnee village from Kickapoo lands – stormed and burned the Big Jim Band's village with little warning before forcibly marching the inhabitants south and resettling them on the Deep Fork.[93]

Shawnee communities often used relocation as a strategic tool to maintain control over their own sovereignty. Although their new home on the Deep Fork of the Canadian River was ideal for ranching and farming, Big Jim could see radical change on the horizon and prioritized his community's ability to relocate whenever necessary to preserve itself. In the past, non-Native histories describing the Big Jim Band have either confused events by stating the US Army forcibly relocated the community directly from the Deep Fork to the Little River in 1886 or wrongly implied that the Shawnees moved westward because they did not understand the stakes of their decision. On the North Fork, the Big Jim Band rebuilt the farms, orchards, and "comfortable log houses" the US Army destroyed when they removed the community from the Deep Fork.[94] These improvements represented significant investments. Yet in 1889, Big Jim deliberately led his people to abandon choice agricultural lands and instead move to a dense

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91 Elias C. Boudinot to James Bell, March 30, 1879, file 4982, roll 43, Cherokee Nation Papers, Western History Collections, Norman, OK.
92 David Payne to the Indian Journal, *Fort Smith Elevator*, September 3, 1880; Robert L. Owen to Dennis Bushyhead, September 9, 1884, file 1595, roll 19, Cherokee Nation Papers.
93 Foreman, *The Last Trek of the Indians*, 179.
94 American Indian Institute Oral History Project, "Shawnee Indian History Class," 3.

thicket of wiry trees and sandy hills further west along the Little River. In the twentieth century, several Shawnee elders emphasized that the community understood the stakes of this decision. According to Big Jim's grandson Webb Little Jim, "my grandfather thought when he moved us down here we would never have to move again."[95] Clifton Blanchard, another member of the Big Jim Band, recalled that "Big Jim…told the government that he been pushed enough so if they would give him and his people the worst land in Oklahoma, then no white man would want it anymore."[96] Reframing this decision as deliberate one reshape the move and its implications for the Big Jim community over the next eighty years.

The Big Jim Shawnees relocated to a cross timber forest that straddles western Pottawatomie County and eastern Cleveland County. Cross timber forests stretch from northern Texas to the Kansas-Oklahoma border. These forests – mostly made up of short hardwood trees such as post oaks and black jacks that grow close together on sandy soil – are typically adjacent to more arable prairies like the one where Catherine Greiffenstein established Burnett or the rich lands the Big Jim Shawnees decided to leave in exchange for the forest.[97] Not only were these forested lands unattractive to White settlers, but they were nearly inaccessible. This region was so difficult to navigate that in the 1890s it was unclear where Pottawatomie County ended and Cleveland County began.[98] A key cause of this difficulty was poor roads. In the early twentieth century, OIA officials operating out of Shawnee found the Big Jim Band to be "in a rather remote territory…ten to fifteen miles from the railroad…[with] the wagon roads…in poor condition."[99] Those roads remained poor for a long time; in the 1960s, a community activist

[95] Web Little Jim, February 2, 1969, Doris Duke Collection.
[96] Clifton Blanchard, April 15, 1968, Doris Duke Collection.
[97] For a study of the cross timbers, see: Richard V. Francaviglia, *The Cast Iron Forest: A Natural and Cultural History of the North American Cross Timbers* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000).
[98] Alford, *Civilization*, 156.
[99] Shawnee Agency, Annual Report, 1918, 538, roll 133, *Superintendent's Annual Narrative*.

compared them to the roads he witnessed in rural Brazil.[100] Using a system of informants that included Thomas Wildcat Alford, federal officials forced the Big Jim Shawnees to take allotments in eastern Cleveland County.[101] Still, the cross timbers presented the Office of Indian Affairs with a significant obstacle; federal employees already overwhelmed by other responsibilities found traversing the forest too time consuming to attempt on a routine basis.

The Office of Indian Affairs did station at least one employee – a White man named Charles Edmister – in the Big Jim community, but the records that have survived from that man's tenure indicate that he was far more interested in science and technology than collecting intelligence. In one communique to his boss at Shawnee, Edmister compared the speeds of a telegram and a letter.[102] In another, he asked that the agency provide him "a high-power kerosene lamp."[103] The farmer borrowed the Shawnee Agency's mimeograph machine for such a long time that the superintendent sent several letters many months apart to retrieve it (apparently, Charles Edmister realized he could use the forest's impenetrability to his advantage too).[104] In March 1916, the employee purchased a Victor Viopticon, a stereopticon or in essence an early version of a projector.[105] Some members of the Big Jim Band grew frustrated with this tinkerer after he began holding public showings. When some of the Big Jim Shawnees traveled to Washington D.C. several weeks later, they "complained that the farmer does not teach them how

[100] Roy M. Isenberg to Fred Harris, July 1, 1968, folder 1, box DP41, Tom Steed Collection, Carl Albert Center, Norman, OK.
[101] Alford, *Civilization*, 137-138.
[102] Charles Edmister to Frank Thackery, May 19, 1910, folder – Farmer Big Jim Dist., box 1, Correspondence Relating to Personnel, Shawnee Agency Records, RG75, National Archives at Fort Worth, TX.
[103] Orville J. Green to Charles Edmister, September 15, 1915, folder – Farmer Big Jim Dist., box 1, Correspondence Relating to Personnel, Shawnee Agency Records.
[104] Orville J. Green to Charles Edmister, October 27, 1915, folder – Farmer Big Jim Dist., box 1, Correspondence Relating to Personnel, Shawnee Agency Records; E.B. Merritt to Orville J. Green, June 10, 1916, folder – Farmer Big Jim Dist., box 1, Correspondence Relating to Personnel, Shawnee Agency Records.
[105] "Something Doing" *Indian Scout* (Shawnee, OK), March 1916.

to farm but devotes his time to showing pictures at night."[106] The OIA upper echelon became concerned that Edmister was wasting money and they lit a fire underneath Shawnee Agency superintendent Orville J. Green. The embarrassed superintendent defended his employee over the "picture show business."[107] Rather than evaluate the effectiveness of an employee who "has gone to the expense of purchasing a machine with which to give those pictures, with lecture, using lantern slides," Green argued that the Shawnees were the ones at fault for not participating.[108]

Even as they resettled in the forest, the Big Jim Band contemplated removing their entire community to Mexico. The potential for such a relocation remained a key aspect of Shawnee persistence for the next fifty years; if they really needed to, Big Jim's people could always leave Oklahoma for Coahuila. Some elderly Shawnee people living in central Indian Territory either remembered or had relatives who once lived in Mexican Texas. From its inception in 1821, the Republic of Mexico recruited Indigenous allies to live in and defend border provinces being overrun by Comanche raiding parties.[109] Over course of the nineteenth century, many Indigenous communities traveled between Indian Territory and Mexico. For example, Kickapoo communities fleeing the Civil War took up residence in Mexico before returning to the United States just over a decade later.[110] A few years after that, the Big Jim Shawnees began living alongside the so-called Mexican Kickapoos on the Deep Fork of the Canadian River.[111] A decade after leading his people to the Little River in 1889, Big Jim began to consider a move back to the

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[106] E.B. Merritt to Orville J. Green, April 22, 1916, folder – Farmer Big Jim Dist., box 1, Correspondence Relating to Personnel, Shawnee Agency Records.
[107] Orville J. Green to Cato Sells, June 15, 1916, folder – Farmer Big Jim Dist., box 1, Correspondence Relating to Personnel, Shawnee Agency Records.
[108] Orville J. Green to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, June 15, 1916, folder – Farmer Big Jim Dist., box 1, Correspondence Relating to Personnel, Shawnee Agency Records.
[109] Alice L. Baumgartner, *South to Freedom: Runaway Slaves to Mexico and the Road to the Civil War* (New York: Basic Books, 2020): 169-170.
[110] A.M. Gibson, *The Kickapoos: Lords of the Middle Border* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 201, 252.
[111] Alford, *Civilization*, 81.

country of his birth. At the time, many Indigenous communities desperate to escape the crushing grip of the United States and the maw of being overrun by White settlers seriously contemplated leaving for Mexico.[112] In the late 1890s, White conmen began peddling removal services to these communities in exchange for their allotments. These agreements were likely illegal, but rarely questioned. The Mexican Kickapoos entered into one of these contracts; their venture ended in utter disaster.[113] Big Jim signed a similar contract in 1898 but caught smallpox and died before his community was prepared to relocate to Mexico.[114] Even after Big Jim's death, the community still maintained connections to Mexico. In the early twentieth century, Little Jim – Big Jim's son – succeeded his father in leading the community. He continued to contemplate relocating the community, most seriously between 1938 and 1940.[115]

In the meantime, settlers and Indigenous people made the border forest into a political and cultural no man's land. Between 1914 and 1916, White socialists held regular gatherings at Big Jim's Crossing, a small settlement on the Little River.[116] In 1917, White subsistence farmers disillusioned with eking out a poor existence in the region organized into an association of paramilitary socialist guerillas known as the Jones Family and terrorized Cleveland and Pottawatomie counties.[117] In fact, OIA officials in Shawnee and Washington D.C. worried that the Working Class Union – a broader socialist front that led an armed rebellion against the

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[112] Steven Crum, "America, Love It or Leave It: Some Native American Initiatives to Move to Mexico, 1890-1940" *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 79/4 (December 2001): 408-429.
[113] Gibson, *The Kickapoos*, 314-360.
[114] Cyrus Beede to C.N. Bliss, October 3, 1898, roll 45, *Reports of Inspection of the Field Jurisdiction of the Office of Indian Affairs, 1873-1900*, National Archives at Washington D.C.
[115] "Mexico Woos State Indians" *The Oklahoman*, January 22, 1939; "Shawnees Seeking Home in Mexico" *The Oklahoman*, September 1, 1940.
[116] "Big Socialist Encampment" *Daily Transcript* (Norman, OK), July 6, 1914; "Socialist Encampment" *Daily Transcript*, July 28, 1915; "Local and Personal" *Norman Transcript*, July 27, 1916.
[117] "Pottawatomie County Man, Witness in Jones Family Case, Attempted Suicide Today" *Shawnee Daily News-Herald* (Shawnee, OK), September 21, 1917.

United States in the summer of 1917 – was recruiting members of the Big Jim Band.[118] Bootleggers and moonshiners operating out of the cross timbers bedeviled federal officials for many years.[119] Although liquor was legal in Oklahoma Territory, the new state of Oklahoma entered the union a dry state and remained bone dry until the last years of Eisenhower administration. Eastern Cleveland County's nearly inaccessible forests provided ideal cover to manufacture liquor intended for major population centers such as Norman, Oklahoma City, and Shawnee. In 1936, an OIA agent claimed that "practically no race consciousness" existed in the forest either.[120] Reportedly, Shawnee and White children played together, attended school together, and lived next to one another. This claim and the accompanying observation are intriguing considering the degree of racial animosity in the surrounding regions.

The Big Jim Shawnees found an island of relative calm between two raging seas: taxation and racism. East of the forest, White settlers in Pottawatomie County separated Indigenous people from their land and wealth through a regime of intimidation driven by taxation. Shawnee people in Cleveland County did not fall under the jurisdiction of the Pottawatomie County assessor, so they largely avoided the wave of predatory taxation schemes that affected Indigenous people in that county. To the west of the forest in Cleveland County, White settlers making the 1889 land run established cities and towns that paralleled the county's riverine border with the Chickasaw Nation. Most ignored the county's nearly impenetrable forest in favor of the prairies along the South Canadian River. As they did in many other places, White settlers quickly

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[118] E.B. Merritt to O.J. Greene, August 30, 1917, folder - Misc. Shawnee File, box 1, Records of the Tribal Operations Office – Absentee Shawnee Tribe, Shawnee Agency Records, RG75, National Archives at Fort Worth, TX; for a contemporary description of what became known as the Green Corn Rebellion, see: "Armed Rebellion in Oklahoma" *Harlow's Weekly* (Oklahoma City, OK), August 8, 1917.

[119] "The Indian War Dance" *Norman Transcript*, August 21, 1913; Eber S. Hobson, "Big Jim Farther On," c. 1920s-1930s, folder 3, box 37, John Womack Collection; Shawnee Agency, Annual Report, 1937, 944, roll 135, *Superintendent's Annual Narrative*.

[120] Shawnee Agency, Annual Report, 1936, 898, roll 135, *Superintendent's Annual Narrative*.

began systematically terrorizing and driving their African American counterparts out of Cleveland County.[121] Norman – the county seat – became known as a "negro-hating town."[122]

In contrast to the community's racist relationship with African Americans, Norman's White citizenry held a more nuanced view of Indigenous people. In 1922, the Norman Ku Klux Klan publicly declared Norman a space for "the Indian and Causian [sic] races" only.[123] The city was already fertile ground for White supremacy but the Klan's inclusion of Indigenous people into its declaration had everything to do with the prominence of powerful Indigenous families in eastern Indian Territory, the gentry. These families – who possessed great wealth and understood how to wield that wealth in the context of capitalism – used their influence to have themselves declared White in the state constitution. Mary Jane Burnett – Catherine Greiffenstein's sister – settled into a quiet life in Noble, a village below Norman that also saw men lynched in 1914 and 1915 respectively.[124] When she died, the *Wichita Eagle* lauded the Potawatomi woman as the mother of the first White baby in Wichita, Kansas.[125] To be clear, Shawnee people in Cleveland County were not members of the Indigenous gentry. In fact, White settlers in Norman distinguished between someone like Edward Bryant Johnson – an influential Chickasaw businessman – and Big Jim, a contrast that Johnson reinforced by hosting an annual barbeque for Big Jim's people on the cattleman's 340-acre estate north of the city.[126] Johnson's wife routinely

[121] John Womack, [African Americans in Territorial Cleveland County], February 1982, folder 2, box 40, John Womack Collection; Michael S. Givel, "Sundown on the Prairie: The Extralegal Campaigns and Efforts from 1889 to 1967 to Exclude African Americans from Norman, Oklahoma" *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 96/3 (Fall 2018): 260-74.
[122] "The Negro Question" *Norman Transcript*, March 14, 1901.
[123] "Ku Klux Klan Takes a Hand" *Norman Transcript*, February 9, 1922.
[124] "Abram B. Burnett, Pottawatomie Chief," 373; "Negro Lynched Near Noble" *Norman Transcript* (Norman, OK), January 29, 1914; "Lynching of Dr. B.E. Ward" *Norman Transcript*, May 13, 1915.
[125] "Mother of First White Child Born in Wichita Dies" *Wichita Eagle* (Wichita, KS), May 30, 1928.
[126] Neil R. Johnson, *The Chickasaw Rancher, Revised Edition* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2001), 274-276.

complained about "those Indians."[127] Although they were not members of the Indigenous gentry, the Shawnees used the gentry's influence to their advantage.

For the most part, Shawnee people in Cleveland County kept White settlers at arm's length. That seemed to suit the Big Jim Band just fine. Shawnee people regularly visited the city to trade or board a train and settlers invited them annually to perform in city's annual July 4th parade, but most did not settle in the city.[128] Cleveland County had almost no trust land aside from Shawnee and Potawatomi allotments deep in the eastern forest, agriculturally unproductive tracts that White settlers along the South Canadian had little incentive to acquire.

Norman's White residents did discriminate against Shawnees, excluding them from jobs in town and occasionally harassing them.[129] In 1918, the Cleveland County Sheriff captured and interrogated twelve-year-old Minnie Little Jim until she confessed to stealing clothing to keep warm; the sheriff then agreed to drop the charges of theft if she signed a contract to live at a federal boarding school in Shawnee, Oklahoma.[130] However, this harassment resulted from casually racist assumptions about Indigenous people rather than the predatory assault Pottawatomie and Lincoln County officials conducted further east. On the margins, the Big Jim Shawnees still controlled their own affairs. When they desired, they engaged with White settlers. In the early twentieth century, the sheriff's department in Norman began sending deputies to patrol Shawnee ceremonial dances, largely to prevent liquor distribution.[131] In 1922, the Big Jim Shawnees formally asked for that practice to continue.[132] The exact details of the agreement they

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[127] Johnson, *The Chickasaw Rancher*, 276.
[128] "Oklahoma Observations" *Norman Transcript*, November 9, 1889; "Sep. 8, 1890" *Norman Transcript*, September 13, 1890; "Fourth of July at Norman" *Norman Transcript*, July 2, 1914.
[129] Roy M. Isenberg to Fred Harris, July 1, 1968, folder 1, box DP41, Tom Steed Collection.
[130] "Captured Miss Minnie Little Jim" *Daily Transcript*, June 3, 1918.
[131] "The Indian War Dance" *Norman Transcript*, August 21, 1913.
[132] J.F. Suffecool to Sheriff of Cleveland County, August 16, 1922, folder - Absentee Shawnee Tribal Records, box 1, Records of the Tribal Operations Office – Absentee Shawnee Tribe, Shawnee Agency Records.

reached have been lost but in a letter relayed by an OIA official, they "express[ed]…thanks to Mr. Frank Boggs, under Sheriff of Cleveland County of Norman, Oklahoma, for his co-operation with us…tell him that we are very much obliged to him for what good work he did in our gathering."[133]

Shawnee people in Cleveland County derived two main benefits from their strategic choice to live on the margins. First, they retained their lands. Partially, this result of an institutional advantage; federal officials not only did not arbitrarily end the twenty-five-year trust period early as they did with members of the Five Tribes. In fact, two US Presidents from different political parties – Woodrow Wilson and Calvin Coolidge – passed executive orders that collectively extended the trust on Shawnee allotments into the mid-1930s.[134] However, it is also important to emphasize that the Big Jim community made a conscious choice not to take their lands out of trust. Many White Turkey Shawnee, Potawatomi, Iowa, Sauk, and Mesquaki allottees who fell under the Shawnee Agency's jurisdiction took their allotments out of trust, often to sell them. Especially between World War I and the early 1920s, Indigenous lands flew out of the Shawnee Agency so rapidly and at such a volume that overwhelmed OIA personnel could not keep track of the fee patents they granted.[135] The *Indian Scout* – the Shawnee Agency's publication – warned readers of predatory lenders and "loan sharks."[136] John Snake – a Big Jim Shawnee employed by the OIA – further advised his peers not to sign contracts, especially if they could not read.[137] By the mid-1930s, the devastating consequences of allotment

[133] John Scott et al to J.L. Suffecool, c. August 1922, Folder - Absentee Shawnee Tribal Records, Box 1, Records of the Tribal Operations Office – Absentee Shawnee Tribe, Shawnee Agency Records.
[134] US Department of the Interior, *Executive Orders Relating to Indian Reservations, Volume II: From July 1, 1912 to July 1, 1922* (Washington D.C: GPO, 1922), 55; Office of the US President, Executive Order 4557, December 23, 1926.
[135] Shawnee Agency, Annual Report, 1918, 540, roll 133, *Superintendent's Annual Narrative*; Shawnee Agency, Annual Report, 1923, 459-60, roll 133, *Superintendent's Annual Narrative*.
[136] "Money to Lend" *Indian Scout* (Shawnee, OK), February 1915.
[137] John E. Snake "Be Careful What You Sign" *Indian Scout*, November 1917.

were apparent to James W. Alford Jr., a White Turkey Shawnee politician testifying before the US Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. As a young man freshly indoctrinated at a federal boarding school four decades earlier, Alford "prevailed upon [the White Turkey Shawnees] to accept [allotment]…and from that date to this our land has been dwindling."[138] In contrast, Alford noted that Big Jim believed "that the earth is [his] mother and [he] will never turn it up and separate [the land] into quarter sections. That always has been the policy of the descendants of that great chief."[139] As a largely self-governing community living on land that was unattractive to speculators and grafters because of its lack of agricultural capacity or mineral reserves, the Big Jim Shawnees were well positioned to hold the grafting industry at bay. Most Shawnee lands in Cleveland County survived until 1934, when US President Franklin D. Roosevelt temporarily froze the status of all trust lands across the United States.[140] Until the disastrous construction of Lake Thunderbird in the 1960s, the Cleveland County Clerk's Office recorded very few sales of trust land.[141] In light of the enormous loss other communities across the Shawnee Agency's jurisdiction suffered in the same period, it seems unlikely that the Shawnee land base would have survived without some kind of internal coordination.

Second, the Big Jim Band maintained their own system of governance despite consistent federal efforts to nullify that government and merge it with the White Turkey Shawnees living in Pottawatomie County. In 1893, the Office of Indian Affairs formed the Absentee Shawnee Business Committee, an entity beholden to the OIA that the United States recognized exclusively

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[138] James W. Alford, Statement, April 8, 1935, United States Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, *To Promote the General Welfare of the Indians of Oklahoma*, April 8-11, 1935, *S. 2047*, 74th Cong., 19.
[139] James W. Alford, Statement, April 8, 1935, *S. 2047*, 19.
[140] Office of the US President, Executive Order 6926, December 20, 1934.
[141] Tract Books A16, A17, and A18, T9N R1E, Cleveland County Clerk's Office, Norman, OK; the Big Jim Community is heavily concentrated in Township 9, Range 1 East; for the Lake Thunderbird disaster, see: John Truden, "The Absentee Shawnees and the True Story of Lake Thunderbird" *Oklahoma Humanities* 14/2 (Fall/Winter 2021): 12-16.

as the Absentee Shawnee government. Even though the two bands had roughly equal populations, federal officials assigned five White Turkey Shawnees and two Big Jim Shawnees to the business committee, a clear ploy to manipulate Big Jim by leaning on the more American-oriented White Turkey Band to support OIA directives.[142] Accepting the Absentee Shawnee Business Committee's legitimacy and authority would simultaneously make the Big Jim Band's autonomy moot, so Big Jim refused to participate. Until the day he died, Big Jim maintained that his community was politically distinct from the White Turkey Shawnees. Little Jim maintained Big Jim's position. Shawnee elders selected Little Jim to succeed his father in 1907, seven years after Big Jim's death in Mexico.[143] As he led the community over the next half century, Little Jim repeatedly stated that Big Jim Shawnees were autonomous. While he did attend the Absentee Shawnee Business Committee's meetings, one frustrated federal agent reported that Little Jim "never participates in voting, and invariably finds fault with whatever progressive members attempt to do."[144]

By December 1937, the Absentee Shawnee Business Committee was made up of five representatives (apparently the committee shrank from its original seven members); four were White Turkey Shawnees while the fifth was longtime Office of Indian Affairs employee John Snake.[145] That month, the committee proposed a vote to incorporate both communities into one tribal government under the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act, a version of the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) modified by Oklahoma's congressional delegation – which placed a provision in the original 1934 law that excluded their state – in 1936 to protect the state's

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[142] Alford, *Civilization*, 16.
[143] "Shawnee Chief Little Jim Dies" *The Oklahoman*, January 2, 1962.
[144] F.E. Perkins to Ben Dwight, January 31, 1938, file 9502-A 1936 066, decimal no. 060-68 and 740, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, Entry 121, RG75, National Archives at Washington D.C.
[145] Absentee Shawnee Business Committee, Resolution, December 4, 1937, file 9502-A 1936 066; "John Snake" *Indian Scout*, September 1916.

grafting interests.[146] Despite OIWA's origins in backroom dealings, the law still reflected the IRA's core ideas: reorganizing Indigenous communities into representative democracies that resembled the government of the United States, increased tolerance of Indigenous cultures, languages, and religions, and – what some scholars have more recently argued – a further substantiation of US authority over Native peoples.[147] From the perspective of the Absentee Shawnee Business Committee, the Big Jim and White Turkey bands had essentially two options: 1) they could retain the committee or 2) they could incorporate a new government with considerably more authority and capability to control their own affairs.

Many Big Jim Shawnees disagreed. From their vantage point, both options were anathema. On December 5, 1938, 171 people voted on whether to adopt a proposed constitution that would incorporate the tribal government under the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act. Of those 171 who submitted ballots, 121 voted yes and 50 voted no. Little Jim discouraged his constituents from voting at all.[148] On the day of the vote, he stood at the Big Jim Band's polling station and took note of who chose to cast their ballot. OIA personnel in Shawnee, Oklahoma, and Washington D.C. interpreted the results of the December 5 vote to mean that Absentee Shawnee communities approved the constitution and reorganized as the Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma. That phrasing obscures considerable dissent. Out of 272 citizens eligible to vote, only 44% expressed approval of the constitution through the voting process. In studying the

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[146] For the IRA, see: Elmer Rusco, *A Fateful Time: The Background and Legislative History of the Indian Reorganization Act* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000); Vine Deloria Jr., *The Indian Reorganization Act: Congresses and Bills* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002); for the OIWA and its origins in a backroom deal with Oklahoma's congressional delegation, see: Jon S. Blackman, *Oklahoma's Indian New Deal* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), 75-77.

