

OKLAHOMA:



Land of Opportunity

Chapter 11:
Boomers, Sooners, and Oklahoma Territory
STUDY PRESENTATION





Section 1: Dissolving a Way of Life
Section 2: Oklahoma Territory

Section 1: Dissolving a Way of Life

➤ Essential Question:

- How did the federal government work to break up the Indian nations in the late 1800s?



Section 1: Dissolving a Way of Life

➤ What terms do I need to know?

- Dawes Severalty Act
- Curtis Act
- boomer
- rider
- squatter
- sooner



The Dawes Act

- Friends of the Indians was a group led by Alice Fletcher. They believed the Indians would be best served by dividing lands into homesteads as in the white society.
- 1887: The Dawes Severalty Act extended U.S. law to the territory and dissolved some tribal ownership of the lands.
- 1893: All tribal ownership was dissolved for all tribes.



Boomers

- Pressure increased to allow settlement of the 2 million acres of “unassigned lands.”
- Some Indians believed this might be good for the local economy.
- “Boomer” was a term used to describe those who were part of the land boom.
- David L. Payne led a group of settlers to the Unassigned Lands, but was driven off by federal troops. He returned several times until his death in 1884.
- William L. Couch’s group of 400 settlers refused orders to leave, but were surrounded and not allowed to get supplies. They gave up and went back to Kansas.



Boomers: Indian Response

- By law, non-Indians were forbidden to be in the Territory.
- Tribes sent delegates to Washington to ask for help and remind politicians of the law; they helped marshals watch for illegal activity.
- Judge Parker ruled in 1881 that the Indians did have an interest in the Unassigned Lands.



Boomers: The Springer Amendment

- 1889: The Indian Appropriation Act authorized payment to tribes in exchange for dropping claims on the Unassigned Lands.
- The Homestead Act allowed settlers into the region at noon on April 22, 1889 to claim a homestead.
- “Sooners” were those who crossed the line early and staked a claim on choice land in the territory.



The First Land Opening

- Word spread quickly of the opportunity for good land.
- Rich, poor, black, white, young, old gathered in Kansas, Texas, and Arkansas days ahead of the entry date.



The First Land Opening: The Run for the Unassigned Lands

- Hundreds of people, wagons, buggies, and animals of all sorts made their way across rivers into the Territory.
- 50,000 – 100,000 people entered and claimed the two million acres within a few hours.



The First Land Opening: Claiming Land

- Homesteaders had to find the surveyor's stone with the land description, then report to the filing office and pay a filing fee.
- They obtained title to the land after living and farming there for five years.
- Fists, guns, and courts were used to settle disputes about ownership.



The First Land Opening: New Towns

- The Seminole Townsite and Improvement Company came in early and mapped out locations for new towns.
- Oklahoma City had 12,000 people on its first day.
- Many towns were started and local governments established quickly.
- Blacksmiths and barbers served as dentists; lawyers and merchants set up shop quickly.
- Food and water ran low in Guthrie due to the huge number of settlers.
- 1890: African American Edward McCabe established the town of Langston. Thousands of blacks were a part of the land run; 50 all-black communities were formed.



Homesteading

- Settlers might use their wagon as the first home.
- If trees were scarce, dugouts or “soddies” served as a home.
- Barns werer often built first.
- Sod houses were insulated and safe from fires; rain caused a wet, muddy mess.
- If a farm was successful, a small wood house would be built.
- Most farms would add cellars (food storage and tornado protection), windmills (for pumping water), and cisterns (to collect rainwater).



Section 2: Oklahoma Territory

➤ Essential Question:

- How did establishment of Oklahoma Territory affect Indians and settlers?



Section 2: Oklahoma Territory

- What terms do I need to know?
 - Organic Act
 - township
 - normal school



The Organic Act

- May 2, 1890: Oklahoma Territory was defined as west of the land of the Five Tribes, including No Man's Land.
- President Harrison was to appoint a governor, secretary, and three supreme court judges.
- Citizens would elect a 13-member council and 26-member house of representatives.
- Seven counties set up with citizens to vote on county names.
- Until they could create their own laws, they used the laws of Nebraska.



Oklahoma Territory and Indian Territory



The Organic Act: Greer County

- Lands claimed by Texas were ruled by the Supreme Court as part of Oklahoma Territory.
- Greer County was later divided into four counties (Beckham, Jackson, Greer, and Harmon).
- Homesteaders were allowed to keep their land.
- The Choctaw tribe was compensated for the loss.



The Organic Act: No Man's Land

- Oklahoma Panhandle had uncertain ownership.
- Boundaries of other areas went around it; some thought it part of the Cherokee Outlet.
- It was also known as the Public Land Strip and Neutral Strip of Indian Territory.
- Though some had already settled there (and wanted to have their own “Cimarron Territory”), officially, settlement was allowed in 1890.
- Called Beaver County until statehood, then became Beaver, Texas, and Cimarron counties.



The Organic Act: First Territorial Government

- George W. Steele (Indiana) was named governor and Robert Martin named secretary.
- Steele arrived May 23, 1890 and traveled the territory and set a date for territorial elections for the legislature.
- His first act was to provide for care and custody of prisoners in Lansing, Kansas.
- Public schools were quickly established with funds from the Organic Act.
- Two sections of each township were reserved to fund schools. A township had 36 1-square mile “sections”; each section had 640 acres.
- A university was established at Norman, an agricultural and mechanical school at Stillwater, and a normal school for teacher training at Edmond.
- The capital was at Guthrie.



The Cherokee (Jerome) Commission

- The Cherokee, or Jerome Commission, was led by David Jerome for the federal government.
- President Harrison wanted Indians to give up their “surplus” lands since there was huge demand by whites for homesteads.
- By 1893, 15 million additional acres became available through more than 11 agreements.



More Land Openings

- Reservations were dissolved and 20,000 people participated on the run for the Sac and Fox, and Potawatomi, Iowa, and Shawnee lands.
- 25,000 people ran on the Arapaho and Cheyenne lands; however, some of this land was so rugged that settlers did not stay.
- Opening of the Cherokee Outlet, Tonkawa, and Pawnee lands brought 100,000 settlers.
- The last run in 1895 was for Kickapoo lands.



Territorial Governors

- Governor Steele resigned and went home to Indiana in 1891.
- Robert Martin, secretary of the territory, was acting governor into 1892.
- Abraham Seay was the second governor followed by William Renfrow (1893-1897).
- 1897: The Northwestern Normal School in Alva opened and the Colored Agricultural and Normal University opened in Langston.
- Cassius M. Barnes was governor from 1897-1901; he opened the University Preparatory School in Tonkawa and Southwestern Normal School in Weatherford.
- William Jenkins was governor May – November 1901.
- Thompson B. Ferguson and Frank Frantz were the last territorial governors.



Land Openings



The Last Land Distributions

- A land lottery used for later distributions.
- 165,000 homesteaders registered at land offices.
- 300 registration cards were drawn per day; winners could pick their claim in county or town plans.
- Land was divided in Ponca, Otoe-Missouri, Kaw, and Osage tribes to the members. There was no surplus land.
- The Osage retained mineral rights on their lands.
- Big Pasture land was sold by auction and money set aside for the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache.





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