[147] for revaluations of the IRA and its relationship to US authority in Indigenous communities, see: Thomas Biolsi, *Organizing the Lakota.: The Political Economy of the New Deal on the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Reservations* (Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 1992); Akim Reinhardt, *Ruling Pine Ridge: Oglala Lakota Politics from the IRA to Wounded Knee* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2007).

[148] Ben Dwight to A.C. Monahan, December 8, 1938, file 9502-A 1936 066.

implementation of the Indian Reorganization Act in Lakota communities, Thomas Biolsi noted that many Indigenous people voted with their feet – a practice that their communities used to determine their leadership thousands of years before the United States existed – rather than with their ballots.[149] Many deliberately did not vote as an expression of their disapproval. On December 5, not only did 50 citizens submit no ballots but 101 more eligible to vote rejected the OIWA by opting not to participate in this process. From this vantage point, a majority decided not to adopt the constitution. OIA officials did not understand (or care about) this cultural nuance, but they did recognize that "the Big Jim area voted to reject the Constitution."[150] Of those Big Jim Shawnees who submitted ballots, a majority said no. The reasoning for this was very clear to OIA personnel: "the Little Jim Band is very much opposed to organizing in any manner that will have a tendency of placing leadership in anyone other than Little Jim."[151] In fact, Little Jim communicated through a lawyer that he "desires that his ban[d] be kept separate from the White Turkey Band. The Big Jim Band does not want to be organized under the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act."[152]

Intriguingly, the creation of a new tribal government under the OIWA had no more effect in merging the White Turkey and Big Jim communities than the creation of the Absentee Shawnee Business Committee four decades earlier. Through OIA officials recognized the vote as legitimate, there was little tribal government representatives or OIA agents could do to force the Big Jim Band to recognize the Absentee Shawnee Tribe as their government. The Big Jim Band remained "in seclusion east of Norman," shielded by poor roads and thick brush.[153] As Big Jim

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[149] For this idea, see: Biolsi, *Organizing the Lakota*.
[150] Ben Dwight to A.C. Monahan, December 8, 1938, file 9502-A 1936 066.
[151] Ben Dwight to A.C. Monahan, December 8, 1938, file 9502-A 1936 066.
[152] Scott P. Squyres to H.C. Hector January 31, 1939, file - Correspondence-Big Jim, box 1, Absentee Shawnee Tribe, Records of the Tribal Operations Office, Shawnee Agency, RG75, National Archives at Fort Worth.
[153] "Shawnees Seeking Home in Mexico" *Oklahoman*, September 1, 1940.

had done nearly half a century earlier, Little Jim and his constituents refused to cooperate with a system they knew was designed to negate their sovereignty. The Big Jim community's resistance to the implementation of the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act speaks to a broader evaluation of the IRA. For example, Keith Richotte Jr. has pointed out that some Indigenous communities already possessed governing documents, while IRA scholar Elmer Rusco noted that many tribes never adopted the IRA at all.[154] However, these examples do not address the aftermath of the IRA's implementation in Indigenous communities that chose (or who were coerced) into creating governments under the act. Thomas Biolsi and Akim Reinhardt argue that the IRA marked a definitive turning point in Indigenous communities who implemented IRA-style governments, but the Big Jim Band's ability to completely ignore the implementation of OIWA – an IRA substitute – complicates that conclusion. Little Jim and his constituents used their geographical isolation not just to resist the changes that Biolsi and Reinhardt but to negate the authority of the OIWA government entirely.

As White settlers entered central Indian Territory, Indigenous people drew on their repeated experiences with removal to navigate the land rush. Some chose to confront settlers directly in hopes that the United States would live up to its own agreements and laws. Others – anticipating that the federal government would drop the ball as it had in Kansas thirty years earlier – figured out how to use settler designs on Indigenous lands for their own benefit. Still others prioritized their community's autonomy over all else, forsaking valuable land and potential wealth in exchange for control over their own affairs. There was no perfect strategy, but these peoples did the best that they could.

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[154] Keith Richotte Jr., *Claiming Turtle Mountain's Constitution: The History, Legacy, and Future of a Tribal Nation's Founding Documents* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Rusco, *A Fateful Time*.

Chapter IV: From Friendships to Coalitions

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October 19, 1941. Several thousand people gathered in the heart of the Texas Panhandle to commemorate a late nineteenth-century skirmish between Comanche, Kiowa, and Southern Cheyenne warriors and White American buffalo hunters at an abandoned fur trade post. The 1874 Battle of Adobe Walls was one episode in a broader conflict between an intertribal coalition and the United States called the Red River War. Traditionally, military historians celebrated the battle as a victory because the post's defenders fought off overwhelming numbers of Indigenous warriors. Yellowfish – the last Comanche survivor of the battle – told a different story, one in which he and his peers patriotically defended their peoples from American aggression in "The Ride at Dawn."[1] In front of a massive crowd, he dedicated a monument to the thirteen Indigenous men – his compatriots killed in the battle – who "died for that which makes life worth living – Indians' liberty, freedom, peace – on the plains, which they enjoyed for generations."[2] With his nephew translating, the elderly veteran told the crowd that the Indigenous dead at Adobe Walls "lost their lives in defense of liberty and [the] pursuit of happiness."[3] Reportedly, "the entire valley was silent…[as he read the names of] the brave warriors who died in battle."[4]

In the moment that Yellowfish spoke, economic and environmental disaster choked the Panhandle and the specter of global war cast a pale over much of the world. The Comanche elder inspired hope in the face of great difficulty and his words caused many White settlers to

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[1] Jenna V. Stephenson, "History Professor is Carried Away by Indian Warriors" *The Prairie* (Canyon, TX) May 9, 1939.
[2] Bill Freemon, "Impressive Rites Dedicate Adobe Walls Monument" *Amarillo Daily News* (Amarillo, TX), October 20, 1941.
[3] "Indian Ceremonials End Today" *Borger Daily Herald* (Borger, TX), October 19, 1941.
[4] Bill Freemon, "Impressive Rites Dedicate Adobe Walls Monument" *Amarillo Daily News*, October 20, 1941.

reconsider their understanding of the battle. A White journalist writing for the local paper reflected that "our children now have a good idea of what the first Americans who inhabited these plains were like."[5]

Yellowfish's address is notable because the American public rarely empathized with Indigenous conceptions of history in this era. As both White supremacy and settler colonialism reached their apex among White US citizens in the early twentieth century, settlers often reinterpreted the past in ways that reinforced their own supposed racial superiority while erasing Indigenous people. In 1927, a White settler speaking at a public commemoration of the Battle of Buffalo Wallow – another skirmish during the Red River War – argued that "this land could not be left with the buffalo and Indians roaming over it. I believe God manifested this as the best and last land for his people."[6] Those words were gentle in comparison to how settlers at Cheyenne, Oklahoma commemorated the Washita Massacre, an unprovoked U.S. attack on a Southern Cheyenne camp in western Indian Territory a few years before the Red River War. In 1937, one White resident reported candidly that out of "hatred for the Indians," his contemporaries deliberately gathered Cheyenne bones scattered all over the massacre site and sold them "along with the bones of the horses and buffalo…to bone-haulers who in turn shipped them to Eastern factories where they were made into fertilizing material."[7] In 1968, the town's White residents decided to reenact the massacre.[8] Southern Cheyenne people reluctantly agreed to set up a historical village as part of the reenactment but unbeknownst to them, the chamber of commerce

[5] "Indian Ceremonials End Stamped Definite Success" *Borger Daily Herald*, October 20, 1941.
[6] Thomas F. Turner, Talk at the unveiling of the Buffalo Wallow Monument, September 20, 1927, Panhandle-Plains Historical Society, Canyon, TX.
[7] Jess Lynn, July 15, 1937, Indian Pioneer Papers, Western History Collections, Norman, OK.
[8] Raylene Hinz-Penner, *Searching for Sacred Ground: The Journey of Chief Lawrence Hart, Mennonite* (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, 2007), 141-43.

hired a troupe of non-Native actors dressed as U.S. Cavalrymen to charge the camp on horseback while firing blanks from their rifles.

Why was Yellowfish so much more successful in communicating his perception of history to a settler audience than his contemporaries? The Comanche elder's reframing of the battle – a deliberate strategy designed not just to reinterpret the event but to win the broader support of settlers watching the pageantry – reflected one of two competing approaches in the ways Comanche and Kiowa people used historical memory to build ties with White settlers in the first half of the twentieth century. Drawing almost exclusively on the memory of their influential father, Parker children who chose to become active in the public eye maintained and built powerful but largely static one to one relationships with individual settlers. The Parkers used their social status in the much the same way as other members of the Indigenous gentry in Indian Territory. Comanche and Kiowa politicians also manipulated historical memory to influence White settlers, but they did so largely with the knowledge that they were addressing a racial majority. In contrast to the Parker family's person to person relationships – many of which Quanah Parker established in his own lifetime – Indigenous politicians built coalitions with the non-Native public that could amplify their own voices and provide for their Kiowa and Comanche constituents. Although they were often tokenized as the only Indigenous members of largely White groups, over several generations these broader relationships proved far more effective for Indigenous political leaders as the world became more interconnected by the mid-twentieth century.

Remembering Quanah Parker

At the end of the nineteenth century, Quanah Parker's fame gave him surprising influence in the region and allowed him to amass some modest wealth. Although he might not have

identified with the Indigenous gentry in eastern Indian Territory, many White settlers saw the Comanche man as a upper class person. When Quanah Parker traveled to Fort Worth to meet with Andrew Houston – son of Governor of Texas Sam Houston – in 1903, an observer called both "sons of illustrous [sic] men – both leaders and statesmen in their respective spheres…"[9] Another man remembered the Comanche politician as "a noble acquaintance. I admired him greatly for his extreme kindness and his consideration for other people."[10] In 1905, US President Theodore Roosevelt praised the Comanche leader in front of a large crowd at Frederick, Oklahoma Territory.[11] The following year, Quanah Parker famously spoke before the Oklahoma Constitutional Convention.[12] The Parker home played an important role in cementing the Comanche politician's social status. In contrast to the shacks and dug outs of his White contemporaries, the Comanche patriarch's extensive family lived in a stately twenty-two room mansion in West Cache known formally as the Star House.[13] Quanah Parker frequently hosted visitors in this "beautiful mountain home," so much so that he became a point of local pride.[14] When a settler family arrived in the region terrified of Indigenous people (a common feeling), another settler told them "the Indians were all peaceful. To prove it we were told to drive by Quanah Parker's home and see how nicely we would be entertained."[15]

[9] Ophelia D. Vestal, April 22, 1938, Indian Pioneer Papers.
[10] Robert B. Thomas, October 1, 1937, Indian Pioneer Papers.
[11] Remarks of the [sic] President Roosevelt at Frederick, Oklahoma, April 8, 1905, roll 425, *Theodore Roosevelt Papers*, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
[12] Oklahoma Constitutional Convention, *Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the Proposed State of Oklahoma Held at Guthrie, Oklahoma, November 20, 1906-November 16, 1907* (Muskogee: Muskogee Printing Company, 1907), 117.
[13] Robert B. Thomas, October 1, 1937, Indian Pioneer Papers; for a broader study of the Star House, see: Larry C. Floyd, "Quanah Parker's Star House: A Comanche Home Along the White Man's Road" *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 90/2 (Summer 2012): 132-159.
[14] Dick Banks, March 10, 1938, Indian Pioneer Papers.
[15] Fidela Jane Eldridge, July 13, 1937, Indian Pioneer Papers.

By the early twentieth century, White settlers regarded Quanah Parker's adult children such as Neda (or Laura) Parker Birdsong – the oldest daughter in the family – to be upper class Indigenous people (not unlike the gentry in eastern Indian Territory). The family led relatively private lives and engaged with the public when they chose to do so. Educated at Carlisle Indian Industrial School and Dallas Commercial College and married to White Office of Indian Affairs employee Aubra L. Birdsong, Neda Birdsong was present in the public eye in the last years of her father's life.[16] For example, Birdsong assisted her father in his communications with the Texas State Legislature.[17] When Quanah Parker attended a Wild West Show organized by ex-outlaw Cole Younger, Pauline Younger remembered "Mrs. Birdson[g]…accompanied him. She was such a sweet woman."[18] In the same breath, Younger criticized other "local Indians [whom she felt] had to get out or get drunk," making an intriguing distinction between different classes of Indigenous people.[19] By the time her father died, Neda Birdsong was well established in Cache. In fact, Birdsong wrote her Carlisle schoolmate Nellie Robertson – a Sisseton Dakota citizen from eastern South Dakota – that year that "I have one little girl, six years old with blue eyes and she is attending the public school here in town"[20] Over the next several decades, she and her family lived in and maintained the Star House.[21]

After Quanah Parker's death in 1911, the Parkers exerted significant influence over his memory. Much of the family remained in West Cache, a Comanche community just south of the

[16] Record of Graduates and Returned Students, January 16, 1912, Laura Parker Student File, folder 2426, box 49, series 1327, RG75, National Archives at Washington D.C.
[17] Quanah Parker via Laura Parker, to legislature members, January 19, 1909, Box 2K300, Quanah Parker Letters, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, Austin, TX.
[18] Pauline Younger, August 26, 1937, Indian Pioneer Papers.
[19] Pauline Younger, August 26, 1937, Indian Pioneer Papers.
[20] Laura Parker Birdsong to Mrs. Wallace Denny, October 4, 1911, Laura Parker Student File.
[21] Robert B. Thomas, October 1, 1937, Indian Pioneer Papers.

Wichita Mountains.[22] In the mid-1890s, Quanah Parker allowed Mennonite Brethren missionaries to create a mission at West Cache.[23] In March 1926, US Senator John Harreld – an Oklahoman then chairing the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs – introduced a bill in the US Congress appropriating $1500 for the Department of the Interior to build a monument honoring Quanah Parker.[24] Though the bill became law that June, the actual process of designing and erecting the monument took four years.[25] In September 1926, the Parker family met at the Mennonite mission – whose representatives offered to donate land for the monument – and formed a committee to negotiate with federal officials.[26] That committee – which included Neda Birdsong along with two other members of the family – pushed the monument's development forward. They successfully convinced federal officials that the stone for the memorial should come from the Wichita Mountains.[27] Although the family did not get everything they wanted – for example, the federal government did not select the firm that the family suggested – the Parkers exerted considerable influence over the design process.[28] With the monument finally finished in the spring of 1930, thousands of people descended on Cache to witness the unveiling.[29]

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[22] Lee Motah, May 30, 1974, Interviewed by John H. Cash and Gerald W. Wolff, folder 20, box 1, American Indian Research Project Collection, Archives, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK.
[23] Marvin E. Kroeker, *Comanches and Mennonites on the Oklahoma Plains: A.J. and Magdalena Becker and the Post Oak Mission* (Winnipeg, MB: Kindred Productions, 1997), 56-57.
[24] *An Act Authorizing an Appropriation for a Monument for Quannah Parker, late chief of the Comanche Indians*, Pub. L. No. 69-416, Ch. 658, S. 3613.
[25] *An Act Authorizing an appropriation for a monument for Quannah Parker, late chief of the Comanche Indians*, Public Law 69-415, *US Statutes at Large* 44 (1926): 762.
[26] Magdalena Becker to J.A. Buntin, September 23, 1926, folder – Quanah Parker Gravesite, decimal file 98, box 35, E-4 Central Files, Kiowa Agency Records.
[27] J.A. Buntin to Oklahoma City Marble and Granite Company, August 7, 1928, folder – Quanah Parker Gravesite, decimal file 98, box 35, E-4 Central Files, Kiowa Agency Records.
[28] Lena Banks to J.A. Buntin and Neda Birdsong, July 28, 1926, folder – Quanah Parker Gravesite, decimal file 98, box 35, E-4 Central Files, Kiowa Agency Records; G.W. Backus to J.A. Buntin, August 15, 1927, folder – Quanah Parker Gravesite, decimal file 98, box 35, E-4 Central Files, Kiowa Agency Records; J.A. Buntin to Neda Birdsong and White Parker, July 19, 1928, J.A. Buntin to Walter McCown, February 6, 1929, folder – Quanah Parker Gravesite, decimal file 98, box 35, E-4 Central Files, Kiowa Agency Records.
[29] "Quanah Parker Honored Sunday" *Kiowa County Democrat* (Hobart, OK), May 8, 1930; A Crosscut of Oklahoma" *Harlow's Weekly* (Oklahoma City, OK), May 10, 1930.

Another example of Parker family's skill in building serviceable networks was Wanada Parker Page's friendship with a White Texan. The connection allowed the family to regain access to Fort Parker, the site where Comanche people took Quanah Parker's mother captive. Much like her older sibling Neda, Wanada Parker attended Carlisle Indian Industrial School and then returned to Oklahoma, where she remained involved with her family.[30] In 1952, Elsie Hamill – a White woman living in Mexia, Texas – sent a letter to Page asking about Comanche history, culture, and the Parker family. The two had never met before, but Page wrote back. They quickly became pen pals. Over the next year, Hamill asked questions and Wanada Parker Page most often answered by drawing on her own life experiences. In one letter, Page relied to Elsie's query about Comanche parenting by kindly but firmly noting that "yes, Indians are very affectionate to their children."[31] In another, Wanada Parker Page observed that "it seems to me most white people are interested in Indians only if they wear feathers and dance war dances."[32] Page's responses became more intimate over time; for example, she wrote that she forgot how to speak Comanche while attending Carlisle Indian Industrial School and had to relearn the language.[33] Page soon invited Hamill to visit her in West Cache; afterward, Hamill reciprocated, asking her friend to come see her where she lived in Mexia, Texas.[34] The town of Mexia is located near Fort Parker, a small White settler fortification where a Comanche war party captured Cynthia Ann Parker – Quanah Parker's White mother – in 1830. The Comanche branch of the Parker family had never been able to revisit the site. Largely through the lobbying of the

[30] Juanada Parker Student File, folder 2425, box 49, series 1327, RG75, National Archives at Washington D.C.
[31] Wanada Parker Page to Elsie Hamill, April 6, 1952, Folder 1-3, Box 1, Quanah Parker Collection #2609, The Texas Collection, Waco, TX.
[32] Wanada Parker Page to Elsie Hamill, May 9, 1952, Folder 1-3, Box 1, Quanah Parker Collection.
[33] Wanada Parker Page to Elsie Hamill, April 20, 1952, Folder 1-3, Box 1, Quanah Parker Collection.
[34] Wanada Parker Page to Elsie Hamill, June 10, 1952, Folder 1-4, Box 1, Quanah Parker Collection; Ray A. Walter to Elsie Hamill and Weldon Hamill, February 20, 1953, Folder 1-1, Box 1, Quanah Parker Collection.

Hamills, the Mexia community formally invited the Parkers to hold a family reunion there.[35] The Parker family billed this 1953 event as "the first official meeting of the White and Indian relatives of Quanah Parker."[36] To thank Elsie Hamill, Wanada Parker Page invited her to that otherwise closed reunion.[37]

For the Parker family, historical memory was an important but narrow conduit to both create and maintain partnerships between the family and their many allies. Personal relationships were highly effective in the turn of the century United States, a universe of loosely connected communities where local perceptions shaped almost every aspect of a person's standing.[38] In his own lifetime, Quanah Parker used these types of alliances to build social capital in southwestern Indian Territory and West Texas, a tradition which Wanada Parker Page continued some forty years after her father's death when she replied to Elsie Hamill's letter. Moreover, the Parker children certainly faced challenges, but their upper-class status insulated them from racial violence that other Comanches like Tahkahper – a Comanche County deputy sheriff who was publicly humiliated and nearly killed after attempting to break up a gambler's den in Cache – struggled to evade. Elsie Hamill excepted, they generally maintained but did not expand many of their existing relationships with settlers and settler institutions. Over the course of many years, some of their allies died and other relationships declined. As the world became more centralized over the course of the twentieth century through advancing communication and transportation technologies, these static personal relationships began to hold less weight.

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[35] The Committee for Quanah Parker Descendants Reunion to Friends and Relatives, 1953, folder 1-2, box 1, Quanah Parker Collection.
[36] The Committee for Quanah Parker Descendants Reunion to Friends and Relatives, 1953, folder 1-2, box 1, Quanah Parker Collection.
[37] Wanada Parker Page to Elsie Hamill, February 27, 1953, folder 1-6, box 1, Quanah Parker Collection.
[38] Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967).

The same year that Elsie Hamill contacted Wanada Parker Page, Dwight Eisenhower – famous for his leadership in the US Army during World War II – won control of the US Presidency. Since the end of the Second World War, the United States and the Soviet Union had been struggling for global supremacy through a series of proxy wars collectively known as the Cold War. In 1952, US soldiers were battling much larger numbers of Chinese soldiers on the Korean peninsula. The newly inaugurated President faced the prospect of similarly uneven numbers in a potential war with the Soviet Union over West Germany. Eisenhower believed that nuclear weapons – rather than a large army – could close the gap, so he began cutting the US Army's funding while growing programs related to the nation's atomic weaponry. In response, US Army officials scrambled to develop new atomic projects. At Fort Sill – the national center for the US Army's artillery branch – the most important of these projects was the Honest John, a missile that could carry an atomic payload ten miles after being launched from the back of a truck.[39] Eisenhower and his peers theorized that if US troops used tactical (or short range) atomic weapons against Soviet armies invading West Germany, they might be able to contain the conflict to that area while also obliterating Soviet troops.[40] Although the Honest John was ready by 1954, the fort's military reservation was barely large enough for artillerymen to train on that weapon.[41] The following year, Fort Sill's newly arrived commander – Major General Thomas de Shazo – proposed a solution: acquire more land.[42]

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[39] Brian McAlister Linn, *Elvis's Army: Cold War GIs and the Atomic Battlefield* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 87; Donald A. Carter, *The U.S. Army Before Vietnam, 1953-1965* (Washington D.C: Center for Military History, 2015), 24.
[40] Linn, *Elvis's Army*, 84-87; James Ledbetter, *Unwarranted Influence: Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Military-Industrial Complex* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 62.
[41] Jonathan M. House, *A Military History of the Cold War, 1944-1962* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 2012), 227-28; State Legislative Council, Public Hearing on the Proposed Fort Sill Land Expansion, February 19, 1958, 5, Folder 39, DP29, Carl Albert Collection, Carl Albert Center, Norman, OK; Linn, *Elvis's Army*, 87; Donald A. Carter, *The U.S. Army Before Vietnam, 1953-1965* (Washington D.C: Center for Military History, 2015), 24.
[42] Special Study Committee on the Fort Sill Land Expansion Question, Committee Recommendations, April 4, 1958, folder – Fort Sill, Oklahoma (2), box 28, Bryce N. Harlow Records, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library,

Along with a number of other Comanche allottees, the Parker family was caught largely unawares by the expansion. The US Army originally created Fort Sill in the late 1860s to bolster US power in western Indian Territory, a region controlled largely by Comanche and Kiowa communities. During the Red River War (1874-1875), the military fortification became central in US efforts to remove those communities to the reservation. Almost a century later, US Army officials at Fort Sill were again removing an Indigenous community. In August 1955, the US Congress authorized the US Army to purchase twenty thousand acres of private lands directly north of Cache and Indiahoma to expand the Fort Sill Military Reservation.[43] About half of the 20,000 acre tract was made up of Comanche allotments, including the allotment that the Star House occupied.[44] After negotiations with the Bureau of Indian Affairs delayed the process, the Army Corps of Engineers pressured individual allottees to sell during the spring of 1957. In theory, the negotiation process between landowners, the Anadarko office, and the Army took the landowner's interests into account via impartial appraisers, negotiations, and, if necessary, condemnation proceedings mediated by a federal judge.[45] Much like allotment, this process rarely unfolded equitably. Using a common strategy of isolating and intimidating individual landowners, the Army Corps of Engineers bullied Indigenous allottees such as Otis Chappabitty into selling their allotments. Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs W. Barton Greenwood noted that "the sale of land containing Mr. Chappabitty's home was not a matter of choice on his part…the Corps of Army Engineers would have acquired ownership through condemnation

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Abilene, KS; Report of the Fort Sill Expansion Study Committee, c. April 1958, folder – Fort Sill, Oklahoma (2), box 28, Bryce N. Harlow Records.

[43] Richard Lowitt, "Fort Sill Enters the Missile Age" *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 83/4 (Winter 2005): 396.

[44] Theodore W. Taylor, *Report on Purchase of Indian Land and Acres of Indian Land in Trust, 1934-1975* (Washington D.C: Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1976), 86.

[45] Dale Buchanan to Victor Wickersham, August 6, 1956, Folder 4, Box 10, Victor E. Wickersham Collection, Carl Albert Center, Norman, OK.

proceedings if a voluntary agreement had not been reached."[46] Otis Chappabitty had no illusions about his displacement; he wrote his US Representative that "I was forced to sell due to [the] Ft. Sill Expansion."[47]

The expansion devastated the Parker family. The family's carefully nurtured ties to surrounding communities failed them. The US Army not only took the family's lands in West Cache, but also forced the family to remove the Star House, the Quanah Parker Monument, and Quanah Parker's body from the future military reservation. The Parkers had little say in Fort Sill's expansion; the Army Corps of Engineers negotiated with members such as Baldwin Parker as individuals, never considering the broader cultural significance of particular sites like the Star House.[48] By March, Baldwin Parker lost his allotment. In August, the family participated in a public reburial of Quanah Parker (and the relocation of his eponymous monument erected less than thirty years before) at Fort Sill. In what must have been a humiliating exchange, Major General Thomas de Shazo – the architect of the expansion project – attempted to preemptively muffle any potential dissent from the Parkers. While speaking as part of the ceremony, de Shazo argued that "more than anything else…Quanah [Parker] stood for acceptance of change…In this age of the atom we can take a lesson from the great chief's career in adapting ourselves and our children to the tremendous changes taking place in our world today."[49] The Major General was making an ahistorical claim – that a man who died decades before would have accepted the loss of his home for the greater good of American victory in the Cold War – to justify taking lands in

[46] W. Barton Greenwood to Will J. Pitner, April 15, 1957, folder – Miscellaneous Correspondence, Kiowa (F.Y. 1957), box 4, E18-Central Files, Records of the Branch of Real Property, Anadarko Area Office Records.
[47] Otis Chappabitty to Toby Morris, March 6, 1957, folder – Miscellaneous Correspondence, Kiowa (F.Y. 1957), box 4, E18-Central Files, Records of the Branch of Real Property, Anadarko Area Office Records.
[48] W. Barton Greenwood to Will J. Pitner, March 8, 1957, folder – Miscellaneous Correspondence, Kiowa (F.Y. 1957), box 4, E18-Central Files, Records of the Branch of Real Property, Anadarko Area Office Records.
[49] Thomas de Shazo, Chief Quanah Parker and Cynthia Ann Burial, August 9, 1957, folder 15, box 119, Walter Stanley Campbell Collection, Western History Collection, Norman, OK.

the present. Wanada Parker Page quietly countered by reading a letter from one of the family's many allies – longtime Quanah, Acme and Pacific Railroad executive Charles Sommer who licensed Quanah Parker's image in the early twentieth century – that described Quanah Parker as someone who "had character and courage. His philosophy was sound, his judgement good and what he may have lacked in education, he more than made up with common sense."[50] By the time Wanada Parker Page spoke at the reburial, her and the other members of the Parker family had already lost their allotments in West Cache, so they contested the US Army's attempts to seize Quanah Parker too.

Robert Goombi and the Fort Sill Expansion Crisis

If the Parkers led relatively private lives and engaged with the public when they chose to do so, Robert Goombi – a Kiowa politician – was constantly in the public eye. He knew he had no choice but to work together with the settler majority. Goombi, born a generation later than the Parker children, came into the world near Mountain View in 1908.[51] Though he did not wield the social capital that helped the Parker family avoid becoming targets of racial violence, Robert Goombi lived in a locale where such capital was not necessary to survive. Unlike Cache or Cheyenne, White settlers and Kiowa people in Mountain View generally got along, probably because the Kiowa customers coming into town spent quite a bit of money there.[52] After federal authorities opened the allotted Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Reservation to the public in late 1901, Mountain View transformed from a squatter settlement into a commercial hub.[53] The town

[50] Charles Sommer to Thomas de Shazo, August 9, 1957, roll 37, Quanah, Acme and Pacific Railway Company Records Collection, Southwest Collections, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX; Margaret Haney to Wanada Parker Page, August 1, 1957, roll 37, Quanah, Acme and Pacific Railway Company Records Collection.
[51] "R. Goombi Services Held Sat." *Mountain View News* (Mountain View, OK), February 28, 1963.
[52] Sam Hodges, January 4, 1938, Indian Pioneer Papers.
[53] Mary E. Stanka, November 23, 1937, Indian Pioneer Papers.

included a railhead, a cotton gin, a cattle inspection point, numerous businesses, and a "Red Light District."[54]

Kiowa people regularly visited Mountain View, sometimes holding mass meetings nearby.[55] The Ghost Dance became particularly prominent among Kiowa communities on nearby Rainy Mountain Creek; at least one White settler recorded that she and her sister traveled from the city to watch a ceremony.[56] Notably, the city's school system integrated relatively quickly. Horace Poolaw – a Kiowa boy born near Mountain View in 1906 who later became a famous photographer – began attending the town's public school in 1912.[57] While it is difficult to confirm whether Goombi attended the local school, he lived in this community for his entire life. In contrast to more segregated spaces like Cheyenne, Mountain View became a place where Kiowa and White people lived together.

For much of his life, Robert Goombi was heavily involved in Rainy Mountain Indian Baptist Church, a Kiowa religious community located only a few miles southwest of Mountain View. While an important node of Kiowa culture in the twentieth century in its own right, the congregation also set an example for a relatively young Goombi on how to influence White settlers.[58] As Tash Smith noted in studying Indigenous Methodist congregations in Oklahoma, Protestant Christianity served as an important conduit between Natives and newcomers.[59] George Hunt – Goombi's adopted father and a prominent Kiowa political activist – used his position in

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[54] C.A. Aldridge, June 15, 1937, Indian Pioneer Papers; A.C. Williams, August 26, 1937, Indian Pioneer Papers; Annie F. Mitchell, April 19, 1938, Indian Pioneer Papers; Nora L. Smith Lorrin, April 28, 1938, Indian Pioneer Papers.
[55] J.L. Robertson, September 29, 1937, Indian Pioneer Papers.
[56] Benjamin R. Kracht, *Religious Revitalization Among the Kiowas: The Ghost Dance, Peyote, and Christianity* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), 95-97; Nora L. Smith Lorrin, April 28, 1938, Indian Pioneer Papers.
[57] Linda Poolaw, "For a Love of His People" In Nancy Marie Mithlo, ed, *For a Love of His People: The Photography of Horace Poolaw* (New Haven, CT: National Museum of the American Indian, 2014), 29-30.
[58] William C. Meadows, *Kiowa Ethnogeography* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 129.
[59] Tash Smith, *Capture These Indians for the Lord: Indians, Methodists, and Oklahomans, 1844-1939* (Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 2014).

the congregation to build relationships with White congregants across the North American Baptist Church.[60] In 1937, George and his wife Julia gained national attention at a large gathering of Christian missionaries; afterwards, they made several tours of North American Baptist Church congregations in Ohio, Indiana, and Massachusetts.[61] While visiting with his fellow brothers and sisters, the Hunts repeatedly compared the concept of a Kiowa war party to a Christian denomination, arguing that both were examples of people choosing to band together to accomplish a greater goal. Their illustrations made Kiowa culture seem familiar, allowing the traveling couple to secure distant but powerful support for Kiowa people. Robert Goombi, who recorded a chronicle of George Hunt's life, meditated deeply on these connections.[62]

During the economically difficult years of the early 1930s, many Indigenous people like Goombi began to see performance in front of settler audiences as an economic lifeline for their impoverished communities. From 1880s through the 1920s, White businessmen hired many Indigenous people to perform in Wild West Shows touring the United States and Europe.[63] By the 1920s, most major Wild West Shows in the United States were fading; a number of different Indigenous festivals had emerged to take their place.[64] Among others, these included Crow Fair, the Wisconsin Dells, and the Gallup Intertribal Indian Ceremonial. Both Wild West Shows and Indigenous festivals drew Native performers "because [they]…could congregate, dance, feast, race their horses and celebrate with friends and relatives, regardless of…disapproving

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[60] Robert S. Goombi, George Hunt, A Leader of His Indian Peoples, c. 1942, George Hunt Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.
[61] How Light Came to the Kiowas, c. 1939, George Hunt Collection; see also, Coe Hayne, *Kiowa Turning* (New York: Council on Finance and Promotion of the Northern Baptist Convention, 1944).
[62] Robert S. Goombi, George Hunt, A Leader of His Indian Peoples, c. 1942, George Hunt Collection
[63] For Indigenous performers in wild west shows, see: Carolyn Thomas Foreman, *Indians Abroad, 1493-1938* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1943); L.G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883-1933* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999); Linda McNenly, *Native Performers in Wild West Shows: From Buffalo Bill to Euro Disney* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012).
[64] E.R. Gaede, "An Ethnohistory of the American Indian Exposition at Anadarko, Oklahoma: 1932-2003" (PhD Dissertation: University of Oklahoma, 2009), 114.

government agents or religious officials."[65] In 1924, Frank Rush – a White businessman living in Cache – began hiring Indigenous performers for an annual event that became known as the Craterville Indian Fair.[66] Comanche, Kiowa, Plains Apache, and Southern Cheyenne leaders had some institutional influence – more than prior performance venues – but Rush retained overall control.[67] According to Kiowa historian Parker McKenzie, the White businessman's death in 1933 provided an opportunity for many of the performers – who had become dissatisfied with their lack of power – to create something new.[68]

Robert Goombi was in his early twenties as his elders – such as Parker McKenzie and Jasper Saunkeah – organized the American Indian Exposition.[69] Unlike the Craterville Indian Fair, the Exposition was more centrally located in Anadarko, Oklahoma, a community initially organized around an Office of Indian Affairs agency that grew into a common meeting place for neighboring Native communities. Local OIA agents were supportive of an Indigenous festival and provided some administrative resources alongside a small amount of initial funding.[70] Nationally, the passage of the Indian Reorganization Act (1934) and creation of the Indian Arts and Crafts Act (1936) created a more fertile environment for Indigenous cultural events by encouraging rather than attempting to suppress expressions of indigeneity.[71] White tourists viewed the American Indian Exposition as entertainment and happily paid admission to attend; the Exposition was an extremely welcome distraction from a crippling economic depression. In

[65] Gaede, "An Ethnohistory of the American Indian Exposition," 119-120.
[66] Gaede, "An Ethnohistory of the American Indian Exposition," 120.
[67] Gaede, "An Ethnohistory of the American Indian Exposition," 123-124.
[68] Gaede, "An Ethnohistory of the American Indian Exposition," 126-127.
[69] For general histories of the American Indian Exposition, see: Muriel H. Wright, "The American Indian Exposition in Oklahoma" *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 24/2 (Spring 1946): 158-166; Clyde Ellis, *A Dancing People: Powwow Culture on the Southern Plains* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 140-152; Gaede, "An Ethnohistory of the American Indian Exposition."
[70] Gaede, "An Ethnohistory of the American Indian Exposition," 128-130.
[71] Gaede, "An Ethnohistory of the American Indian Exposition," 97.

1935, the City of Anadarko began formally lending its resources to the fair too.[72] Over the course of the decade, the American Indian Exposition made far more money and attracted more publicity than contemporary county fairs or even the Craterville Indian Fair; it grew to include hundreds of performers and attract thousands of visitors from across Oklahoma and surrounding states. Typically a four day affair involving a variety of pageantry, dancing, and performances, the event expanded as it gained notoriety to eventually include shooting contests, races, baseball, a parade, an Indigenous royalty contest, and exhibitions. Beginning in the mid-1930s, a neighborhood of temporary dwellings began growing up around the site each year; rather than just local communities, Indigenous people from across the state began gathering together and spending time with one another for just over a week before the exposition started.[73]

The connections that Indigenous politicians such as Albert Attocknie and Robert Goombi made through American Indian Exposition opened up a series of new opportunities. After the 1874-1875 Red River War, US officials took full military control over Kiowa, Comanche, and Plains Apache communities and suppressed their traditional systems of governance. In 1899, a local Office of Indian Affairs agent created the Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Business Committee, a council of elected representatives from each community that met to address tribal government business.[74] All three Indigenous communities were distinct and sovereign from one another, but they were essentially forced to work together from a position of limited power. Although flawed, the Business Committee was for a long time the only semblance of self-governance that Kiowa, Comanche, and Plains Apache people had. Given the limitations of the committee imposed by

[72] Gaede, "An Ethnohistory of the American Indian Exposition," 138.
[73] Gaede, "An Ethnohistory of the American Indian Exposition," 141-142.
[74] David La Vere, "Minding Their Own Business: The Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Business Committee of the Early 1900s" In Brian C. Hosmer and Colleen O'Neill, Eds, *Native Pathways: American Indian Culture and Economic Development in the Twentieth Century* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2004), 54.

the US government, many Indigenous politicians – including Goombi – sought to use other means like the Exposition to gather soft political influence through their non-Native neighbors.

The American Indian Exposition's economic success and increasing notoriety created a demand for Comanche and Kiowa performers in neighboring Texas. In 1940, the White residents of Jacksboro, Texas decided to reenact the late nineteenth century trial of Kiowa leaders Big Tree and Satanta for the first time. After US soldiers seized them as a reprisal for leading a raid into Texas and handed them over to state authorities at Jacksboro in 1871, the two men received a sham trial and spent several years in the Texas State Penitentiary on death row before Governor Edmund Davis pardoned them to relieve political tensions between the Kiowas and United States.[75] Big Tree later reinvented himself and became a prominent deacon at Rainy Mountain Indian Baptist Church, the same congregation that Robert Goombi attended.[76] In 1940, White settlers in Jacksboro asked University of Oklahoma pre-med student Kenneth Haag and internationally renowned artist James Auchiah to play their respective grandfathers, Big Tree and Satanta. "The Trial of Satanta" pageant portrayed Kiowa people as bloodthirsty raiders and White Texans as heroes, but Haag used his marginal position within the proceedings at Jacksboro to question those White supremacist assumptions.[77] In "scholarly language," he explored a Kiowa perspective of the trial while also arguing that modern Kiowa people like himself were functioning members of American society. To the 30,000 or so people who attended the commemoration, Kenneth Haag left a distinctly unsettling impression. The President of the Jack County Historical Society reflected on Haag and Auchiah, noting that

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[75] Carl H. Moneyhon, *Edmund J. Davis of Texas: Civil War General, Republican Leader, Reconstruction Governor* (Fort Worth: TCU Press, 2010), 185-186.
[76] H.H. Clouse, Rainy Mountain, c. 1912, Parker McKenzie Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.
[77] R.C. Lanning and W. Gayle Walley, "The Trial of Satanta" Scrapbook, Wolf Law Library, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA.

"these are modern young men not distinguishable from any other American by dress, manner or otherwise except…sunbrowned skin."[78] In light of subsequent events, Jacksboro was an important moment in which Kiowa and Comanche activists commandeered a settler commemoration to express their own points of view. Kenneth Haag and James Auchiah sharply challenged White supremacist, settler colonial conceptions of the past, making White settler audiences more amendable to listening to what the two men had to say.

It would take some time for Indigenous people to revisit the Texas Panhandle – the Comanche heartland – which had been almost completely depopulated of Indigenous people after the Red River War. New White and Nuevomexicano settlers – groups not present in substantial numbers before that event – replaced them.[79] Panhandle settlers first saw Indigenous people as a threat; in January 1891, a mass panic broke out over a false rumor of a war party coming over the horizon.[80] Those racial attitudes softened as White and Nuevomexicano people began to believe that Indigenous communities were more a disappearing curiosity than a danger. In 1931, Panhandle residents commemorated the scare as a time when they came together as a community. Those softening attitudes created new opportunities. In 1929, Olive K. Dixon – a White journalist and historian based in the largest city in the Panhandle, Amarillo – met Albert Attocknie, whose father fought at the 1874 Battle of Adobe Walls; the two began corresponding

[78] Lewis Johnson to Fritz G. Lanham, July 30, 1940, Scrapbook.
[79] Jayme Sokolow, "The Demography of a Ranching Frontier: The Texas Panhandle in 1880" *Panhandle Plains Historical Review* 55 (1982): 73-125; Anna J. Taylor, "Hispanic Settlement of the Texas Panhandle-Plains, 1876-1884" *Panhandle Plains Historical Review* 70 (1997): 36-58; : Frederick W. Rathjen, *The Texas Panhandle Frontier, Revised Edition* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1998); Ann Carson, "Far East Meets Near West: Asian Pioneers of the Texas Panhandle" (Master's Thesis: West Texas A&M University, 2010).
[80] B. Bryon Price, "The Great Panhandle Indian Scare of 1891" *Panhandle-Plains Historical Review* 55 (1982): 128.

about escorting the last living Comanche veterans of the battle to see the field once again.[81] Attocknie visited the site in 1931, but the Great Depression delayed a follow up trip.

In the Texas Panhandle, White settlers made assumptions about Comanches rooted in racism but also in rumor. By the time Albert Attocknie managed to escort the last two living Comanche veterans – Yellowfish and Timbo – to the battle site near Borger, Texas in 1939, Indigenous people had not regularly lived in the region for almost sixty years. Yellowfish – seasoned in both Comanche and Oklahoma politics – understood how to manipulate settler assumptions to his advantage.[82] Left in a car with Yellowfish and Timbo, West Texas State College history professor L.E. Sheffy assumed the two men did not understand English, so he began talking to them about Borger in a racist pidgin dialect more rooted in Hollywood than the Great Plains. The two men replied in "perfect English."[83] In a speech to the Borger Chamber of Commerce two years later, Yellowfish deliberately spoke in Comanche while his nephew Albert Attocknie translated.[84] The seasoned politician and veteran of Adobe Walls proposed the erection of a monument remembering those Indigenous people who died at the battle. Borger representatives enthusiastically adopted this goal, pledging that they were "ready…to help erect and dedicate a monument to the Indians who lost their lives at Adobe Walls."[85] By playing into a certain image of indigeneity and then manipulating implicit assumptions associated with that image, Yellowfish could pierce once impermeable cultural barriers.

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[81] "Comanche Indian Braves Want to visit Historic Adobe Walls Battle Site" *Amarillo Daily News*, January 16, 1931; "Comanches Here to Arrange for Three Lone Survivors of Adobe Walls to See Site" *Amarillo Daily News*, February 12, 1931.
[82] George W. Levite, July 17, 1967, 11, Interviewed by Bill Savage, Doris Duke Collection, Western History Collections, Norman, OK; Yellowfish to Lorraine Gensman, February 24, 1921, Folder 105, Box 12, Lorraine M. "Nick" Gensman Collection, Carl Albert Center, Norman, OK.
[83] Jenna Stephenson, "History Professor is Carried Away by Indian Warriors" *The Prairie* (Canyon, TX), May 9, 1939.
[84] Olive K. Dixon, "Indians Visit Adobe Walls Battle Site" *Amarillo Sunday-News Globe*, April 20, 1941.
[85] H.N. Pruett to A.C. Monahan, October 30, 1940, Folder – Quanah Parker Gravesite, Decimal File 98, Box 35, E-4 Central Files, Kiowa Agency Records.

Surely the Borger Chamber of Commerce also saw a unique financial opportunity in Yellowfish's pitch. Borger's residents – seriously weakened by years of decline, drought, and mass exodus that devastated the Panhandle during the Dust Bowl – were desperate to find new sources of revenue. Those old enough certainly remembered how many people traveled to Borger in the early 1920s to visit commemorative festivities at Adobe Walls. Furthermore, the American Indian Exposition and its counterpart in New Mexico – the Gallup Intertribal Indian Ceremonial – were then raking in profits despite some of the worst environmental and economic disasters ever witnessed in the region. [86] Whether or not they agreed with Yellowfish and Albert Attocknie's interpretation of the 1874 battle, partnering with the two men made good financial sense to the members of the Borger Chamber of Commerce. Gradually, plans to erect a monument evolved into a full-fledged festival, a multi-day event crewed by Indigenous people that would reinterpret Adobe Walls through the perspectives of Indigenous combatants.[87]

At the Adobe Walls Indian Ceremonial, Yellowfish offered a powerful Comanche reinterpretation of the battle. As the Borger Chamber of Commerce prepared to provide housing, food, and transport to the festival's performers and their families that Albert Attocknie recruited and coordinated, Yellowfish gained Comanche political support for the project.[88] Conversations with Albert Attocknie, Yellowfish and Timbo had already challenged White settlers' ideas about the past; notably, the festival brochures preprinted by a county organization referenced a "trail of

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[86] Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 36-37; Gaede, "An Ethnohistory of the American Indian Exposition at Anadarko, Oklahoma," 140; Jo Allyn Archambault, "The Gallup Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial: An Examination of Patron-Client Relations" (PhD Dissertation: University of California at Berkeley, 1985), 34.

[87] H.N. Pruett to A.C. Monahan, June 18, 1941, folder – Quanah Parker Gravesite, Decimal File 98, box 35, E-4 Central Files, Kiowa Agency Records.

[88] W.C. McCown to L.M. Davis, September 12, 1941, folder – Quanah Parker Gravesite, Decimal File 98, box 35, E-4 Central Files, Kiowa Agency Records; W.C. McCown to H.N. Pruett, July 17, 1941, folder – Quanah Parker Gravesite, Decimal File 98, box 35, E-4 Central Files, Kiowa Agency Records; W. Barton Greenwood to W.B. McCown, May 15, 1940, Folder – Quanah Parker Gravesite, Decimal File 98, Box 35, E-4 Central Files, Kiowa Agency Records.

broken treaties" rather than just the inevitable advance of "white man's civilization."[89] Yellowfish pushed further during the October 17-19 festival, reminding observers of Comanche and Kiowa independence from the United States as well as their present patriotism as Indigenous Americans. While preparing the monument, Indigenous men employed at a branch of the Civilian Conservation Corps-Indian Division at Anadarko carved the words "they died for that which makes life worth living – Indians' liberty, freedom, peace."[90] The monument's obvious allusion to the Declaration of Independence – a foundational American document – helped Yellowfish legitimize a controversial (at least for White attendees) understanding of The Ride at Dawn. In the same moment that he spoke, economic and environmental disaster choked the Panhandle and the local newspaper mapped out the German advance on Moscow. Certainly, Borger residents were extremely pleased with a vibrant, new revenue stream – the festival was deemed a "definite [financial] success" in the local paper – but Yellowfish's words also spoke powerfully to many White Americans who saw their economic and political freedom threatened.[91] It was not a significant mental jump for the same settlers to see Yellowfish's perspective as something like their own and therefore legitimate.

Eighteen days after the Ceremonial's end, the Japanese Navy raided the Hawaiian Islands. Comanche and Kiowa communities in southwestern Oklahoma mobilized for war. Some gained manufacturing jobs or bought war bonds, while others enlisted in the US armed forces.[92] Over the course of the Second World War, at least eleven lost their lives and twenty-three others

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[89] *1941 Adobe Walls Indian Ceremonials* (Borger, TX: Hutchinson County Fair Association, 1941), folder 79, box 1, T. Lindsay Baker Research Papers on Adobe Walls, Panhandle Plains Historical Museum, Canyon, TX.
[90] Bill Freemon, "Impressive Rites Dedicate Adobe Walls Monument" *Amarillo Daily News* (Amarillo, TX), October 20, 1941.
[91] "Indian Ceremonials End Stamped Definite Success" *Borger Daily Herald*, October 20, 1941.
[92] Alison R. Bernstein, *American Indians and World War II: Toward a New Era in Indian Affairs* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 40-88.

found themselves wounded.[93] Internationally renowned Kiowa artist James Auchiah enlisted in the US Coast Guard and on that service's authority collaborated with Kiowa tribal government officials to decode drawings left by Southern Plains Indian prisoners of war at a nineteenth century fortification in St. Augustine, Florida.[94] For his part, Albert Attocknie sang a series of Comanche songs ridiculing Germany and Japan on the Indians for Indians radio hour, an Indigenous radio program based at the University of Oklahoma.[95]

The American Indian Exposition's staff – a mix of Indigenous and White people in southwestern Oklahoma that included Albert Attocknie and Robert Goombi – saw the war as an opportunity to continue revisiting how the public understood Indigenous peoples. They did so by emphasizing how Indigenous patriotism. Whereas the 1941 Exposition pageant emphasized "Peace on the Prairie," the following year's "Drums Along the Washita" linked Indigenous histories with the present "World Conflict" and 1943's "Signal Fires" reminded audiences that the United States would soon invade Europe and face the Nazi German state.[96] The 1945 American Indian Exposition – staged as hostilities finally ended – bled celebratory patriotic fervor.[97] Staff dedicated several event days to Indigenous men and women in the US military.[98] Indigenous soldiers home from the front gathered at the grounds, an artillery unit from Fort Sill honored a Kiowa man killed in a 1944 battle in France, and Exposition performers reenacted the

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[93] Office of Indian Affairs, *Indians in the War* (Chicago: Office of Indian Affairs, 1945), 21-22, 36-37.
[94] Newton B. Drury to James Auchiah, November 20, 1943, DOC7363, Fort Sill Museum Archives, Fort Sill, OK; John P. Aunko to James Auchiah, March 25, 1943, DOC1838, Fort Sill Museum Archives, Fort Sill, OK; R.M. French Jr., "Around Florida: Young Indian Helps Decipher Inscriptions of His Grandfather on St. Augustine Fort" *Miami Herald* (Miami, FL), July 16, 1943.
[95] "Radio Warpath" *Newsweek*, April 20, 1942, 60; see also: Josh Garrett-Davis, "The Intertribal Drum of Radio: The Indians for Indians Hour and Native American Media, 1941-1951" *Western Historical Quarterly* 49/3 (Fall 2018): 249-273.
[96] American Indian Exposition Program, August 20-23, 1941, Indian Exposition I, Historic Oklahoma Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK; American Indian Exposition Program, August 19-23, 1942, Western History Collections, Norman, OK; Margaret Pearson Speelman to Jasper Saunkeah, July 10, 1943, Folder – Fairs (American Indian Exposition), decimal file 72, box 35, E4-Central Files, Kiowa Agency Records.
[97] E.R. Gaede, "An Ethnohistory of the American Indian Exposition," 158.
[98] American Indian Exposition Program, August 14-18, 1945, Indian Exposition I, Historic Oklahoma Collection

raising of an American flag at the 1945 Battle of Iwo Jima.[99] Seizing the moment, Robert Goombi – now president of the exposition – asked US Representative Jed Johnson that the US Congress fund a permanent venue for the American Indian Exposition: a massive amphitheater dedicated as a "Living Memorial for the Indians of World Wars I and II."[100] Although this appeal failed, Goombi continued to remind his allies of "our [Indigenous] boys" who he believed deserved to be included in "the so called GI Bill of Rights."[101]

By leveraging relationships and perception to his advantage, Robert Goombi became the most powerful tribal politician in southwestern Oklahoma since Quanah Parker. Both men derived a portion of their authority from their positions as leaders in tribal government but bolstered that authority with influence built from the surrounding community. Parker lived in a disconnected nineteenth century world, a series of communities that existed (at least on a daily basis) as cultural islands. He gained influence by befriending individuals within these communities through personal generosity and hospitality. In contrast, Robert Goombi derived most of his influence through his ability to shape a more unified public opinion. The world Goombi lived in was far more interconnected than the one Quanah Parker inhabited. New technologies such as radio, film, automobiles, and planes sped up communication and transportation, allowing politicians and pundits to communicate messages across vast distances to large audiences. The Kiowa politician developed a regional and even national reputation for his role in Indigenous affairs. In 1944, his criticisms of Kiowa Agency Superintendent W.B. McCown reached the US Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, forcing McCown to testify and

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[99] Wright, "The American Indian Exposition in Oklahoma," 164; Raymond E. Lee to W.B. McCown, July 20, 1945, Folder – Fairs, Decimal File 72, Box 35, E4-Central Files, Kiowa Agency Records; Thomas J. Noonan to W.B. McCown, July 28, 1945, Folder – Fairs, Decimal File 72, Box 35, E4-Central Files, Kiowa Agency Records.
[100] Robert Goombi to Jed Johnson, September 10, 1945, folder – Fairs, Decimal File 72, box 35, E4-Central Files, Kiowa Agency Records.
[101] Robert Goombi to Elmer Thomas, April 7, 1949, folder 27, box LG76, Elmer Thomas Collection, Carl Albert Center, Norman, OK.

defend himself.[102] In 1949, US Representative Elmer Thomas supported legislation allowing the city government of Lawton, Oklahoma attempted to condemn and annex a portion of Fort Sill Indian School's reservation without approval of the KCA Business Committee.[103] Robert Goombi wrote to Thomas that "my heart was broken over the whole thing I did'nt [sic] think you would do such dirty trick to me and your other Indian friends who have stood by you in the past years."[104] He pledged to push Thomas – a former ally – out of office. That exchanged scared the congressman.[105]

Even the powerful Goombi grew more concerned about the Office of Indian Affairs and the federal government's role more generally. After 1945, many powerful federal and US congressional officials looking to cut costs began pushing for the United States to end its formal relationship with Indigenous communities. They advocated for a set of policies – collectively called termination – that included the dismantlement of tribal governments, voiding of treaty rights, relocation and assimilation of tribal citizens, and settlement of court claims among other policies.[106] In 1950, US President Harry Truman hired Dillon S. Myer to head the Bureau as a part of this general drawdown.[107] Myer, an influential federal bureaucrat who headed the War Relocation Authority that incarcerated 120,000 Japanese Americans during the Second World War, was willing to violate the rights of those he served to meet his bottom line. The Interior

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[102] "Kiowa Agent Denies Charge" *Sapulpa Herald* (Sapulpa, OK), June 24, 1944.
[103] William E. Warne to Elmer Thomas, June 8, 1949, folder 15, box LG74, Elmer Thomas Collection.
[104] Robert Goombi to Elmer Thomas, August 27, 1949, folder 15, box LG74, Elmer Thomas Collection.
[105] Elmer Thomas to W. Wade Head, September 26, 1949, folder 15, box LG74, Elmer Thomas Collection.
[106] Donald L. Fixico, *Termination and Relocation: Federal Indian Policy, 1945-1960* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986); Kenneth R. Philp, *Termination Revisited: American Indians on the Trail to Self-Determination, 1933-1953* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999); Roberta Ulrich, *American Indian Nations from Termination to Restoration, 1953-2006* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010); Douglas K. Miller, *Indians on the Move: Native American Mobility and Urbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019); Harvey Rosenthal, *Their Day in Court: A History of the Indian Claims Commission* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990); David E. Wilkins, *Hollow Justice: A History of Indigenous Claims in the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).
[107] Richard Drinnon, *Keeper of Concentration Camps: Dillon S. Meyer and American Racism* (Berkely: University of California Press, 1987), 166.

Department gave him a mandate to cut costs, make changes as he saw fit, and allowed him to install his cronies into positions of power within the BIA.[108] In 1952, Myer sent out an incendiary memorandum directing BIA employees to begin a general withdrawal of federal involvement in Indigenous affairs.[109] Native peoples quickly condemned the memo, but the BIA continued despite their protests.[110] In 1953, Goombi led national opposition to the appointment of Myer's successor, a similarly minded terminationist.[111]

In southwestern Oklahoma, the Anadarko Area Office – one of twelve regional offices created by the Office of Indian Affairs during its reorganization in the late 1940s to streamline communications with many smaller agencies, boarding schools, and other BIA subunits –began carrying out a program of termination. In 1954, Goombi wrote US Senator Robert Kerr that the Anadarko Area Office suffered from "some of the blackest and most corrupt [in the] Indian service…It is terrible for Congress to let this thing go on in America."[112] In another letter to US Representative Victor Wickersham the following year, Goombi complained that "we do not know what is going on [at] the Aera [sic] Office [because they] never consult with the Indians so we do not know what is going on. Changes are made over night and we never know what is going on."[113] By 1957, the Anadarko Area Office was submitting annual, extensive reports to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs about the status of the local agency's reduction of services that

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[108] Drinnon, *Keeper of Concentration Camps*, 167-69.
[109] Dillon S. Myer to Victor Wickersham, November 3, 1952, folder – Memoranda and Correspondence (Re: withdrawal program), box 3, E10A Office Files of the Area Director, Anadarko Area Office Records, RG75, National Archives at Fort Worth, TX.
[110] A.C. Hector to W. Wade Head, October 15, 1952, folder – Memoranda and Correspondence (Re: Withdrawal Program), box 3, E10A Office Files of the Area Director; Caddo Tribal Executive Committee, Resolution, October 10, 1952, folder – Memoranda and Correspondence (Re: Withdrawal Program), box 3, Office Files of the Area Director, Anadarko Area Office Records.
[111] "Kiowa Heads Protest Emmons Appointment" *Washington Post*, July 18, 1953.
[112] Robert Goombi to Robert Kerr, January 14, 1954, folder 16, box CR7, Robert S. Kerr Collection, Carl Albert Center, Norman, OK.
[113] Robert Goombi to Victor Wickersham, April 14, 1955, folder 13, box 4, Victor E. Wickersham Collection.

included phasing out boarding schools, withdrawing trust status from allotments, giving Indigenous landowners more power over leasing and money, relocating Indigenous families to urban areas, transferring federal responsibilities such as agricultural advising, road maintenance, welfare, and law enforcement to state, county, and municipal authorities, and planning an exit strategy for more complicated problems that required continuing maintenance.[114] On the ground, the consequences of this campaign translated to a loosening of legal protections for Indigenous landowners. In 1956, Robert Goombi wrote Oklahoma historian Angie Debo that "the Bureau is selling Indian land right and left."[115] Goombi was born just a generation after the US government removed his people to a reservation and a mere five years the US Supreme Court affirmed that the US Congress had the power to dismantle the same reservation. It was not unreasonable that the federal government might take more from them.

The apex of Goombi's influence coincided with the Fort Sill expansion crisis. Indigenous allottees and White settlers alike stood to lose their lands, while surrounding communities would suffer significant disruption to their economies from lost business. Goombi's responses to that crisis reflected his long career as a public figure and particularly the way he and his contemporaries used historical memory to influence White settlers. In 1955, Robert Goombi was chairman of the KCA Business Committee. In his official committee as chairman, he represented the Business Committee – effectively the collective government of Kiowa, Comanche, and Plains Apache communities – on the Wichita Landowners Association. The WLA – a majority White coalition of landowners threatened by the expansion – incorporated Robert Goombi's ideas into their protest against the expansion. As part of a formal statement in front of the US

[114] Anadarko Area Office, Summary Statement of Withdrawal Status, June 30, 1957, folder – Withdrawal Status – Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache Tribes, box 2, Office Files of the Area Director, Anadarko Area Office Records.
[115] Robert Goombi to Angie Debo, June 29, 1956, folder 5, roll 22, Angie Debo Papers, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK.

Senate Committee on Armed Forces in June 1955, several members of the WLA emphasized Indigenous aspects of the landscape. They asked "haven't we mistreated our American Indians long enough? They are only a few, but they do not want to be moved from their homes. There are over 600 Indians buried in the proposed private lands purchase including the grave of Quannah [sic] Parker, the last chief of the Comanches, at the head of which is a monument which was provided by an act of Congress."[116] Though Indigenous issues were only one of twelve main points made by the organization, their inclusion is notable because the WLA leadership was majority White.

Writing from his home in Mountain View in his official capacity as the chairman of the KCA Business Committee, the Kiowa politician sent a much longer letter in May 1955 which WLA representatives included as part of their testimony before the committee. The points Goombi made in that letter paralleled almost exactly the WLA's testimony relating to Indigenous peoples before the US Senate Committee on Armed Forces, which indicates that these points were his in the first place. In the background Goombi was shaping how his settler peers remembered Quanah Parker. In the letter, he elaborated somewhat by imagining "that if Chief Quannah Parker were alive today he would say, "Please, white brother, when will the end be? Please leave my corral, home, and land as God made them. White brother, you have broken your vows many times."[117] The Kiowa politician was very clearly drawing on how White settlers thought about the Comanche leader to combat the expansion. Goombi also pointed to the Quanah Parker Monument erected by the Parker family. Referring to a phrase on the monument that reads "resting here until day breaks and shadows fall and darkness disappears," the Kiowa

[116] US Senate, Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Real Estate and Military Construction. *Military Public Works Construction*, S. 1765, 84th Cong, 1st Sess, June 14, 1955, 687.
[117] US Senate, *Military Public Works Construction*, 686.

politician wrote that "the day is about to break on the grave of Chief Quannah Parker, but surely not the day referred to in this inscription."[118] In essence, Robert Goombi accused the US Army of robbing the Comanche politician's grave.

Though the US Army faced opposition from the WLA when they acquired the 20,000 acre tract near Cache, that opposition failed to reach the critical mass needed to stop the process. As Army officials demanded 72,000 more acres in late 1957, the world situation changed yet again. In August 1957, Dwight Eisenhower doubled down on his strategy of limited nuclear war, a stance that enraged Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev.[119] In October, Soviet scientists launched *Sputnik*, a small satellite, into orbit over the Earth's atmosphere. *Sputnik* had no military capabilities, but the American media panicked and US Army Major General Thomas de Shazo – commander of Fort Sill and architect of the first expansion – saw an opportunity.[120] In late November, he announced plans to nearly double the fort's military reservation, enveloping much of western Comanche and southern Kiowa counties.[121]

Goombi remained highly influential in a combined settler and Indigenous resistance movement to the US Army's second expansion attempt. In response to Fort Sill's leader, Thomas de Shazo's announcement, White and Indigenous people affected by the potential new expansion organized the Southwest Oklahoma Survival Association (SOSA). Though SOSA was much larger than the Wichita Landowners Association, the organization was still made up mostly of concerned citizens who lived in the region. Charles Bolar, a White mailman from Gotebo, served

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[118] US Senate, *Military Public Works Construction*, 686.
[119] "Defense Strategy Undergoes Change" *Lawton Constitution*, August 10, 1957; "U.S. Warned of Rocket Attack" *Lawton Constitution*, August 8, 1957.
[120] Yanek Mieczkowski, *Eisenhower's Sputnik Moment: The Race for Space and World Prestige* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 2; Report of the Fort Sill Expansion Study Committee, c. April 1958, folder – Fort Sill, Oklahoma (2), box 28, Bryce N. Harlow Records.
[121] State Legislative Council, Public Hearing on the Proposed Fort Sill Land Expansion, February 19, 1958, 21, folder 39, box DP29, Carl Albert Collection.

as the organization's head.[122] Along with his Plains Apache colleague Philemon Berry, Robert Goombi made up a notable (and interestingly, disproportionate in comparison to the general population) Indigenous minority within the organization's leadership.[123] In January 1957, Goombi's Plains Apache colleague Philemon Berry replaced the Kiowa politician as chair of the KCA Business Committee, so as a director Goombi represented the reservation's communities at large and Mountain View.[124] Considering the town's longtime integrated status, Robert Goombi – both a literal and figurative Native son of Mountain View – was a logical choice to represent the town's residents, who were terrified by de Shazo's announcement. For the most part, the expansion benefited Lawton's economy. Outlying towns had little incentive to lose customers, businesses, and land to the federal government with minimal compensation. From December 1957 onward, Mountain View's residents were among the most motivated to resist the expansion.[125] Though they were not enveloped by the military reservation, the economic threat posed by the expansion threatened to destroy the town. They sent representatives to SOSA's first meetings, contributed funds, and mobilized protesters to go to Oklahoma City and Washington D.C.[126]

As with the WLA, Robert Goombi shaped SOSA's rhetoric about Indigenous communities. Although he always remained a minority within a White settler majority, Goombi's non-Native peers regarded the Kiowa politician as an important part of their coalition

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[122] State Legislative Council, Public Hearing on the Proposed Fort Sill Land Expansion, February 19, 1958, 46, folder 39, box DP29, Carl Albert Collection.
[123] Board of Directors, Southwest Oklahoma Survival Association, Minutes, December 5, 1957, folder 2, box 5, Southwest Oklahoma Survival Association, Western History Collections, Norman, OK.
[124] "Inter-Tribal Council Holds First Meeting of '57, Elects Officers" *Anadarko Daily News*, January 9, 1957.
[125] "Sill's Expansion Opposed" *Mountain View News*, December 12, 1957.
[126] "Mt. View Caravan Joins Other Units in Journey to Capitol" *Mountain View News*, February 20, 1958; "400 From Area Attended SOS Meeting" *Mountain View News*, February 27, 1958; "Special Study Committee On the Fort Sill Land Expansion Question" *Mountain View News*, April 17, 1958; "Ladies Invited to Chamber Meeting to Hear Report" *Mountain View News*, May 8, 1958.

and they adopted what he had to say into their platform. Goombi was highly respected in southwestern Oklahoma, but he was extraordinarily skilled at using language White settlers were familiar with to help them understand Indigenous points of view. At a particularly contentious 1958 hearing before state legislators in Oklahoma City, Charles Bolar spoke and then gave a hearty endorsement of his colleague Robert Goombi.[127] Goombi –a self-proclaimed "loyal first American" – told legislators that "we the Indian citizens in Western Oklahoma urge all our friends in free America to oppose this proposed expansion and put a stop to this land grab"[128] Later on, the White mayor of Hobart, Oklahoma – the largest community impacted (if indirectly) by the expansion – compared the dispossession of Goombi's forebears from their lands in the early twentieth century to his own White constituents removal in another "Trail of Tears."[129] Where Yellowfish drew on the Declaration of Independence to change how White settlers thought about the Battle of Adobe Walls, Robert Goombi used the rhetoric of the Cold War to speak to contemporary Indigenous affairs

Goombi and his allies also benefited from national events. Even before de Shazo announced the expansion plans in late 1957, the American public was paying attention to a similar confrontation in southeastern New Mexico. At Fort Bliss, the US Army was attempting to further expand a nuclear testing site, but a scrappy New Mexican rancher, assisted by general disenchantment in New Mexico with Defense acquisitions since 1945 and by his own allies in the immediate area, ignored condemnation proceedings. Using a mix of force and nerves, the

[127] State Legislative Council, Public Hearing on the Proposed Fort Sill Land Expansion, February 19, 1958, 59, folder 39, box DP29, Carl Albert Collection.
[128] State Legislative Council, Public Hearing on the Proposed Fort Sill Land Expansion, February 19, 1958, 59, folder 39, box DP29, Carl Albert Collection.
[129] State Legislative Council, Public Hearing on the Proposed Fort Sill Land Expansion, February 19, 1958, 70, folder 39, box DP29, Carl Albert Collection.

rancher prevented the Department of Defense from acquiring his lands.[130] In February 1958, a *New York Times* correspondent began reporting from Kiowa County, Oklahoma about the Fort Sill expansion crisis.[131] Such confrontations between White landowners and the US Army in the American heartland made many middle-class White Americans uncomfortable and aroused significant public concerns about the US Army's general lack of accountability. Intellectuals and journalists published direct criticisms of what they perceived to be a wasteful and even dangerous military apparatus growing out of the Department of Defense.[132] Two major pieces of legislation grew out of this public discontent. Clair Engle, a US Representative from central California who had already expressed concerns about the New Mexican situation, fostered the passage of the Engle Act, a 1958 law that heavily restricted the public resources the Defense Department could make use of without congressional approval.[133] Dwight Eisenhower gathered support for the Defense Reorganization Act, which centralized the Defense Department's operations under his office's control and seriously weakened the armed forces' ability to acquire new lands and resources.[134]

In Oklahoma, the results of SOSA's resistance campaign were mixed. At the local level, the controversy over the second expansion considerably tightened an already contentious race between incumbent US Representative Toby Morris and former congressman Victor Wickersham.[135] At the state level, Governor Raymond Gary and US Representative Tom Steed

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[130] Ryan H. Edgington, *Range Wars: The Environmental Contest for White Sands Missile Range* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 51
[131] "Kiowa County Asks Help" *New York Times*, February 4, 1958, 28; Russell Baker, "Oklahomans Put Army on Defense" *New York Times*, February 3, 1958, 25.
[132] Ledbetter, *Unwarranted Influence*, 16; Charles Stevenson, "Do the Armed Forces Need a 35-Million Acre Empire?" *Reader's Digest*, July 1958, Folder 39, DP6, Toby Morris Collection.
[133] "Army Acquisition Holds" *New York Times*, April 18, 1957, 11; David Loomis, *Combat Zoning: Military Land-Use Planning in Nevada* (Reno: University of Nevada, 1993), 33-35.
[134] Gerard Clarfield, *Security with Solvency: Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Shaping of the American Military Establishment* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999), xiv.
[135] "Who Won the 6th District Congress Race! No Off. Count" *Mountain View News*, July 24, 1958.

both stated their opposition to Fort Sill's expansion.[136] Members of the state legislature even carried out a formal investigation.[137] In combination with the efforts of the Southwest Oklahoma Survival Association, public scrutiny stopped the U.S. Army from further expanding Fort Sill's military reservation. However, the Parker family and other Comanche allottees never regained their land or the spaces they lost when the US Army annexed West Cache. The people displaced by that expansion remained displaced because the Defense Reorganization Act did not retroactively apply to existing weapons development, testing and training sites seized from Indigenous peoples over the proceeding fifteen years.

The Parkers and Robert Goombi used historical memory – particularly memories of Quanah Parker – in ways that reflected their cultural context and their relationship to surrounding settler communities. The Parkers used the memory of their father selectively, largely for the benefit of the family in much the same way that the Chapmans or Quanah Parker did in early Oklahoma Territory. They created person to person relationships that were highly effective in a disconnected, turn of the twentieth century world. Although the way the Parkers used historical memory to make relationships gave them returns well into the twentieth century, they did not anticipate facing a state that had no face and therefore no person to make tie with. In contrast, Robert Goombi used historical memory – often the same memories of Quanah Parker – to influence public opinion.

Goombi's predecessors and peers learned how to do this by necessity during the Great Depression, but by the mid-twentieth century – the height of Goombi's career – the American

[136] Tom Steed to Frank. O. Baugh, March 21, 1958, folder – Fort Sill, Oklahoma (1), box 28, Bryce N. Harlow Records; Southwest Oklahoma Survival Association, Press Release: Governor Gives Reasons for Opposing Army Missile Plan, April 1958, folder – Fort Sill, Oklahoma (2), box 28, Bryce N. Harlow Records.
[137] Special Study Committee on the Fort Sill Land Expansion Question, Committee Recommendations, April 4, 1958, folder – Fort Sill, Oklahoma (2), box 28, Bryce N. Harlow Records.

public existed as a much more unified whole than the cultural enclaves that Quanah Parker addressed a half-century before. Robert Goombi made a relationship with a much broader audience of White settlers and consequentially was able to forge coalitions with surrounding settler communities to which the Parkers did not have access. The scale of these relationships marked an evolution in the scope and sophistication of Indigenous-settler relations but they hardly replaced tribal sovereignty. The colonial relationship that Goombi alluded to in his criticisms of the Kiowa Agency and the Anadarko Area Office proved to be deadly. As the Kiowa politician's longtime colleague Philemon Berry found out over a decade after the conclusion of the Fort Sill expansion crisis, the Bureau of Indian Affairs intended to stamp out tribal sovereignty. When the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation – who in the nineteenth century chose to remain in Kansas rather than relocate to a rump Indian Territory – attempted to use an alliance with settlers to circumvent the Anadarko Area Office, they found BIA bureaucracy to be infuriatingly persistent and malevolent.

Chapter V: Confronting the Bureau of Indian Affairs

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On April 9, 1975, Kickapoo and Potawatomi men played cards on the floor of Horton Agency, a small stone building housing a regional Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) office in rural northeastern Kansas. Nearby, Superintendent Jack Carson ate lunch at his desk.[1] Earlier that morning, they occupied the superintendent's office. That afternoon, they were still waiting and they would continue to wait until Jack Carson left for good. From his arrival in 1970, the superintendent had disrupted Indigenous life in northeastern Kansas. Carson played members of the region's four communities – the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, the Kickapoo Tribe in Kansas, the Sac and Fox Nation of Missouri in Kansas and Nebraska, and the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska – against one another. When Indigenous people gathered at the BIA building in Horton, Kansas to protest the superintendent's actions, Carson replied with riot police and tear gas. Even when the Prairie Band partnered with the Society of Jesus – a Catholic order informally known as the Jesuits – in a mutually beneficial exchange, Jack Carson refused to tolerate any challenge to his power. Using his influence in the BIA, he suspended the entire Prairie Band Potawatomi government. When Carson began to similarly manipulate Kickapoo politics, Kickapoo leader Amos Goslin forged a rebel alliance with his Potawatomi neighbors. As they sat in Horton Agency that day in 1975, the occupants were determined to hold out until they removed Carson. In doing so, they would not only deal with the immediate problem of a corrupt official but play a small part in a broader return to Indigenous communities addressing problems through self-governance rather than settler allies.

[1] Doug Anstaett, "Indians win agent firing" *Topeka Daily Capital* (Topeka, KS), April 10, 1975.

The BIA and US Colonialism

The five-year saga that played out in northeastern Kansas reflected a slow moving but fundamental shift not just in Kansas or Oklahoma but across late twentieth century Indigenous America. From the 1870s onward, the United States – largely through the Office (later Bureau) of Indian Affairs – obstructed the ability of tribal governments to govern their own lands and people, necessitating that their citizens partner with settler allies and institutions to navigate a changing world. Like most Indigenous communities in the United States, Indigenous people in northeastern Kansas endured attempts by neighboring settlers and settler institutions to erase and replace them, but the Bureau of Indian Affairs maintained a relationship with tribal governments like the Prairie Band that embodied colonialism rather than settler colonialism. Colonialism is a political system in which one power forcibly subdues another to extract economic resources.[2] Although many Indigenous people like Chitto Harjo or Robert Goombi publicly protested the BIA's constraints, the Bureau's power to interfere in Indigenous affairs was difficult to reverse after allotment. As administrators over allotments, the Bureau of Indian Affairs controlled much of the wealth that Indigenous peoples held onto in the twentieth century; the agency was now entangled in Indigenous affairs. As a colonial institution, the BIA profiteered from this administrative position. According to Prairie Band Potawatomi historian Gary Mitchell, BIA officials "operate[d] in plush offices, had secure checks and enjoyed top benefit packages" while Potawatomi people grappled with grinding poverty.[3] That financial imbalance had everything to do with BIA administrators capitalizing on the aftermath of allotment at the economic expense of tribal citizens. The colonizer was extracting resources from the colonized.

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[2] For example, see: Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington D.C: Howard University Press, 1982).
[3] Gary E. Mitchell, *Stories of the Potawatomi People: From the Early Days to Modern Times* [Mayetta, KS: Self-published, 1996], 58.

Like other Indigenous communities in allotted America, Potawatomi people first simply weathered the storm, only gradually regaining strength. As in Oklahoma, some individuals or communities formed partnerships with neighboring settlers, but they did not begin rebuilding national infrastructure until the 1970s, when sovereignty – in theory the inherent right of a community to determine its own destiny and in practice the ability of a community to govern itself – regained its position as a primary consideration for Indigenous communities. By that time, many Indigenous people understood themselves not just to be members of their tribal citizenries, but to be part of a much broader movement built on an increasingly national Indigenous identity.[4] In 1971, the Prairie Band established an institutional partnership with the Society of Jesus that subverted but did not actually terminate their community's colonial relationship with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Jack Carson's ability to quash that option reflected its inherent limitations. To realize their sovereignty, Indigenous peoples in northeastern Kansas had to disrupt colonial rule. Instead of seeking ways around Jack Carson's manipulations, Amos Goslin's coalition chose to directly confront Carson and by extension, the BIA. This regional coalition of Indigenous peoples not only reflected Native resistance to colonialism, but an expression of a broader Indigenous identity.

[4] For this movement, see: Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior, *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996); Bradley G. Shreve, *Red Power Rising: The National Indian Youth Council and the Origins of Native Activism* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011); Paul McKenzie-Jones, *Clyde Warrior: Tradition, Community, and Red Power* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015); Seonghoon Kim, "'We Have Always Had These Many Voices:' Red Power Newspapers and a Community of Poetic Resistance" *American Indian Quarterly* 39/5 (Summer 2015): 271-301; Meg Devlin O'Sullivan, "Transforming Red Power and Transforming the Second Wave: Native American women and the struggle against coerced sterilization in the 1970s" *Women's History Review* 25/6 (December 2016): 965-82; Kent Blansett, *A Journey to Freedom: Richard Oakes, Alcatraz, and the Red Power Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018); Thomas A. Britten, *Voice of the Tribes: A History of the National Tribal Chairmen's Association* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2020).

Martinican philosopher Frantz Fanon recognized that colonial bureaucracies like the BIA never relinquish control quietly.[5] Originally created by the federal government as a relatively small administrative entity in the nineteenth century, the BIA expanded into a vast, highly inefficient, decentralized bureaucracy that grew like a cancer – self-replicating, nearly impossible to remove, slowly eating away at the host.[6] In the late 1940s, the Office of Indian Affairs reorganized, dividing the United States into twelve regions monitored by twelve corresponding regional offices. Each of these offices controlled many smaller agencies, boarding schools, and other BIA subunits. By 1971, the Anadarko Area Office communicated with twenty-tribal governments and dozens of Indigenous communities through its main facility, five subagencies, four boarding schools, and a community college scattered across the office's jurisdiction in western Oklahoma and all of Kansas.[7]

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[5] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 1.

[6] For histories of the Office (Bureau) of Indian Affairs, see: Curtis E. Jackson and Marcia J. Galli, *A History of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and its Activities Among Indians* (San Francisco, CA: R&E Research Associates, Inc., 1977); David H. DeJong, *The Commissioners of Indian Affairs: The United States Indian Service and the Making of Federal Indian Policy* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2020); for studies of the Bureau's personnel and evolving culture, see: William E. Unrau, "The Civilian As Indian Agent" Villain or Victim?" *Western Historical Quarterly* 3/4 (Winter 1972): 405-420; Steve Nickeson, "The Structure of the Bureau of Indian Affairs" *Law and Contemporary Problems* 40/1 (Winter 1976): 61-76; Robert Kvasnicka and Herman Viola, *The Commissioners of Indian Affairs, 1824-1977* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979); Duane Champagne, "Organizational Change and Conflict: A Case Study of the Bureau of Indian Affairs" *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 7/3 (Fall 1983): 3-28; Patricia A. Carter, "'Completely Discouraged': Women Teachers' Resistance in the Bureau of Indian Affairs Schools, 1900-1910" *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 15/3 (Fall 1995): 53-86; Cathleen D. Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers: A Social History of the United States Indian Service, 1869-1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Mark Palmer and Robert Rundstrom, "GIS, Internal Colonialism, and the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs" *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 103/5 (September 2013): 1142-1159; David Wallace Adams, "Blood and Ice: Intimacy and Factionalism at Fort Defiance Indian Agency, 1887-1888" *Western Historical Quarterly* 50/3 (Fall 2019): 209-231; Holly Miowak Guise, "Who is Doctor Bauer?: Rematriating a Censored Memory on Internment, Wardship, and Sexual Violence in Wartime Alaska, 1941-1944" *Western Historical Quarterly* 53/2 (Summer 2022): 145-165; For the broader relationship of the BIA in Indigenous communities, see: Christopher Buck, "'Never Again': Kevin Gover's Apology for the Bureau of Indian Affairs" *Wicazo Sa Review* 21/1 (Spring 2006): 97-126; Valerie Lambert, "The Big Black Box of Indian Country: The Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Federal-Indian Relationship" *American Indian Quarterly* 40/4 (Winter 2016): 333-363.

[7] Anadarko Area Office, *Anadarko Area Office Yearbook 1971* (Anadarko, OK: GPO, 1972), 2.

American legal scholar Felix Cohen described the Bureau of Indian Affairs as a self-perpetuating entity with what another commentator later called a "militant disinclination toward change."[8] Individual agents wielded enormous power over the benefits promised in treaty agreements: food, shelter, healthcare, funding, jobs, paychecks, and even the legitimacy of tribal governments. While technically accountable to the Bureau headquarters, each regional office effectively controlled what information traveled back to Washington D.C.[9] This arrangement gave local BIA employees enormous power to manipulate Indigenous politics. These civil servants – often more motivated by their own careers than the people they served – routinely manipulated and suppressed tribal governments. Partially this was a behavior motivated by the self-preservation – especially from the 1960s onward, tribal governments could provide the same services as the BIA – but as Fanon wrote, "the 'native' quarters, the shanty town…the reservation…is a disreputable place inhabited by disreputable people" in the eyes of colonial officials.[10] In other words, colonial entities like the BIA operate on the premise that Indigenous peoples are incapable of managing their own affairs.[11]

Take for example, John Crow, a career BIA employee once called "the most hated Indian in America" for his opposition to tribal sovereignty.[12] A Cherokee Nation citizen raised in Commerce, Oklahoma, Crow made an early name for himself while playing football at Haskell Indian Industrial Institute and later with the Boston R*dskins.[13] In 1933, he accepted a lowly clerical position with the Office of Indian Affairs at the Fort Totten Agency in North Dakota. Over the next two decades, Crow rose to command a series of regional positions across the

[8] Felix Cohen, "Colonialism: U.S. Style" *The Progressive*, February 1951, 16-18; Nickeson, "The Structure of the Bureau of Indian Affairs," 61.
[9] Nickeson, "The Structure of the Bureau of Indian Affairs" 63.
[10] Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 4.
[11] Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 4, 6.
[12] Karen Ducheneaux, "Crow Strikes Back at Critics" *Navajo Times* (Window Rock, AZ) January 18, 1973.
[13] "Who's Who" *Navajo Times*, April 16, 1964.

American Southwest. John Crow showed so much promise in the service that in 1957 his superiors promoted him to the agency's Washington D.C. headquarters. Most BIA employees at the time were White, so Crow's rise reflected his excellence as a civil servant and his ability to navigate federal bureaucracy. Like many of his peers, John Crow believed strongly in incremental reform fostered by the BIA; not unlike US Representative Charles Carter a generation earlier, Crow assumed his highly exceptional experiences of pulling himself up by his bootstraps was a realistic goal all Indigenous people could achieve.[14] Granted, it is hard to imagine that John Cro would have been promoted had he disagreed with BIA policies. Moreover, many of the Cherokee bureaucrat's contemporaries disagreed. The same year Crow's promotion brought him to the District of Columbia, Kiowa activist Robert Goombi complained that Bureau of Indian Affairs agents "make us feel that we are in some foreign country here in free America."[15] Goombi was then one of the most influential Indigenous people in Oklahoma, but John Crow wielded national influence. Still (perhaps tellingly), Crow – bootstraps and all – still could not break the glass ceiling. In 1961, US President John F. Kennedy temporarily designated Crow as Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs, the most powerful position in the BIA. Rather than promote the veteran Cherokee civil servant, Kennedy relegated John Crow to the position of deputy commissioner while another White man rose to command the agency.[16] In 1965, Crow transferred out of the BIA to the Bureau of Land Management.

In 1969, US President Richard Nixon's choice for Commissioner of Indian Affairs – Louis Bruce – outright rejected BIA control. Bruce grew up on the early twentieth century St.

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[14] David Halberstam, "Indian Unit Head Urges Self-Help" *New York Times*, February 13, 1961.
[15] Robert Goombi to Oliver LaFarge, October 7, 1957, Folder – Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache 1, Reel 186, Part 2: Tribal Files, Series 2: The Association on American Indian Affairs Archives, 1851-1983, *Native America: A Primary Record* (Woodbridge, CT: Primary Source Microfilm, 2004).
[16] "Indian Given Director Post" *Oklahoma City Times* (Oklahoma City, OK), February 14, 1966.

Regis Mohawk Reservation in upstate New York. His staunchly middle class family was well educated and active in Indigenous politics while also operating a dairy farm.[17] Endowed with these resources, Louis Bruce became a success in his own right; in 1930, he graduated from Syracuse University – where he became affiliated with the Zeta Psi fraternity – and then went on to become influential in the dairy farming and advertising industries as well as the Republican Party. By the time of his appointment in 1969, Bruce lived with his wife and children in Greenwich Village, a neighborhood in Manhattan; he always remained active in lobbying for change within federal Indian policy, but he was no career BIA bureaucrat like John Crow. Nixon appointed Bruce because the latter man's activism made him a reasonable choice for the job and because he was affiliated with the Republican Party.[18] Bruce advocated for radical change in the relationship between the BIA and Indigenous communities. In a 1969 speech to Indigenous leaders, he emphasized that "I want to make it clear that the Bureau of Indian Affairs under my direction has no intention of laying out the decisions for you. I want non-Indians to stop telling us what is wrong, what to do, and how it should be done."[19] Bruce's presence threatened the BIA's established order and touched off a two-year struggle for power within the agency.[20] In 1971, the Secretary of the Interior moved John Crow from the Bureau of Land Management back to the Bureau of Indian Affairs and appointed him Deputy Commissioner, arguably – although Crow later denied this – to restrain Bruce.[21]

Barely a month into his new job, the Cherokee bureaucrat overturned a democratic tribal election in southwestern Oklahoma. In doing so, he ran roughshod over that community's right

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[17] "New Commissioner of Indian Affairs a Veteran Fighter" *New York Times*, August 13, 1969.
[18] William Greider, "Mohawk-Sioux from Manhattan asked as Indian Commissioner" *Washington Post* (Washington D.C.), August 8, 1969.
[19] US Department of the Interior, News Release, October 24, 1969, folder 2, box 126, E.Y. Berry Collection, Leland D. Case Library for Western Historical Studies, Black Hills State University, Spearfish, SD.
[20] Nickeson, "The Structure of the Bureau of Indian Affairs" 64.
[21] Ducheneaux, "Crow Strikes Back at Critics."

to determine its own destiny. Indigenous peoples possess their own inherent sovereignty as independent nations; their powers of governance come from within their communities, but in most cases were formally recognized by eighteenth and nineteenth century treaties with the United States. However, those same treaties – negotiated under duress or without adequate consultation – granted the US government significant power to intervene into Indigenous politics, typically through the BIA. John Crow wielded that terrible power as the Plains Apaches – a Southern Athabaskan speaking people long allied with the Kiowas – reorganized their government.[22] In 1971, Philemon Berry – the same politician who partnered with Robert Goombi in an alliance with the Southeast Oklahoma Survival Association a decade earlier – won control of that government through a free and fair election.[23] Two months later, the losing faction filed a petition with the BIA to create a rival government.[24] While this was clearly an isolated attempt by a minority faction (thirty percent by the BIA's count) to regain power, John Crow manipulated the opportunity to oust Berry and railroaded through a vote on a new Plains Apache constitution. When Philemon Berry protested, Crow maintained that the BIA's responsibility to represent Plains Apache interests overrode Berry's authority as the democratically elected leader of that people.[25]

The Apache Constitutional Election Board, a panel of five Anadarko Area Office employees paid overtime, administered the February 5, 1972, referendum on the proposed tribal

[22] Apache Tribe of Indians, Resolution No. 71-0, July 30, 1970, folder 4, box DP60, Tom Steed Collection, Carl Albert Center, Norman, OK.
[23] George Poolaw to Rex Sparger, November 5, 1971, folder 4, DP60, Tom Steed Collection; Board of Directors, Southwest Oklahoma Survival Association, Minutes, December 5, 1957, folder 2, box 5, Southwest Oklahoma Survival Association, Western History Collections, Norman, OK.
[24] Alexander McNabb to Tom Steed, December 29, 1971, folder 4, DP60, Tom Steed Collection.
[25] John Crow to Philemon Berry, January 17, 1972, folder 4, DP60, Tom Steed Collection; John Crow to Tom Steed, November 23, 1971, folder 4, DP60, Tom Steed Collection.

constitution.[26] Despite the name, the board existed outside of Apache Tribe's government; Apache officials had no say in the BIA entity's operations and personnel, none of whom were members of the Apache Tribe.[27] The Anadarko Area Office endowed the Apache Constitutional Election Board with significant administrative powers. For example, the board threw out seventy six ballots, a little more than twenty percent of the vote.[28] A slim majority of these ballots were marked yes, so the board's decision did not change the election results. In most of these cases, the board ruled that these people were not eligible to vote in Apache elections because they voted in a 1967 Kiowa election.[29] Plains Apache and Kiowa communities – allies well before the arrival of the United States on the Southern Great Plains – had long been living together and some intermarriage was inevitable. Some voters had cultural ties to both communities, but the board ruled that tribal citizens could only vote in one or the other. While the Apache Constitutional Election Board did not necessarily change the outcome of the election, its existence gave an impression of impartiality to outsiders even though the election did not reflect the demands of Apache voters and in doing so subverted Plains Apache sovereignty.

After Plains Apache voters approved the new constitution prompted by the BIA in February 1972, the BIA declared Berry's government void of any authority or legitimacy.[30] Despite Berry's protests that neither the election nor the constitution was valid, BIA officials

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[26] "Comp Time Earned, 2-5-72," [folder 2] – Apache Constitution Election 2-5-72, box 4, E11D Records Relating to Tribal Elections and Government, Records of the Anadarko Area Office, Record Group 75, National Archives at Fort Worth, TX.
[27] Apache Constitutional Election Meeting, Minutes, February 2, 1972, [folder 2] – Apache Constitution Election 2-5-72, box 4, E11D Records Relating to Tribal Elections and Government; Official Apache Voting List, c. 1972, [folder 2] – Apache Constitution Election 2-5-72, box 4, E11D Records Relating to Tribal Elections and Government.
[28] Sidney Carney to William Grissom, February 7, 1972, [folder 2] – Apache Constitution Election 2-5-72, box 4, E11D Records Relating to Tribal Elections and Government.
[29] List of Ineligible Voters, c. 1972, [folder 2] – Apache Constitution Election 2-5-72, box 4, E11D Records Relating to Tribal Elections and Government.
[30] Philemon Berry to Sid Carney, February 18, 1972, folder 4, DP60, Tom Steed Collection.

organized a new tribal election under the authority of the February constitution and buried the Berry government.[31] Colonial bureaucrats like John Crow had long frustrated Indigenous people across the United States. His return to power alarmed many who saw his rehiring as a step backwards. About a month after Crow's hiring, Indigenous protesters traveled to Washington D.C. The National Indian Youth Council and the American Indian Movement (AIM) attempted to make a citizen's arrest of John Crow at the BIA's headquarters while Diné activist Peter MacDonald called the Deputy Commissioner "a tool of the anti-Indian elements within [the] Interior."[32] Crow managed to survive the protests, only to lose his job alongside Louis Bruce in the wake of the AIM occupation of the same BIA facilities a year later.[33]

"A History of Liberation:" The Prairie Band-Missouri Province Alliance

The Prairie Band – another Indigenous community under the supervision of the Anadarko Area Office – ran headlong into the same bureaucratic machinery as the Plains Apache Tribe of Oklahoma. In fact, the 1975 occupation of Horton Agency – while led by Kickapoo leaders – was rooted in a friendship forged between the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation and the Missouri Province, Society of Jesus years earlier. The Catholic Church had long been present in Potawatomi communities, but this partnership between tribal government and a particular Catholic religious order coalesced over a tract known as St. Marys. Between 1830 and 1846, the United States repeatedly pushed many Potawatomi communities westward from Michigan and Indiana to Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, and finally northern Indian Territory.[34] Shortly after Potawatomi communities arrived on this last reserve, the Jesuits established a mission and school

[31] Philemon Berry to Betty Bell, March 14, 1972, folder 4, DP60, Tom Steed Collection.
[32] "Angry Indians, Police Clash in Lobby of BIA Building" c. 1971, folder 32, box 2, National Indian Youth Council Records, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM.
[33] Nickeson, "The Structure of the Bureau of Indian Affairs" 71.
[34] John P. Bowes, *Land Too Good for Indians: Northern Indian Removal* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), 149-181.

called St. Marys. As White settlers increasingly moved into what became Kansas Territory in the 1850s, pressure mounted on Potawatomi people to move again. After signing an 1861 treaty, many of the Catholic Church's strongest followers left for Indian Territory; they became known as the Citizen Band. Despite this loss in congregants, both the 1861 treaty and a subsequent 1867 treaty included clauses granting and substantiating Jesuit legal title to reservation lands to St. Marys.[35] Under extreme duress, those Potawatomi who wanted to stay accepted a much smaller reservation about thirty miles away in Jackson County, Kansas; they became known as the Prairie Band. By that time, the Jesuits were phasing out their services to Potawatomi communities and officially dropped that pretense altogether in 1872; instead, St. Marys began exclusively serving White settler communities.[36] Those same settlers soon built the surrounding town of St. Marys, Kansas. Between 1872 and 1967, the campus successively functioned as a boarding school for White settler children and later a college and a seminary for the Jesuits in training.[37] In the meantime, the Prairie Band endured yet another cataclysmic event as the federal government forced the community to allot their reservation in the early twentieth century, displacing many Potawatomi people in Kansas yet again.[38] For much of the next century, Potawatomi people were absent from St. Marys.

In 1971, Prairie Band citizens voted a new political movement – the Tribal Action Committee (TAC) – into control of their tribal government.[39] The TAC's demographics and

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[35] Gary Mitchell, "Tribal History," www.pbpindiantribe.com/about/tribal-history, Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, accessed August 25, 2022.
[36] John Francis Bannon, *The Missouri Province S.J.: A Mini-History* (St. Louis, MO: Missouri Province, 1977), 39.
[37] Raymond A. Schroth, *The American Jesuits: A History* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 155.
[38] Anne Heloise Abel, "Indian Reservations in Kansas and the Extinguishment of their Title" *Collections of the Kansas Historical Society* 8 (1904): 103.
[39] For descriptions of the TAC coalition, see: Frank Battese, "The Proud Pottawatomie: We're Big Red Number One!" *Pottawatomi Prairie Band Drummer*, January 1972, folder – Publications, Missouri Province box 3.0072, Kansas: St. Marys: Missouri Province Property Management [Collection], Jesuit Archives and Research Center, St. Louis, MO; Mitchell, *Stories of the Potawatomi People*, 56.

ideology strongly influenced the Prairie Band's choice to seek a new relationship with the Jesuits and reclaim St. Marys. The TAC coalition included both rural reservation communities in Jackson County and a large urban constituency in neighboring Topeka. Many Potawatomi people called both home, commuting between the two.[40] For example, Frank Battese – a TAC politician elected chairman of the Prairie Band government – spent much of his time advocating for urban Indigenous people through several social services agencies in Topeka.[41] In both spaces, Potawatomi people suffered from profound economic marginalization.[42] TAC leaders argued that this marginalization was rooted in the Bureau of Indian Affairs' mismanagement of essential services such as water, housing, and education as well as local BIA officials' collective "malpractice and the manipulation of tribal leaders."[43] Their supporters shared this conviction. Mayme Mattwaoshshe, the head of the Indian Center of Topeka (a prominent Indigenous social services organization in the city that often partnered with the Prairie Band), so distrusted the Bureau of Indian Affairs that she ran the center entirely with private funds to avoid coming under BIA control.[44] The TAC knew that their presence threatened the BIA. In summing up the coalition's successful but hard-fought campaign win, Frank Battese wrote in the *Pottawatomi Prairie Band Drummer* newspaper that "we made a bid for fair and open elections, free from…control of the BIA. The Bureau fought us. We took them to court. We protested in

[40] Indian Center of Topeka, "The Indian Community in Topeka" c. 1971-72, folder 36, box 3, Sub-Series 4: Native Americans, Series 1: Subject Files, Dow Chemical Multicultural Resource Center Records, Richard L. D. and Marjorie J. Morse Department of Special Collections, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS.
[41] "Indian, Scientist to speak today" *Kansas State Collegian*, July 23, 1971; "Minorities rep to speak here" [*Kansas State Collegian*?], c. 1972, folder 24, box 3, Sub-Series 4: Native Americans, Series 1: Subject Files, Dow Chemical Multicultural Resource Center Records.
[42] Melinda Hodgson, "Indians like to Govern Themselves" *Kansas State Collegian*, March 22, 1972.
[43] Mitchell, *Stories of the Potawatomi People*, 56.
[44] Melinda Hodgson, "Indian Center Fights Poverty, Racism" *Kansas State Collegian*, March 21, 1972.

Washington. We raised the issue in the press and on television. We picketed the BIA election…We became a movement."[45]

That movement began propositioning the Missouri Province to repatriate the St. Marys property. While headquartered in Rome, the Society of Jesus divides itself into regional units – each with its own story – called provinces. By the late 1960s, American Jesuits were desperately trying to adjust to rapid changes within their organization; disillusioned recruits and seasoned leaders alike began to leave in droves as the order that seemed more and more irrelevant over the course of the decade.[46] Simultaneously, the order grappled with the imperatives set by the Second Vatican Council or Vatican II, a series of church-wide meetings between 1962 and 1965 that redefined the role of the Catholic Church. For the Jesuits, the Second Vatican Council cemented a growing belief that their order needed to work harder to carry out justice for the marginalized.[47]

Vatican II sparked a revaluation of the Catholic Church's relationship with Indigenous peoples, but that process took decades. For example, while the Australian Catholic Church began revaluating its relationship with Aboriginal peoples almost immediately after the Second Vatican Council's conclusion in 1965, their representatives did not release a more substantial response until 1978.[48] For the Missouri Province Jesuits, these conversations were in the air but not necessarily as explicit. Faced with an economic mandate to consolidate in the immediate term and a social mandate to do more in the world over the long term, Missouri Province officials adapted; in 1967, they put the relatively isolated St. Marys property on the market and moved the

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[45] Battese, "The Proud Pottawatomie."
[46] Joseph M. Becker, *The Re-Formed Jesuits, Volume II: A History of Changes in the Jesuit Order During the Decade 1965-1975* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1997), 14.
[47] Mary Ann Hinsdale, "Jesuit theological discourse since Vatican II" In *The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits*, edited by Thomas Worchester (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 300.
[48] Dominic O'Sullivan, *Faith, Politics, and Reconciliation: Catholicism and the Politics of Indigeneity* (Wellington: Huia Publishers, 2005), 139-42.

seminary to their more centralized provincial headquarters in St. Louis.[49] The property – a set of buildings and pastures whose maintenance drew significant provincial resources but produced little – proved hard to sell. By the time the TAC took control of the Prairie Band government in 1971, the property remained unsold.

The impasse made the Jesuits more open to alternative ideas about the campus, but Prairie Band representatives succeeded because they understood how to engage the Jesuits on a theological level. Within months of the TAC's electoral victory, the Prairie Band contacted the Missouri Province about the property. A local Jesuit in St. Marys, Kansas flatly refused to consider the Prairie Band's proposal.[50] It is unclear whether Potawatomi people in Kansas already possessed a familiarity with the Second Vatican Council due to their community's historic association with the Catholic Church or if they gained that knowledge after returning to the drawing board. Regardless, the Prairie Band drew up a position paper that masterfully appealed to Jesuit theological convictions. Indigenous activists across the United States were then attempting to reclaim their lands largely by citing America's obligation to honor treaty agreements with Native nations.[51] Settlers with longtime investments in Indigenous lands were rarely agreeable to that line of reasoning and often contested treaty claims.[52] The letter that the Prairie Band's representatives gave to Gerald Sheahan – an American born in Topeka who was

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[49] Schroth, *The American Jesuits*, 238-39; Janice Flanary, Mark Pettay, and Scott Ronsse, "The History of St. Mary's College, St. Marys, Kansas" 37, unpublished manuscript, 1975, Pottawatomi-Wabaunsee Regional Library, St. Marys, KS.
[50] "Dec. 1 meeting opens negotiations" *Pottawatomi Prairie Band Drummer*, January 1972.
[51] Vine Deloria Jr. perhaps most clearly articulated this obligation as a reporter and philosopher. For example, see: Vine Deloria Jr., "The Theological Dimension of the Indian Protest Movement" *Christian Century*, September 19, 1973; Vine Deloria, Jr., "Indian Treaties A Hundred Years Later" *Race Relations Reporter*, March 1974, 29-32.
[52] For example, see: Interstate Congress for Equal Rights and Responsibilities, *Are We Giving America Back to the Indians?* (Winner, SD: Interstate Congress for Equal Rights and Responsibilities, Inc., 1976).

then the Provincial (or head) of the Missouri Province – when the two groups first began negotiating in early December 1971 cleverly reframed the exchange as an opportunity.[53]

Drawing on the conclusions of several significant meetings within the Catholic Church and the Society of Jesus – Vatican II, Thirty First General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (1965), and especially the Second Episcopal Conference of Latin America (1968) – that heavily emphasized the church's role in carrying out justice for the poor, the authors argued that repatriating St. Marys to the Prairie Band would "keep ourselves from being finally and completely destroyed by an almost infinite series of deprivation and injustice."[54] In other words, the Potawatomi authors believed that St. Marys could prevent the destruction of their society. To further emphasize their point, the authors asked Gerald Sheahan "to come to our reservation, to visit our people and homes to discuss with us how the Jesuit Fathers may unite again with the Pottawatomi people to create our history – a history of liberation."[55] Prairie Band officials knew such a visit would give them an opportunity to win over their guests but that same visit also invited the Jesuits into a new partnership. Comanche activists such as Quanah Parker and Yellowfish used similar strategies of inclusion to recruit White Texan settlers in Quanah and Borger respectively; by reframing the conversation as a potential partnership rather than a demand, Indigenous people offered their trespassers a very attractive chance to find a kind of collective redemption from the sins of the past.

The Prairie Band also sent their position paper to Pedro Arrupe, Superior General of the Society of Jesus. Otherwise known as Father General, Arrupe possessed authority over the entire

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[53] Bannon, *The Missouri Province S.J.*, 105.
[54] [Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation], Position Paper Submitted by the Pottawatomie Tribe to the Provincial Sheehan at first Meeting in St. Louis, December 3, 1971, c. December 1971, folder – 1971, Missouri Province box 3.0071, Kansas: St. Marys: Missouri Province Property Management Collection.
[55] Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, Position Paper, c. December 1971, folder – 1971, Missouri Province box 3.0071, Kansas: St. Marys: Missouri Province Property Management Collection.

order and commanded enormous influence in the broader Catholic Church. Intriguingly, Arrupe once lived at St. Marys and received his ordination from the theologate (or seminary) there in 1937.[56] After entering office in 1965, Arrupe pushed the Jesuits to focus more intensively towards carrying out social justice and articulated that theology at the last session of Vatican II.[57] In his reply to the Prairie Band, Arrupe promised to "study the position paper in order that he might understand the full intent of our request."[58] That the Father General – one of the most powerful officials in the Catholic Church – acknowledged the Prairie Band at all and that he promised to consider their position paper not only reflected his own stakes in the dialogue between the Prairie Band and the Missouri Province, but the effectiveness of the Prairie Band's appeal to Jesuit theological convictions.

St. Marys became part of a broader conversation about returning Indigenous lands to their rightful owners. The 1970s saw many Indigenous communities reclaim their ancestral lands. Some Native communities successfully petitioned their non-Native counterparts to restore lost tracts. Famously, Richard Nixon was instrumental in returning land to several Indigenous communities, but land repatriation happened on local levels as well. Alabama Governor George Wallace lent his support to local officials in Escambia County, Alabama to repatriate a small but historically significant tract to the Creek Nation East of the Mississippi (now the Poarch Band of Creek Indians).[59] In other instances, Indigenous communities sued settlers who acquired their lands under suspicious or fraudulent circumstances. After Passamaquoddy and Penobscot tribal

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[56] Pedro Miguel Lamet, *Pedro Arrupe: Witness of the Twentieth Century, Prophet of the Twenty-First* (Chestnut Hill, MA: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2020), 96.
[57] Hinsdale, "Jesuit theological discourse since Vatican II," 299.
[58] "Letter to Rome" *Pottawatomi Prairie Band Drummer*, January 1972.
[59] "Board of Education Approves Poarch Indian Land Transfer" *Atmore Advance* (Atmore, AL), November 28, 1974; Vivian Cannon, "Brief Being Prepared to Identify Indian Lands" *Montgomery Advertiser* (Montgomery, AL), February 13, 1975, 11; George Wallace to Morris Thompson, September 15, 1975, folder 13, box 86B, LaDonna Harris Papers, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM.

governments filed a lawsuit to reclaim stolen lands from Maine that gained unexpected traction in federal court and consequentially national attention, Narragansett, Wampanoag, Mashpee, Mohawk, Oneida, Cayuga, Catawba, and Chitimacha communities along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts filed similar suits.[60] Still others claimed stolen lands by reoccupying them. The most notable of these occupations happened at Alcatraz Island and Wounded Knee, but Indigenous activists occupied many places across the United States for many different reasons. Frustrated with the Colorado legislature's decision to cut tuition waivers for Indigenous students at Fort Lewis College, Northern Ute college student Eric LaRose formed a "camp-in" at nearby Hesperus in 1971.[61] The protest camp brought widespread attention to the issue, which inspired lawsuits from the National Indian Youth Council and the US Department of Justice that forced the legislature to restore the tuition waiver.[62]

Private land repatriation, while uncommon, did happen. The Missouri Jesuits and Prairie Band Potawatomi could both point to a 1971 property exchange between a different Catholic religious order – which later publicly supported the Prairie Band's efforts to reclaim their ancestral lands – and an Ojibwe community in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.[63] As the Jesuits and their Potawatomi counterparts negotiated over the terms of the repatriation the following year,

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[60] Leo Krulitz to Office of the Solicitor, March 3, 1978, folder 7, box 20, Robert J. Lipschutz Subject Files, Records of the White House Office of Counsel to the President, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum, Atlanta, GA.

[61] "'Camp-In' On Despite Split" *Denver Post*, June 19, 1971.

[62] "Two Students Protest Tuition Cutoff" *Denver Post*, April 1, 1971; [American] Indian Press Association, "Indian Students Dissent at Fort Lewis College" April 2, 1971, folder 8, box Robert A. Warrior Papers, Sequoyah National Research Center, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, AR; Concerned Indian People of Colorado "Indian Feelings on House Bill 1452!!" c. 1971, folder 4, box 2, series 9, Roy Wells Papers, Center for Southwest Studies, Fort Lewis College, Durango, CO; "Italian Film Crew visits Indian student Camp-In" *Durango Herald*, May 4, 1971; "State must pay tuition for Fort Lewis Indians" August 15, 1972, folder 1, box 1, series B.11, RG 7, M001 Fort Lewis College, Center for Southwest Studies, Fort Lewis College, Durango, CO; United States Court of Appeals, Tenth Circuit, *Cornell Tahdooahnippah v. John Thimmig* and *United States of America v. State of Colorado*, July 1973, folder 3, box 2, series 9, Roy Wells Papers.

[63] "Capuchins set 'land precedent'" *Pottawatomi Prairie Band Drummer*, January 1972.

Kansas State University hosted a panel termed "The St. Marys Land Restoration."[64] Although the Missouri Province was only active in one Indigenous community in the United States (a mission on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming) in 1970, the Jesuits would have been hard pressed to ignore the broader context of the Prairie Band's claim to St. Marys.[65]

Prairie Band-Missouri Province conversations soon blossomed into a partnership, even a friendship. Gerald Sheahan took the Potawatomi position paper seriously and began meeting regularly with Prairie Band representatives. In a gesture of good faith, he agreed to take the property off the market for the duration of their negotiations. The *Pottawatomie Prairie Band Drummer* reported that the Jesuits "have attempted to work with us by honoring our request that they visit St. Mary's property with us…we are pleased...We acknowledge their cooperation and look forward to the return of the property."[66] Sheahan also answered the position paper's call for the Jesuits to visit with Potawatomi communities both in Jackson County and in his own hometown of Topeka. This trip seems to have convinced the Provincial and his peers that the St. Marys property – which the Missouri Province had been attempting to liquidate a month prior – would do the most good in Potawatomi hands. The Prairie Band's arguments that St. Marys could not only "keep ourselves from being finally and completely destroyed" by poverty but could rewrite the Potawatomi-Jesuit past into "a history of liberation" spoke powerfully to the Society of Jesus.[67] Sheehan came to see that "these people, more than any other, need these facilities and they deserve them."[68] After receiving permission from Father General Pedro Arrupe in Rome (who in turn received authorization from Pope Paul VI), Missouri Province

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[64] "The American Indian in an American Society," folder 24, box 3, Sub-Series 4: Native Americans, Series 1: Subject Files, Dow Chemical Multicultural Resource Center Records.
[65] Bannon, *The Missouri Province S.J.*, 16.
[66] "Jesuits respond favorably" *Pottawatomi Prairie Band Drummer*, January 1972.
[67] Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, Position Paper, c. December 1971, folder – 1971, Missouri Province box 3.0071, Kansas: St. Marys: Missouri Province Property Management Collection.
[68] Flanary, Pettay, and Ronsse, "The History of St. Mary's College" 38.

officials gave TAC politician Lester Jessepe the deed to St. Marys to in a small April 13, 1972 ceremony. Jessepe emphasized the monumental significance of this return, stating that "your unprecedented act will serve as a model to guide…the rest of American society in their future relations with all Indian people."[69] Although national and regional news organizations ignored the transfer, Indigenous and Catholic journalists quickly sent out news of the repatriation through their continental networks and across North America.[70]

The St. Marys Indian Center began with an auspicious start: a grand celebration. On May 23, 1972, the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation celebrated the transfer at the campus with a large gathering and considerable fanfare. Prairie Band citizens ran the entire event. Frank Battese served as master of ceremonies, while the Potawatomi Youth Club gave tours of the campus buildings to visitors. About 400 Jesuits and Prairie Band citizens held a joint "Indian and Roman Catholic Mass."[71] Alongside Lester Jessepe, members of the Missouri Province, the city of St. Marys, and the US Congress spoke about the national significance of the transfer. A photographer from the *Saint Marys Star* – the local newspaper – published an extensive set of photos on this "encouraging sign of progress and growth."[72] There was certainly cause for celebration. For the residents of St. Marys, Kansas who had watched the Jesuit facilities stand abandoned for five years, the Potawatomi represented a welcome, if unfamiliar investment. For the Jesuits, the repatriation of the St. Marys lands to its ancestral owners was a chance to answer the call of the order's core convictions.[73] For the Potawatomi tribal government, the campus provided much needed land. At almost 1400 acres, St. Marys more than tripled the Prairie

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[69] Therese Horvat, "Jesuits Return Land to Indians" *Eastern Kansas Register*, April 23, 1972.
[70] American Indian Press Association, Society of Jesus, April 1972, folder 10, box 2, Robert A. Warrior Papers; Horvat, "Jesuits Return Land to Indians;" Jane Priwer, "Priests, Politics and the Potawatomi" *St. Louis University Magazine* Volume 46, Number 4 (July 1973): 3-9.
[71] "Pottawatomi Indians Hold Pow Wow" *Saint Marys Star*, June 1, 1972.
[72] "Pottawatomi Indians Hold Pow Wow" *Saint Marys Star*, June 1, 1972.
[73] Priwer, "Priests, Politics and the Potawatomi," 9.

Band's collectively held lands (while individual citizens owned about 20,000 acres of the original reservation in Jackson County, the tribal government only retained about 500 acres).[74] More than land though, Prairie Band officials saw the St. Marys Indian Center –and by extension their alliance with the Jesuits – as a means to restore Potawatomi governance.

For some members of the Prairie Band, the center reflected the beginnings of a revived Potawatomi nationalism. During removal in the 1830s, some Potawatomi communities managed to evade US troops and American militia to remain in the homeland, but many ended up in other places such as Ontario, Wisconsin, Kansas, and Indian Territory.[75] Isolated from one another, these communities drifted apart. In a September 1972 AIPA press release, members of the Prairie Band publicly speculated that the St. Marys Indian Center might be a vehicle for a "formal reunification" of Potawatomi communities scattered from Ontario to Oklahoma.[76] Certainly, the campus could serve as a common meeting place for all Potawatomi communities, perhaps even the basis for a Potawatomi representative at the United Nations. Arguably, the St. Marys Indian Center reflected the pre-dawn twinkling of a broader movement identified by Christopher Wetzel in his study of modern Potawatomi nationalism.[77] While a Potawatomi UN delegate never materialized, such ideas were not unrealistic or unusual at the time. The following year, Apache leaders met in New Mexico to consider "uniting their tribes as a single Apache Nation."[78] In

[74] Mitchell, *Stories of the Potawatomi People*, 57.
[75] Bowes, *Land Too Good for Indians*, 149-181.
[76] American Indian Press Association, Trans-Border Potawatomi Union in Offing, folder 15, box 2, Robert A. Warrior Papers.
[77] Christopher Wetzel, *Gathering the Potawatomi Nation: Revitalization and Identity* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015), 39-41.
[78] "Apaches Meet to Form a Nation" *Jicarilla Chieftain* (Dulce, NM), September 3, 1973; Stan Green, "Historic Meeting of Apache Tribes" *Jicarilla Chieftain*, October 15, 1973.

1977, the International Indian Treaty Council – a transnational Indigenous movement that emerged from the American Indian Movement – received consultative status from the UN.[79]

Operating on a shoestring budget largely provided by community partners and volunteer labor between 1971 and 1975, the center accomplished a remarkable amount with few resources. The center always remained divorced from BIA infrastructure, but – like many contemporary tribal governments – was highly reliant on external funding. Community partners helped create additional opportunities and provide labor, but the center struggled with funding issues for the entirety of its tenuous existence. Despite these limitations, the St. Marys Indian Center served a wide variety of Indigenous constituencies over the course of its existence. In 1972, Lester Jessepe hired several Indigenous Vietnam War veterans to help maintain and upgrade the facility.[80] Using student volunteers from Kansas State University, Frank Battese organized the construction of a large geodesic dome on the premises.[81] KSU students and faculty frequently traveled from neighboring Manhattan to volunteer with the center; this relationship became so substantial that in 1973 the university established the KSU Research Assistance Committee to Indians.[82] Through partnerships with KSU and the Kansas Department of Regional and Community Planning, the center organized programs for Indigenous youth. Perhaps following a preexisting interest created by the Pottawatomi Social Club (a Mayetta, Kansas based social organization centered around sewing), the St. Marys Indian Center created a "sewing center…for the construction of teepees, quilts, and shows."[83] By 1974, the center was developing a series of

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[79] United Nations Office of Public Information, United Nations Press Release, February 10, 1977, Folder 21, Box 2, Roger A. Finzel American Indian Movement Papers, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM; "Treaty Council Wins U.N. Status" *Treaty Council News*, (New York, NY), April 1977.
[80] "Empty Campus reflects Indian hopes, dreams" *Kansas State Collegian*, July 3, 1972.
[81] Carol Colliver, "A Coming Together" *Midway: Sunday Magazine of the Topeka Capital-Journal*, August 6, 1972.
[82] St. Marys Indian Center Inc., Planning Grant [1974], Kansas Department of Economic Development, Kansas Government Information Online Library, https://cdm16884.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16884coll7/id/359rec/1, accessed August 28, 2022.
[83] St. Marys Indian Center Inc., "Planning Grant," 28, 32.

new social programs that included transitional housing for Indigenous prisoners exiting the Kansas State Penitentiary, extension classes through Flaming Rainbow University (an Indigenous college based in Tahlequah, Oklahoma), and an urban sales venue for rural reservation artists through the Topeka Indian Center.[84]

The St. Marys Indian Center articulated an innovative vision of Indigenous governance in northeastern Kansas. One of the principal ways the center staff began realizing that vision was by gathering data about the communities they served. Influenced by the Tribal Action Committee movement (TAC politicians Lester Jessepe and Frank Battese played key roles in shaping the development of the center), the staff envisioned the center as a solution to the widespread marginalization of Native people across northeastern Kansas. Apart from a few reservation communities, Indigenous people generally made up less than one percent of the population across the region, but that population was rapidly growing and urbanizing.[85] The most pressing problems in these rural and urban communities alike was an absence of accessible facilities, inadequate funding, and poor transportation infrastructure.[86] The center staff realized that programs centered around a particular facility often only reached the small population of Indigenous people who lived in that vicinity. In response, they developed programs that could simultaneously make resources concentrated in a few locations accessible to Indigenous communities across the entire region.

One of the principal issues that rural Indigenous communities in northeastern Kansas struggled with was a lack of access to Indigenous "books, films, magazines, and newspapers."[87]

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[84] St. Marys Indian Center Inc., "Planning Grant," 2, 7; Flaming Rainbow History, c. 1984, vertical file – Flaming Rainbow University, Special Collections, Northeastern State University, Tahlequah, OK.
[85] St. Marys Indian Center Inc., "Planning Grant," 4-5.
[86] St. Marys Indian Center Inc., "Planning Grant," 29, 78.
[87] St. Marys Indian Center Inc., "Planning Grant," 78.

Prior to the rise of the internet, most relied on their local libraries, always held out as the place Americans could educate themselves. Since the nineteenth century, libraries were funded by local governments which wielded enough tax money to gather a much wider variety and volume of materials than any individual resident could alone. Racism, of course, marked who got access to libraries and most library systems that served Indigenous communities in northeastern Kansas – staffed and patronized largely by White settlers – considered Indigenous materials to be non-essential. In theory, individual library systems could join the Northeast Kansas Library System (NKLS), a regional co-op designed to share resources between libraries, and request Indigenous books or newspapers through that program. However, membership in NKLS required raising taxes that many White voters were unwilling to pay. In Doniphan County – home to Sac and Fox and Iowa communities – voters rejected a taxation proposal to create the county's sole public system. Potawatomi people living on the Prairie Band's reservation found that the only library in Jackson County refused to join NKLS. In Brown County, Kickapoo communities had access to four library branches which opted into the Northeast Kansas Library System, but "these [were] unable to meet minimum standards for the white population much less the minority Indian population."[88] To the organization's credit, the Northeast Kansas Library System worked with Indigenous activists to work around some of these barriers, hiring several Kickapoo and Potawatomi tribal citizens as "consultants" for the organization and assisting Potawatomi activists in creating a community library.[89] Kickapoo tribal citizens created their own library and established a reciprocal borrowing policy with the Powhattan School District, a majority Kickapoo public school located on the reservation.[90]

[88] St. Marys Indian Center Inc., "Planning Grant," 77.
[89] St. Marys Indian Center Inc., "Planning Grant," 42, 74.
[90] St. Marys Indian Center Inc., "Planning Grant," 88.

The St. Marys Indian Center played a central role in the creation of an Indigenous library system in northeastern Kansas. Between 1969 and 1973, NKLS continued to coordinate with the region's four Indigenous communities, spending about $40,000 over those four years to help Potawatomi, Kickapoo, Iowa, and Sac and Fox activists establish their own tribal libraries.[91] The Topeka Indian Center and St. Marys Indian Center also created small libraries. These reference collections represented significant – though separate – achievements. In 1973, Indigenous community activists incorporated the American Indian Library of Kansas (AILK).[92] Not unlike the Indigenous controlled schools movement emerging at the same time, Native controlled libraries offered Indigenous patrons a new set of opportunities oriented around their own cultures.[93] Chaired by Indigenous women such as Grace Wahwassuck and La Vera "Babe" Adame and driven by Native parents who wanted their children to have access to culturally relevant books, newspapers, and other media, the non-profit magnified the impact of the region's smaller tribal libraries by linking them together into a broader Indigenous library system.[94] Through a van purchased with funds from the Northeast Kansas Library System, the system even reached Indigenous cultural associations at the Kansas State Penitentiary, the United States Prison at Leavenworth, and the United States Disciplinary Barracks.[95] Each of the four tribes and two Indigenous centers sent elected representatives to serve on the AILK board.[96] The main resource that the St. Marys Indian Center brought to the new library system was storage

[91] St. Marys Indian Center Inc., "Planning Grant," 82.
[92] St. Marys Indian Center Inc., "Planning Grant," 87.
[93] John Truden, "'You're in apple land but you are a lemon:' Connection, Collaboration and Division in Early '70s Indian Country," *Online Journal of Rural Research and Policy* 15/3 (July 2020): 1-30.
[94] St. Marys Indian Center Inc., "Planning Grant," 75, 87.
[95] St. Marys Indian Center Inc., "Planning Grant," 176; Office of Indian Culture to [Warden Atkins?] September 17, 1976, folder – Indian Culture, box 1, Inmate Activity Files, Kansas Department of Corrections [Collection], Kansas Historical Society, Topeka, KS; Indian Offender Rehabilitation Program Inc., Spring 1974, folder 4, box 8, Topeka League of Women Voters Collection, Kansas Historical Society, Topeka, KS; Georgia Jimenez to James Pearson, September 12, 1974, folder 14, box 152, James Blackwood Pearson Papers.
[96] St. Marys Indian Center Inc., "Planning Grant," 82.

capability; unlike the other five libraries, the campus's buildings provided extensive space, including a former library. In 1974, the AILK board planned to retrofit the center's former seminary library into "an American Indian Research, Historical, and cultural Library and Museum" while also developing the campus into a "consortium service center for housing mail-order services, inter-library loan services and book rotation services"[97] Expanded interlibrary loan service allowed patrons access to Indigenous reference materials held at more specialized academic libraries throughout the state. In other words, the campus broadened the capabilities of an already expanding system.

The St. Marys Recreational Program, a day camp for Indigenous children across northeastern Kansas during the summer of 1973, similarly reflected the center's efforts to address widespread marginalization in the region's Native communities. Babe Adame – a Potawatomi mother "of seven" – coordinated a staff of thirteen: a graduate student and five college students from Kansas State University as well seven Indigenous high schoolers from surrounding communities.[98] On an average day, Adame's staff drove some fifty miles to pick up thirty five Indigenous children scattered across reservation communities and Topeka's urban neighborhoods, then brought them to St. Marys Indian Center by 9:30am.[99] On campus, staff members led the children in a wide variety of activities such as "painting, modelling with clay, movies, beading, making earrings, playing volleyball, basketball, [and] kickball."[100] In addition to KSU, local and regional partners that included several public libraries, a county extension office, and "people in the area…[who came to] talk about and share their way of living – through art, poetry, books, or medicine" further broadened the experiences of a child attending the

[97] St. Marys Indian Center Inc., "Planning Grant," 77-78.
[98] St. Marys Indian Center Inc., "Planning Grant," 32.
[99] St. Marys Indian Center Inc., "Planning Grant," 31.
[100] St. Marys Indian Center Inc., "Planning Grant," 35.

program.[101] Taking advantage of the center's transportation capabilities, the staff even brought their day campers "to a pheasant farm and a cheese factory."[102] At 3:30pm each day, the camp ended and staff drove the attendees another combined fifty miles to their homes. For the most part, the St. Marys Indian Center community considered the 1973 Recreation Program to be extremely successful in its goals of connecting and educating Indigenous children in northeastern Kansas.[103] Due to a lack of documentation, it is unclear whether the program survived to the next summer.

Removing Jack Carson

While the St. Marys Indian Center developed its vision, Horton Agency superintendent and longtime BIA bureaucrat Jack Carson was constructing his own. The year after the Anadarko Area Office sent Carson to Horton, Kansas, he oversaw the formation of the United Tribes of Kansas and Southeast Nebraska (UTKSN).[104] On the surface, the United Tribes' purpose was to encourage coordination between the region's tribal governments. By gathering the region's four populations of Indigenous people under one umbrella, the United Tribes met "[the] minimum service population requirements" required for federal grants, a main source of income for tribal governments across the United States.[105] The United Tribes used that grant funding to provide direly needed services such as a "mobile health unit" – in essence, a healthcare clinic on wheels – to the region's rural Indigenous communities.[106] The UTKSN's appeal was its ability to bring

[101] St. Marys Indian Center Inc., "Planning Grant," 33-35.
[102] St. Marys Indian Center Inc., "Planning Grant," 37.
[103] St. Marys Indian Center Inc., "Planning Grant," 38.
[104] "United Tribes' Progress Report" *United Tribes of Kansas and Southeast Nebraska/Horton Agency – Bureau of Indian Affairs Newsletter*, Spring 1973, folder 37, box 3, Sub-Series 4: Native Americans, Series 1: Subject Files, Dow Chemical Multicultural Resource Center Records.
[105] Task Force No. 9, *Final Report, Volume Two*, 167.
[106] United Tribes of Kansas and Southeast Nebraska, "Mobile Health Unit" c. 1975, Folder – United Tribes of Kansas and Southeast Nebraska, Reel 86, Part 2: Tribal Files, Series 2: The Association on American Indian Affairs Archives, 1851-1983, *Native America: A Primary Record* (Woodbridge, CT: Primary Source Microfilm, 2004).

in far more federal money than any of the region's tribal governments, several of whom did not meet the population threshold; by 1975, the UTKSN employed 240 people and operated on nearly a million dollars a year.[107]

At its core, the UTKSN linked the prospect of economic growth and compliance with Carson's instructions. The United Tribes was never an independent organization; it remained closely associated with the Horton Agency; the two entities even published a joint newsletter. Jack Carson used the UTKSN as an economic carrot to win constituents and maintain power from his office in Horton. The UTKSN structure granted one vote to each tribal government, ignoring significant population differences between the region's communities.[108] This system gave the region's two much smaller Indigenous communities (and perhaps not coincidentally Jack Carson's strongest allies) – the Iowa Tribe and the Sac and Fox Nation – disproportionate economic and political influence. Forest Fee – Iowa tribal chairman – effectively controlled the organization. He became so associated with the United Tribes that one Kickapoo politician referred to him as "Boss Fee."[109] Fee and his peers in the UTKSN believed that Carson's economic offerings through the organization were the answer to their communities' problems; consequentially, they defended the superintendent.[110] In 1972, disillusioned Kickapoo representatives – likely citing a lack of proportional representation – withdrew their tribal government from the organization.[111] If the Prairie Band left, the UTKSN would fall below the population threshold and experience a catastrophic loss of federal funding.

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[107] American Indian Policy Review Commission – Task Force No. 9: Law Consolidation, Revision, and Codification, *Final Report, Volume Two* (Washington D.C: GPO, 1977), 167.
[108] Task Force No. 9, *Final Report, Volume Two*, 165-66.
[109] "Potawatomi and Kickapoo Peoples Unite to Regain Their Destiny" *Akwesasne Notes*, Early Summer 1975.
[110] Merle Bird, "Leaders Support BIA Head" *Topeka Daily-Capital*, July 1, 1974.
[111] Merle Bird, "Leaders Support BIA Head" *Topeka Daily-Capital*, July 1, 1974.

Jack Carson manufactured a Potawatomi constitutional crisis centered around the St. Marys Indian Center to protect the UTKSN from falling below the population threshold. In doing so, he consolidated his influence with his supporters across the region. With good reason, the Tribal Action Committee never trusted the BIA. As early as July 1971, Frank Battese publicly criticized the BIA for interfering in free and fair Prairie Band elections.[112] Not all Potawatomi agreed with Battese but enough were "tired of being controlled by others who don't know their local needs" that the TAC had popular support.[113] After the May 1972 celebration, Jack Carson began raising concerns that the TAC-controlled Prairie Band government had not received BIA approval (even though another BIA official had earlier approved Jesuit-Potawatomi negotiations).[114] The Prairie Band also became divided over the issue. Many Potawatomi people legitimately believed St. Marys represented an unwise use of the tribal government's meager fiduciary capabilities; the tribal council members who represented that constituency froze tribal government funding allotted for the St. Marys Indian Center. On August 2, Lester Jessepe called a public meeting to vote out these members of the tribal council.[115] Jack Carson declared that meeting illegal because a quorum was not present. The following day, Potawatomi protesters attempted to occupy Horton Agency, where they were met with riot police and tear gas.[116]

Commissioner of Indian Affairs Louis Bruce's public response to these events indicates that Carson successfully reframed them as a toxic political impasse crippling the Potawatomi government's operations – a constitutional crisis – rather than an internal dispute magnified by

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[112] "Indian claims rights denied" *Kansas State Collegian*, July 26, 1971.
[113] Melinda Hodgson, "Indians like to govern themselves" *Kansas State Collegian*, March 22, 1972.
[114] Forest Hintz, "U.S. Takes Control of Potawatomi Tribe" *Wichita Eagle and Beacon*, October 7, 1972; "Indians, Government Quarrel" c. 1972, folder 37, box 3, Sub-Series 4: Native Americans, Series 1: Subject Files, Dow Chemical Multicultural Resource Center Records.
[115] Rick Pendergrass, "Indians Rebel Against BIA's 'Interference'" *Topeka Daily Capital*, August 3, 1972.
[116] Lester L. Jessepe, Our Story: The Prairie Band Pottawatomi Indians, c. 1972-1973, folder 3, box 72, James Blackwood Pearson Papers, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS.

the superintendent. The federal government endowed the BIA with enormous power, including the ability to block the decisions of tribal governments. On October 4, 1972, Bruce did just that; he suspended the Prairie Band's constitution. The ramifications of this decision rippled through Potawatomi communities. Not only could Potawatomi people no longer make decisions about the direction of their nation, but the suspension shuttered their tribal government's day to day operations. Technically, tribal government employees did not lose their jobs, but naturally their employer could not pay them if it could not operate. In a published explanation to Prairie Band citizens, Louis Bruce assured them that the suspension was temporary. He detailed a process for Potawatomi people to reconstitute their government "as soon as possible at a general council meeting called by the Superintendent of the Horton Agency"[117] In the same message, Louis Bruce explicitly supported the Prairie Band's claim to St. Marys. Moreover, Bruce misunderstood Jack Carson to be a neutral party in what he assumed to be a strictly internal dispute that would soon be resolved. Inadvertently, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs gave the superintendent the ability to keep the Prairie Band from reforming their government. In the meantime, the UTKSN – through an unelected Potawatomi representative appointed by the BIA – acted as an *ersatz* government, providing individual tribal citizens access to federal programs and jobs that the Prairie Band lost access to with the suspension.[118] Not coincidentally, this arrangement preserved the organization's population threshold. Frank Battese promptly sued, but that lawsuit showed no signs of resolving quickly.[119]

While Jack Carson remained a serious local concern for Indigenous people in northeastern Kansas, events elsewhere shifted the balance of power. In November 1972, the

[117] "Potawatomi Political Problems" *Saint Marys Star*, October 12, 1972.
[118] Task Force No. 9, *Final Report, Volume Two*, 167.
[119] Task Force No. 9, *Final Report, Volume Two*, 165.

American Indian Movement – a Minneapolis, Minnesota-based community organization gradually transitioning into a national Indigenous protest movement – occupied the Bureau of Indian Affairs's headquarters in Washington D.C.[120] AIM's occupation, which dragged on for a week, profoundly disrupted the BIA and created a public relations disaster for the Nixon administration. The President sacked Louis Bruce and John Crow. For over a year, the federal agency operated without a permanent replacement for Bruce. That vacancy prolonged the crisis in Kansas and left the Prairie Band economically reliant on Jack Carson and the UTKSN.[121]

In February 1973, AIM occupied the village of Wounded Knee, South Dakota, as part of an intervention into a local Lakota political administration. Federal officials surrounded the protest camp. Without warning, both sides began shooting at one another. Their confrontation – really a two and half month siege – caught the attention of the world. Writing against the backdrop of Wounded Knee, Ralph Simon Sr. – a twenty-year veteran of Kickapoo politics then serving as tribal chairman – publicly rejected violence enforce tribal sovereignty and instead argued that "we must [carry out treaty rights] with acts of diplomatic dealings with government officials and fellow citizens…[not] a 'one night stand.' It is going to take time and labor."[122] Yet, Simon could not ignore Carson's increasingly malevolent influence and concerted effort to manipulate Kickapoo politics.[123] When Ralph Simon attempted to remove the superintendent diplomatically the following year, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Morris Thompson – Louis Bruce's replacement – dismissed the tribal chairman's communications.[124]

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[120] Smith and Warrior, *Like a Hurricane*. This account remains the best overall analysis of AIM's rise.
[121] Nickeson, "The Structure of the Bureau of Indian Affairs," 75.
[122] Ralph Simon Sr. and Ralph Simon Jr., "Letters to the Editor: Simons write about 'Indianism' in Today's American Society" *Kansas State Collegian*, April 18, 1973.
[123] Steve Cadue to Morris Thompson, November 26, 1974, folder 1, box 8, Topeka League of Women Voters Papers, Kansas Historical Society, Topeka, KS.
[124] Morris Thompson to Ralph Simon, September 18, 1974, folder – Brown County, Complaints, box 1, Investigation Files – Counties, Civil Division, Kansas Office of the Attorney General Files.

By June 1974, Ralph Simon had enough; he organized a force and prepared to peacefully occupy the agency building. The violent confrontation of Wounded Knee, South Dakota is generally remembered as the most prominent occupation of the 1970s United States, but peaceful occupations were far more common. In the five years preceding Simon's proposal, various Indigenous communities occupied and repurposed a former federal prison, abandoned US military properties, urban landscapes, a boarding school, and numerous ancestral lands.[125] Non-violent occupations served a variety of purposes, but they were often effective in lobbying for short term, concrete objectives. In Colorado, Native college students used an occupation of federal lands to protect an endangered tuition waiver reserved for exclusively for them.[126] In Oklahoma, boarding school students mistreated by the staff seized control of the school overnight, creating a controversy that pushed out the administration's leadership.[127] The level of violence at Wounded Knee – which was widely televised and described by many observers – made corresponding non-violent occupations seem more acceptable. By 1974, occupations were a well-established, orderly tactic in the toolkit of Indigenous activists seeking change. Still, that Simon threatened to lead a non-violent but potentially dangerous occupation of a federally controlled facility after negotiations failed reflected the gravity of Jack Carson's continued tenure.[128] Carson mustered state, county, and local police to stop Kickapoo protesters for the anticipated occupation. Commissioner Thompson – desperate to avoid another Wounded Knee – agreed to send federal investigators but – in a moment of irony that even the press noted – when

[125] Richard La Course, "Alcatraz in Perspective" June 1971, folder 11, box 1, Robert A. Warrior Papers; American Indian Press Association, Occupation, June 1971, folder 11, box 1, Robert A. Warrior Papers; American Indian Press Association, Chicago, October 1971, folder 4, box 2, Robert A. Warrior Papers; American Indian Press Association, Seattle, November 1971, folder 5, box 2, Robert A. Warrior Papers.
[126] Fort Lewis College Indian Students via National Indian Youth council, News Release, April 25, 1971, folder 32, box 2, National Indian Youth Council Records.
[127] "Indian Militants Occupy FSIS Building, 3 Jailed" *Lawton Constitution* (Lawton, OK), October 3, 1972; Dona Evers, "FSIS Superintendent, Principal to be Reassigned" *Lawton Constitution*, October 4, 1972.
[128] "Federal Probe of BIA to begin at Horton today" *Kansas State Collegian*, June 20, 1974.

they arrived, they met with Jack Carson to "coordinate [their] activities."[129] The federal probe accomplished relatively little.

Undaunted, Jack Carson hatched a plot to return the Kickapoos to the United Tribes. Several prominent Kickapoo leaders – among others, Ralph Simon Sr., Amos Goslin, and Steve Cadue – recognized that their nation's potential inclusion into the United Tribes could devastate Kickapoo powers of governance.[130] Using a variation on the tactics he employed to suspend the Potawatomi constitution, Carson secretly collaborated with four different Kickapoo council members to give the United Tribes control over Kickapoo programs and allegedly forged the signature of the tribal chairman to achieve a quorum and pass the resolution.[131] Like Iowa tribal chairman Forest Fee, these council members were likely enticed by the promise of economic resources Jack Carson could provide through the UTKSN. Theoretically, Carson might have been able to use the resistance of the other three Kickapoo government officials who refused to recognize the forged document as grounds to declare another constitutional crisis, convince his superiors to suspend the tribal government, and control Kickapoo affairs through a compliant representative on the UTKSN in much the same way as the Prairie Band.[132] Likely with the guidance of TAC politicians from the Prairie Band, Kickapoo leadership anticipated this move. Instead of holding an unrecognized general council meeting that might give Carson the ammunition to declare a constitutional crisis, Kickapoo voters banded together and initiated a

[129] "Boldface" *Kansas State Collegian*, June 21, 1974.
[130] Morris Thompson to Ralph Simon, September 18, 1974, folder – Brown County, box 1, folder – Brown County, Complaints, box 1, Investigation Files – Counties, Civil Division, Kansas Office of the Attorney General Files; "Potawatomi and Kickapoo Peoples Unite to Regain Their Destiny" *Akwesasne Notes*, Early Summer 1975; Steve Cadue, "Pottawatomi People are Victims of a Classic Rip-Off" *Akwesasne Notes*, Early Summer 1975.
[131] "Potawatomi and Kickapoo Peoples Unite to Regain Their Destiny" *Akwesasne Notes*, Early Summer 1975.
[132] Steve Cadue, "Pottawatomi People are Victims of a Classic Rip-Off" *Akwesasne Notes*, Early Summer 1975.

recall election (a method recognized by the BIA). In March 1975, the Kickapoo Tribe in Kansas succeeded in removing Carson's allies and elected a new government led by Amos Goslin.[133]

Outmaneuvered, Jack Carson attempted to block the election entirely and inadvertently gave Kickapoo and Potawatomi leaders the chance they needed to oust him once and for all. Carson's situation within the BIA's machinery had changed drastically since the suspension of the Potawatomi constitution three years earlier. In 1973, Anadarko Area Office Director William Grissom retired; his acting replacement Charles Delaney began paying more attention to the Horton Agency and soon noted Jack Carson's blatant manipulation of Indigenous politics in northeastern Kansas.[134] Grissom's permanent replacement proved even more of a problem for Carson. Like Louis Bruce, Anadarko Area Office Director Charles James was not a typical BIA employee. A Choctaw citizen from Oklahoma, James served as a paratrooper during World War II.[135] While the head of the Navajo Ordinance Deport for the US Army in the 1950s, he formed a relationship with nearby Diné communities. In 1971, Charles James entered the BIA and rose through the ranks until Commissioner Thompson assigned him the directorship in Anadarko. From the time they met in late 1974, James and Carson did not get along.[136] On January 31, 1975, Charles James publicly announced that he was scheduling Carson for reassignment, but bureaucracies move slowly.[137] Still superintendent two months later, Jack Carson refused to recognize the Kickapoo recall election. In doing so, the superintendent left the treasurer's position open. Without a recognized treasurer, the BIA did not allow the Kickapoo tribal

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[133] "Indians Actions Lead to Transferal" *Kansas State Collegian*, April 10, 1975.
[134] Task Force No. 9, *Final Report, Volume Two*, 162-63.
[135] "Choctaw Named in BIA" *Navajo Times*, September 26, 1974.
[136] Steve Cadue to Morris Thompson, November 26, 1974, folder 1, box 8, Topeka League of Women Voters Papers.
[137] "Indians Actions Lead to Transferal" *Kansas State Collegian*, April 10, 1975.

government to distribute paychecks to their employees. For Amos Goslin and his supporters, that was the last straw.

On April 9, 1975 – after coordinating with Charles James and calling on a Topeka-based news crew, newly elected Kickapoo tribal chairman Amos Goslin – whose inauguration Carson was attempting to block – led a group of about thirty protesters to meet the agent as he walked into the agency's little stone building to start work.[138] After a brief exchange in which neither man budged on their original positions, Goslin's people entered the agency with Carson and began to wait. The actual occupation, which stretched into the following morning, was uneventful; one photographer snapped a photo of several protesters playing cards while Jack Carson ate a sandwich at his desk.[139] Local and state police chose not to interfere.[140] Reporters entered freely and even conducted an interview with Amos Goslin. After Carson went home at 5pm, Goslin's people remained. In the meantime, Charles James traveled to Washington D.C. and convinced Thompson to reassign Jack Carson. Afterward, he reportedly flew to Horton, Kansas and joined Goslin's occupants for a celebration.[141] The following morning, Carson walked into work to find he was no longer superintendent.

By 1975, the broader relationship between Indigenous communities and the United States was changing. Goslin's rebel alliance certainly benefited from the coalition's tenacity and experience grappling with the Carson regime, but those factors alone were not enough. When Lester Jessepe led a similarly determined movement in 1972, he did not have the benefit of public sympathy and Carson suppressed efforts to occupy the agency with relatively little controversy. The following spring, the Wounded Knee occupation captured the attention of the

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[138] Jack Carson, Incident Report, April 14, 1975, folder 4, DP132, Carl Albert Collection.
[139] Doug Anstaett, "Indians win agent firing" *Topeka Daily Capital*, April 10, 1975.
[140] "Potawatomi and Kickapoo Peoples Unite to Regain Their Destiny" *Akwesasne Notes*, Early Summer 1975.
[141] Richard Dreitzler to Morris Thompson, April 24, 1975, folder 8, box 180, James Blackwood Pearson Papers.

American public. That event enraged some members of the American law enforcement community. Kansas Attorney General Vern Miller swore that he would retaliate to any attempted occupation of "public property in Kansas" with extreme prejudice, while elements within the BIA began developing a heavily armed police unit designed to overrun an occupied building and subdue or kill the inhabitants.[142] However, the occupation also caused a much greater segment of the American public to become more sympathetic towards Indigenous activism (and to the extent they understood the concept, tribal sovereignty). In late 1974, a small Kootenai community in far northern Idaho "declare[d] war on the United States" and constructed a toll blockade at the border with Canada; within a year, the United States government acquiesced to their demands.[143] Omaha, Quechan, and Mohawk communities in Nebraska, Arizona, and New York used similarly non-violent, well publicized occupations to reclaim lost ancestral Indigenous lands.[144] Unlike earlier efforts initiated by activists, tribal governments led many of these occupations; they recognized that media attention, a reflection of increasing public sympathies, changed the game. Attorney General Vern Miller, voted out of office, found that his successor did send at least one Kansas Bureau of Investigation agent to monitor the occupation but refused to intervene with television cameras rolling and reporters snapping photos.[145]

The occupation of Horton Agency – while effective in pushing government officials to remove Carson – could never have unraveled nearly a century of BIA interference and colonial rule; rather, the occupation accelerated an ongoing, but contested process of decolonization. It is

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[142] "Miller Will Arrest Militants, No Talk" c. 1973, folder 37, box 3, Sub-Series 4: Native Americans, Series 1: Subject Files, Dow Chemical Multicultural Resource Center Records; Richard La Course "FBI, BIA Probing Indian Movement" *Race Relations Reporter*, September 1974.
[143] Christine Parker, "67 Idaho Kootenai Indians Declare 'War' on United States" *Wassaja*, October-November 1974; Ian Chambers, "The Kootenai War of '74" *American Indian Quarterly* 42/1 (Winter 2018): 44-86.
[144] Suzan Shown Harjo, Omaha, c. April 1975, folder 20, box 41, LaDonna Harris Papers; Ken Dennis, "Quechans Seize 152 Acres of Land Belonging to Tribe" *Wassaja*, November 1973; Richard La Course, "A Different Kind of Indian Occupation" *Race Relations Reporter*, July 1974, 35-40.
[145] "Arrests at BIA urged by Miller" *Topeka Daily Capital*, April 10, 1975.

important to recognize that Amos Goslin's coalition set out to achieve a short-term goal of removing Jack Carson, not a comprehensive change in the nation's relationship with the United States. Even before the occupation, Forest Fee defended Jack Carson.[146] Fee's activism prompted a federal investigation – termed the Horton Agency Task Force – that adamantly defended of the United Tribes and the superintendent.[147] Ultimately, both the Interior Department and federal investigators determined that regardless of Jack Carson's competence, he so was deeply enmeshed in the region's Indigenous politics that reinstating him to the superintendency would be inadvisable.[148]

Carson's removal was primarily a result of his own behavior, but the Bureau of Indian Affairs' inability to find him a new position reflected broader demographic and policy changes within the organization. In 1972, the BIA began instituting a policy of giving preference to Native employees in hiring and promotion, otherwise known as Indian preference. In *Morton v. Mancari* (1974) – a class action lawsuit filed by White BIA employees alleging that this policy violated the Civil Rights Act of 1964 – the US Supreme Court affirmed that Indian preference was not only perfectly legal but part of the federal government's obligation in carrying out treaties with Indigenous peoples.[149] In an ironic way, the case turned the Bureau's colonial relationship to Native America on its head. Prior to 1974, most of the BIA's upper echelon was White. The composition of the organization began to shift as those career White employees retired and Indigenous employees replaced them. This left the Bureau in a lurch. The BIA could not simply fire Jack Carson – one of many White employees in positions of power – because he

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[146] Merle Bird, "Leaders Support BIA Head" *Topeka Daily-Capital*, July 1, 1974.
[147] Task Force No. 9, *Final Report, Volume Two*, 161, 164.
[148] Task Force No. 9, *Final Report, Volume Two*, 162; US Congress, House, Committee on Education and Labor, Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education. *Indian Education*. 1977. 95th Cong., 1st sess. 59-60.
[149] Gavin Clarkson, "*Morton v. Mancari*, 1974" In *Treaties with American Indians: An Encyclopedia of Rights, Conflicts, and Sovereignty, Volume 3*, edited by Donald L. Fixico (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2007): 708-709.

had not committed a fireable offense, but due to the Indian preference, the BIA could not move him to a similar position if an equivalent Indigenous candidate applied for that job; instead, BIA officials offered the displaced agent a position in another federal agency where Indian preference did not apply, but Carson – insistent that he and his family be able to remain in Horton – refused positions in Denver and Washington D.C.[150] After stewing for a little over a year, the former superintendent launched an lawsuit in federal court against Ralph Simon Sr., Amos Goslin, Charles James, and Morris Thompson under the Civil Rights Act, alleging that these Indigenous men "conspired to destroy plaintiff's career in the government service because he is a white man."[151] In 1980, a federal judge dismissed the suit with prejudice.[152]

As Carson stewed and sued, Potawatomi communities got the BIA to reinstate the Prairie Band's constitution in 1977. According to Prairie Band historian Gary Mitchell, the grounds for that reinstatement were just as unclear as the original suspension.[153] Even with the St. Marys Indian Center, the Prairie Band lost five years of potential economic development. Bereft of funding, the center closed in 1975. Along with his allies in the Missouri Province, Lester Jessepe helped oversee the center's sale in 1976; two years later, the Society of St. Pius X – a conservative Catholic cultural society that rejects the legitimacy of Vatican II – purchased St. Marys and over the next half century built a community around the campus.[154]

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[150] Morris Thompson to Ralph Simon, September 18, 1974, folder – Brown County, box 1, folder – Brown County, Complaints, Box 1, Investigation Files – Counties, Civil Division, Kansas Office of the Attorney General Files; Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education. *Indian Education*, 60.
[151] Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education. *Indian Education*, 61-64.
[152] Stipulation of Dismissal, March 10, 1980, Civil Case File 76-170 *Carson v. Simon*, National Archives ID 6852798, Non-Trial Civil Case Files 1970-1995, US District Court for the First (Topeka) Division of the District of Kansas, Record Group 21, National Archives at Kansas City, MO.
[153] Mitchell, *Stories of the Potawatomi People*, 59.
[154] "St. Marys College Campus Sold" *St. Marys Star-Valley Ho!* (St. Marys, KS) April 8, 1976.

Despite all these loose ends, Jack Carson's removal eviscerated the Bureau of Indian Affairs's authority in northeastern Kansas.[155] At an April 1975 conference at the St. Marys Indian Center between the Prairie Band and various federal officials, a notice forcefully warned that "any action by any state or federal law enforcement agency to interfere or intervene on this conference will be considered as a violation of treaty agreement between the United States Government and the Prairie Pottawatomi."[156] Jack Carson's removal also seems to have impacted the Anadarko Area Office as a whole. In 1976, BIA agents working out of Shawnee, Oklahoma considered investigating a nearby contested Absentee Shawnee election.[157] Where they might have intervened earlier in the decade, these agents decided that the Bureau of Indian Affairs should stay out of such tribal elections. Using federal grants, Kickapoo tribal government contractors took direct control over many institutions and services formerly administered by BIA employees. In some cases, they created new services such as a Kickapoo-controlled school system.[158] The nation experienced a dramatic economic boom as many of tribal citizens took on these new jobs and spent their paychecks in Kickapoo communities.[159] By the end of the 1970s, the Kickapoo Tribe in Kansas – which began the decade with two paid employees – counted 142 people in its tribal government workforce. [160] In a 1977 interview, Goslin's contemporary Steve

[155] Andrew E. Yamaguchi, "Kickapoos Look Forward, Not Back at Troubles" *Kansas City Times* (Kansas City, KS), July 27, 1977.
[156] Prairie Band Pottawatomi Conference, St. Marys, Kansas, April 24, 1975, folder 47, box 3, Sub-series 4: Native Americans, Series 1: Subject Files, Dow Chemical Multicultural Resource Center Records.
[157] John S. Taylor to Ernest Longhorn, July 15, 1976, Folder-Absentee Shawnee-1975 Election, Box 1: Tribal Histories-Absentee Shawnee-Cherokee, Oklahoma Indian Commission Papers, Oklahoma State Archives, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Oklahoma City, OK.
[158] Donald D. Stull, *Kiikaapoa: The Kansas Kickapoo* (Horton, KS: Kickapoo Tribal Press, 1984), 126.
[159] Donald D. Stull, Jerry A. Schultz, and Ken Cadue, "Rights Without Resources: The Rise and Fall of the Kansas Kickapoo" *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 10:2 (1986): 45.
[160] Stull, Schultz, and Cadue, "Rights Without Resources," 48.

Cadue phrased this evolution as "the freedom to do the job without the politics of the Jack Carson era…we're not at odds with the bureau now."[161]

Conclusion

The United States (and more broadly, western colonizing societies) experienced the 1970s as a moment of catastrophic, nightmarish decline, but as Niall Ferguson writes, this was not the case across much of the world.[162] The same decade saw Indigenous peoples across the globe wrestle their sovereignty back from colonial powers. In northeastern Kansas, that looked like Kickapoo and Potawatomi people disrupting the BIA's operations and replacing them with new tribal government positions, a shift away from relying on settler allies and towards restored powers of governance. As with any historical event, the significance of the occupation of Horton Agency depends upon interpretation. Looking backward from the mid-1980s, some Kickapoo citizens became frustrated after US President Ronald Reagan's funding cuts crippled their tribal government's operations and forced them to return to a reliance on the Bureau of Indian Affairs.[163] Yet, the Horton Agency occupation could just as easily be labeled a precursor to increasing Kickapoo and Potawatomi economic and political sovereignty. While gradual and still ongoing, the revitalization of those governments proved transformational over the long term. Ending this story in 1977 rather than during the Reagan administration (or for that matter, after the Prairie Band began operating a casino) allows the occupation to be a moment of Indigenous triumph against US imperialism.

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[161] Yamaguchi, "Kickapoos Look Forward," July 27, 1977.
[162] Niall Ferguson, "Crisis, What Crisis?: The 1970s and the Shock of the Global," In Niall Ferguson, ed, et al, *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010): 1-21.
[163] Stull, Schultz, and Cadue, "Rights Without Resources," 44.

Epilogue

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November 6, 2018. Oklahomans elected an Indigenous man to the state's highest office for the second time (the first was Johnston Murray in 1950) since statehood. Wealthy Tulsa businessman J. Kevin Stitt – a citizen of the Cherokee Nation – campaigned on a three-pronged platform of reforming the state's poorly funded education system, fixing the state's equally disastrous criminal justice system, and creating a more accountable state government.[1] In January 2019, the new governor began his term with little controversy. His administration followed several others – most notably Brad Henry (2003-2011) – who built mutually positive relationships between the state government and the thirty-nine tribal governments who call Oklahoma home.[2] Stitt seemed to be following this path too. He communicated regularly with Bill Anoatubby, the widely respected, longtime Governor of the Chickasaw Nation.[3] The new governor also hired Lisa J. Billy – an influential Chickasaw citizen who saw her primary responsibility in this role as "improving the health of the State-Tribal relationship" – as the state's inaugural Secretary of Native American Affairs.[4]

Kevin Stitt and Lisa Billy approached state-tribal government relationships from vastly different positions. Raised in various parts of the state before settling in Tulsa and founding the extremely successful Gateway Mortgage Company in 2000, Stitt campaigned as a businessman who could reform state government.[5] Largely unknown in state politics before 2018, Oklahoma

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[1] Catherine Sweeney, "J. Kevin Stitt, Oklahoma's 28th Governor" *Journal Record* (Oklahoma City, OK), January 14, 2019.
[2] Barbara Hoberock, "Stitt, tribes deeply divided" *Tulsa World* (Tulsa, OK), November 17, 2019.
[3] Carmen Forman and Molly Young, "McGirt rhetoric boils over as communication stalls" *Tulsa World* (Tulsa, OK), December 20, 2021.
[4] Lisa J. Billy to Kevin Stitt, December 23, 2019, Gaming Compact Documents [Collection], United for Oklahoma, https://www.unitedforoklahoma.com/gaming-compact/resources/, accessed June 5, 2022.
[5] Catherine Sweeney, "J. Kevin Stitt, Oklahoma's 28th Governor" *Journal Record*, January 14, 2019; "Gateway Mortgage Funds Classroom Projects" *Oklahoma Eagle* (Tulsa, OK), August 16, 2018.

voters – and notable endorsee US President Donald Trump – lauded Stitt's financial success as well as his adherence to fundamentalist Protestant Christianity and the populist political conservatism espoused by the Republican Party (and most Oklahomans). Although Stitt's wealth and tribal citizenship lent him some superficial similarity with members of the early twentieth century Indigenous gentry who came to political prominence in the state, the gubernatorial candidate's views on the state government's relationship with Indigenous communities played almost no role in his campaign. Two months before the general election, eminent Indigenous journalist Mark Trahant noted that "he has not said much about tribal issues."[6]

Lisa Billy consistently represented "the commonsense conservative views of my constituents" but she also worked to recognize tribal sovereignty for the entirety of her political career.[7] Billy came to prominence as the Chickasaw Nation used capital gained through the gaming industry to transition from a reliance on partnerships with settlers back to self-governance in the late twentieth century. After a stint in the Chickasaw legislature, she ran for and won a seat in the state house representing Purcell, a small city on the northern border of the Chickasaw Nation. In her initial campaign in 2004, Billy argued that "people need to know more about what the tribes contribute to the state."[8] Two years later, she and twelve other Indigenous state representatives and state senators founded the Native American Caucus, a "bi-partisan group [within the legislature designed] to inform other lawmakers about Native American issues and cultivate a closer relationship with Oklahoma tribal leaders."[9] Although she was also passionate about other issues, Lisa Billy became known for her work "build[ing] communication

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[6] Mark Trahant, "Historic Mid-Term Elections? The Numbers and Stories Answer 'Yes'!" *News from Indian Country* (Hayward, WI), September 1, 2018.
[7] "State Rep. Lisa Billy Nominated for 'Woman of the Year'" *Native American Times* (Tulsa, OK), October 28, 2011.
[8] Jennifer Tedlock, "Choctaw/Chickasaw Woman Juggles Family and Political Career" *Native American Times*, April 7, 2004.
[9] "The Big 13: Meet Oklahoma's Native American caucus" *Native American Times*, February 17, 2006.

bridges between the state and tribal governments."[10] One of the most influential women in the state's dominant Republican Party and an expert on state-tribal government relations, Billy was a natural choice for a state position centered around nurturing those relationships.

Barely six months into his term, Kevin Stitt ignited a controversy over tribal gaming – really over the question of whether the state could interfere in Indigenous affairs – that overshadowed his administration for much of the next year. In *Worchester v. Georgia* (1831), the US Supreme Court definitively ruled that tribal governments – as peers with the United States – are not subject to state sovereignty. Jeff Corntassel and Richard Witmer argue that the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act – passed by the US Congress in 1988 to limit tribal gaming powers after the US Supreme Court affirmed states had no power to regulate them in *California v. Cabazon Band of Mission Indians* (1987) – disrupted the hierarchy established in *Worchester* because it requires that tribal governments negotiate with states to construct and operate gaming facilities.[11] For example, Oklahoma voters approved a proposed compact between the thirty nine tribes and the state in 2004, authorizing tribal gaming operations in Oklahoma. Over the next decade, tribal gaming in the state exploded into a multi-billion-dollar industry with over a hundred facilities in operation, including the largest casino in the world.[12] The compact automatically renewed after fifteen years – January 1, 2020 – if both parties adhered to its terms. Since Oklahoma's entry into the union in 1907, state government officials assumed that state institutions superseded tribal governments, a mistaken assumption that the US Supreme Court obliterated in *McGirt v.*

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[10] "State Rep. Lisa Billy Nominated for 'Woman of the Year.'"

[11] Jeff Corntassel and Richard C. Witmer, *Forced Federalism: Contemporary Challenges to Indigenous Nationhood* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 2008): 16-24; for histories of tribal gaming's intersection with federal Indian policy, see: Dean J. Kotlowski, "From Backlash to Bingo: Ronald Reagan and Federal Indian Policy" Pacific Historical Review 77/4 (November 2008): 617-52; Jessica Cattelino, *High Stakes: Florida Seminole Gaming and Sovereignty* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Laurie Arnold, "The Ground Floor of a Movement: The National Indian Gaming Association and the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act" *Western Historical Quarterly* 48/4 (Winter 2017): 345-365.

[12] Barbara Hoberock, "Stitt, tribes deeply divided" *Tulsa World*, November 17, 2019.

Oklahoma about a year later. Under this assumption, Oklahoma claimed regulatory authority over tribal governments in a number (although not all) of instances. In hindsight, it is not surprising that Kevin Stitt tried to renegotiate the gaming compacts. The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act reinforced an ambiguity that already existed in relationships between tribal governments and the state government in Oklahoma.

On July 5, 2019, Kevin Stitt sent a letter to tribal governments across the state addressing the "upcoming termination of the Tribal-State Gaming Compacts."[13] Stitt assumed the compact would expire and so rather than simply reinstate them, he played hardball. Knowing that Indigenous communities could not abide such a cataclysmic loss of revenue after investing millions in gaming facilities and infrastructure, the new governor concluded his communique by encouraging tribal governments to act "so that [they]…may continue to lawfully conduct…gam[ing] in Oklahoma after that date."[14] To Indigenous leaders who followed the terms of the compact and believed Stitt had no authority to impose new terms on an existing agreement, that statement read as a threat that state officials would invade the casinos and shut them down if new compacts were not renegotiated before January 1, 2020. Three days after Stitt sent out his letter, the public – and many Indigenous leaders who had not had a chance to respond or even process the letter – found out about the governor's views through an editorial published in the *Tulsa World*.[15]

In response, Indigenous leaders – insulted first and foremost that the governor took "a matter of such great importance to the media before engaging in respectful and purposeful conversations" – rallied to protect their collective sovereignty. At a Muscogee Nation gaming

[13] J. Kevin Stitt to Bill Anoatubby, July 5, 2019, Gaming Compact Documents Collection.
[14] J. Kevin Stitt to Bill Anoatubby, July 5, 2019, Gaming Compact Documents Collection.
[15] Kevin Stitt, "New Compacts Must Protect Tribes and State" *Tulsa World*, July 8, 2019.

facility in Tulsa on July 12, "tribal leaders expressed their disappointment in the action by Gov. Stitt."[16] Many were caught off guard by Stitt's claim that the compacts would expire. In a July 19 letter to the Governor of Oklahoma, Governor Bill Anoatubby wrote that "the pre-conditions for renewal have been satisfied, and our compact will therefore renew."[17] Four days later, the Oklahoma Indian Gaming Association – an organization designed to voice (but not supersede) the concerns of tribal governments invested in the state's gaming industry – publicly disputed Stitt's assertion, stating that "we intend to stand united in response to your recent statement that the Gaming Compact will expire at the end of this year."[18]

Although most of the thirty-three tribal governments who participated in OIGA only operated a few gaming facilities, they recognized that the dispute was about more than gambling. Stitt's conception of the 2004 compact as something the state government could back out of inadvertently reframed what might have simply been a mundane legal disagreement into an issue of sovereignty.[19] If the State of Oklahoma could simply break the terms of the compact, then the state could arbitrarily ignore the terms of other agreements. More than disrespect, Stitt's efforts threatened to repeat the disastrous dismantlement of tribal governments that occurred during the allotment era. Consequentially, whether the compacts automatically renewed became the center of the dispute. At an August 22 meeting at a Citizen Potawatomi Nation gaming facility in Shawnee, the Oklahoma Indian Gaming Association stated that "we will consider [negotiations]…only when the State of Oklahoma affirms the automatic renewal."[20]

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[16] Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes, "Tribal Leaders Sign Joint Resolution Opposing Governor Stitt's Repudiation of the State-Tribal Gaming Compacts," July 12, 2019, Gaming Compact Documents Collection.
[17] Bill Anoatubby to Kevin Stitt, July 19, 2019, Gaming Compact Documents Collection.
[18] Oklahoma Indian Gaming Association to Kevin Stitt, July 23, 2019, Gaming Compact Documents Collection.
[19] Barbara Hoberock, "Stitt, tribes deeply divided" *Tulsa World*, November 17, 2019.
[20] Oklahoma Indian Gaming Association to Kevin Stitt, August 28, 2019, Gaming C1ompact Documents Collection.

Kevin Stitt and Lisa Billy's understanding of tribal sovereignty influenced their responses during this crisis in tribal-state relations. Stitt had little prior experience working with tribal governments and possessed little understanding of how tribal sovereignty made Indigenous peoples different from corporations. Having worked in an Indigenous legislature and centered her career in state government around advocating for tribal sovereignty, Lisa J. Billy naturally possessed a very different understanding of that concept. Billy recognized Indigenous nations as entities whose inherent authority made them peers with the federal government, not state governments. In Kevin Stitt's defense, a working knowledge of tribal sovereignty was not a requirement to become governor, but it is also difficult to imagine that Lisa Billy did not speak up when her boss began following such a disastrous line of reasoning. If she did, Stitt did not listen. From his understanding of tribal governments as something approaching corporations, it made sense to continue playing hardball. Rather than apologizing, Stitt repeatedly (and unsuccessfully) demanded that Indigenous leaders meet him at the negotiating table.[21] Billy found the governor's behavior to be extraordinarily disrespectful. On December 23, 2019, she resigned, noting in her letter to the governor that "it has become increasingly clear you are committed to an unnecessary conflict that poses a real risk of lasting damage to the State-Tribal relationship and to our economy."[22] Just eight days later, the Cherokee, Choctaw, and Chickasaw Nations sued the Stitt administration over the tribal gaming debacle.[23]

What Lisa Billy alluded to when she used the word *economy* in her resignation letter was a complex set of interwoven relationships between Indigenous governments, their citizens, and

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[21] Office of the Governor, "Office of Gov Stitt Files Response in Federal Court to Choctaw, Cherokee, Chickasaw Nations' Lawsuit," January 22, 2020, https://oklahoma.gov/governor/newsroom/newsroom/2020/january/office-of-gov-stitt-files-response-in-federal-court-to-choctaw--.html, accessed September 12, 2022.
[22] Lisa J. Billy to Kevin Stitt, December 23, 2019, Gaming Compact Documents Collection.
[23] "Cherokee, Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations File Federal Lawsuit to End Compact Renewal Dispute" December 31, 2019, Gaming Compact Documents Collection.

settler neighbors across rural Oklahoma. In addition to paying over a billion dollars into the state's education coffers as part of the 2004 compact, tribal governments used gaming revenue to build, finance, and staff hospitals, colleges, roads, housing, social services, fire and police departments, schools, factories, and museums in their communities.[24] In Oklahoma, most tribal governments are based in rural communities – Tahlequah, Anadarko, Miami, Ponca City, and Shawnee. As these governments pumped gaming revenue back into rural regions of the state, settlers and Indigenous people alike increasingly looked to them for fire trucks, police, bridges, roads, family doctors and dentists, libraries, and perhaps most importantly financial support for rural school districts. In the same fifteen-year period, the state government increasingly contracted into metropolitan centers as Oklahoma's economy suffered grievously from the effects of the Great Recession.

When Kevin Stitt threatened to shut down tribal gaming operations, he inadvertently threatened all the settler communities that benefited from Indigenous reinvestments of gaming revenue. The financial investments that tribal governments made in rural Oklahoma gave a huge number of settlers a stake in this fight. Indigenous leaders understood this relationship and amplified it by forming United for Oklahoma in December 2019, a lobbying group that waged a robust public campaign to point out the enormous investments tribal governments had already made in rural communities.[25] This campaign was highly successful. Many non-Native people responded to the escalating conflict between Indigenous communities and the state government by calling out Stitt. In a January 2020 forum in the *Tulsa World*, one writer argued the governor

[24] Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes, "Tribal Leaders Sign Joint Resolution Opposing Governor Stitt's Repudiation of the State-Tribal Gaming Compacts," July 12, 2019, Gaming Compact Documents Collection.
[25] United for Oklahoma, "Tribal Leaders Comment on Governor Stitt's Compact Dispute" Press Release, December 17, 2019, Gaming Compact Documents Collection; United for Oklahoma, "Tribal Leaders Stand United at Press Conference, Press Release, December 19, 2019, Gaming Compact Documents Collection; Oklahoma Indian Gaming Association to Kevin Stitt, December 20, 2019, Gaming Compact Documents Collection.

should "stand down," while another noted that "turning our indigenous Oklahomans into adversaries is the wrong way to conduct business."[26] Charles McCall – speaker of the state house and "the most influential rural lawmaker" in Oklahoma – argued that "everyone wins when tribes are strong because their benefit in rural Oklahoma goes far beyond the tribes themselves."[27] Together with his contemporary Oklahoma Senate Pro Tempore Greg Treat, McCall publicly challenged the Stitt administration's attempts to create new compacts with tribal governments, an important part of the governor's plan to force the tribal gaming industry to the negotiating table. McCall and Treat – some of the most powerful figures in Oklahoma politics and both members of the Republican Party – argued that tribal governments "are essential parts of the fabric of the State of Oklahoma, each vested with their own sovereignty."[28] In their joint letter, they argued that "Oklahoma's executive branch made a promise it could not legally keep under current law" both because the proposed new compacts violated the original 2004 compact and because Stitt illegally circumvented the legislature's authority.[29] In other words, the two men recognized that tribal governments and the state legislature in Oklahoma shared a mutual investment in tribal sovereignty, a tie ironically created by requirements of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act.

The compact dispute illustrated the continuing importance of Indigenous-settler partnerships even as tribal governments have increasingly reclaimed their powers of governance from federal and state officials. Indigenous communities in Oklahoma won a legal victory in July 2020 when a federal court confirmed that the compact automatically renewed, but they also won an enduring moral victory with much of Oklahoma's non-Native public.[30] Although later

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[26] "Bill Leighty, "Letter to the Editor: Stitt needs to stand down" *Tulsa World*, January 11, 2020; Jim Weems, "Letter to the Editor: Stitt needs to play nice" *Tulsa World*, January 11, 2020.
[27] Barbara Hoberock, "Legislators Stand by the State's Tribes" *Tulsa World*, December 15, 2019.
[28] Charles A. McCall and Greg Treat to J. Kevin Stitt, April 22, 2020, Gaming Compact Documents Collection.
[29] Charles A. McCall and Greg Treat to J. Kevin Stitt, April 22, 2020, Gaming Compact Documents Collection.
[30] United for Oklahoma, "OIGA Chairman Matthew L. Morgan responds to Federal Court's ruling" Press Release, July 28, 2020, Gaming Compact Documents Collection.

controversies – most notably the earthshattering *McGirt v. Oklahoma* (2020) ruling – are far more significant, the gaming compact dispute shaped the contours of those battles. Like Charles David Carter or Robert L. Owen, J. Kevin Stitt's concerns were not those of most Indigenous people, but the governor inherited a fundamentally different situation than the two congressmen. Where Owen and Carter's constituents demanded that the two congressmen loosen restrictions on allotments so they could loot Indigenous property, Stitt found his own constituents unsympathetic to the destruction of tribal sovereignty. In combination with decades of rebuilding tribal government infrastructure, the hard work of winning over much of Oklahoma's settler public – once a simple survival strategy turned into a means of bolstering tribal sovereignty – won the day.

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