

# *Chapter 11*

## **Boomers and Sooners**



*In this chapter:*

- ❖ *The federal government will begin the dismantling of the Indian Nations and allotting land to every individual.*
- ❖ *The Boomer Movement will provoke the sale and opening of The Unassigned Lands.*
- ❖ *The western plains and the Panhandle will be organized as Oklahoma Territory, and the reservations will be broken up and given to settlers through land runs and lotteries.*

# *Section 1: Dissolving the Indian Nations*

**INDIAN LAND FOR SALE**

GET A HOME  
OF  
YOUR OWN  
EASY PAYMENTS



PERFECT TITLE  
POSSESSION  
WITHIN  
THIRTY DAYS

*Many people believed it was in the Indians' best interest to give tribal-held lands to individuals.*

**In 1887, Congress passed the Dawes Severalty Act.**

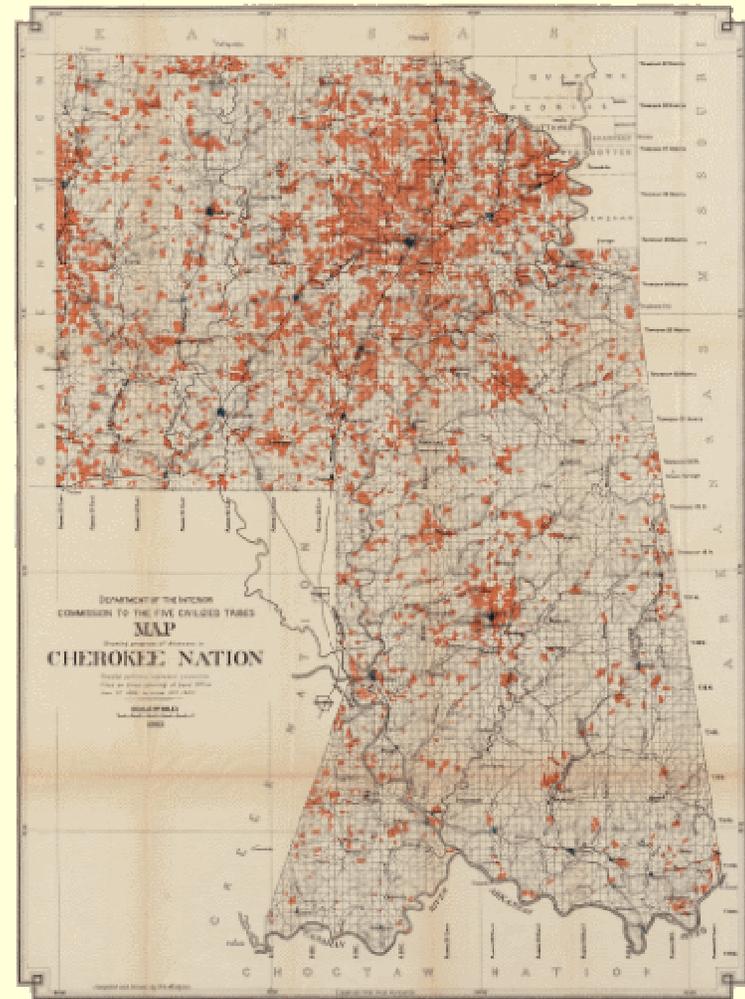
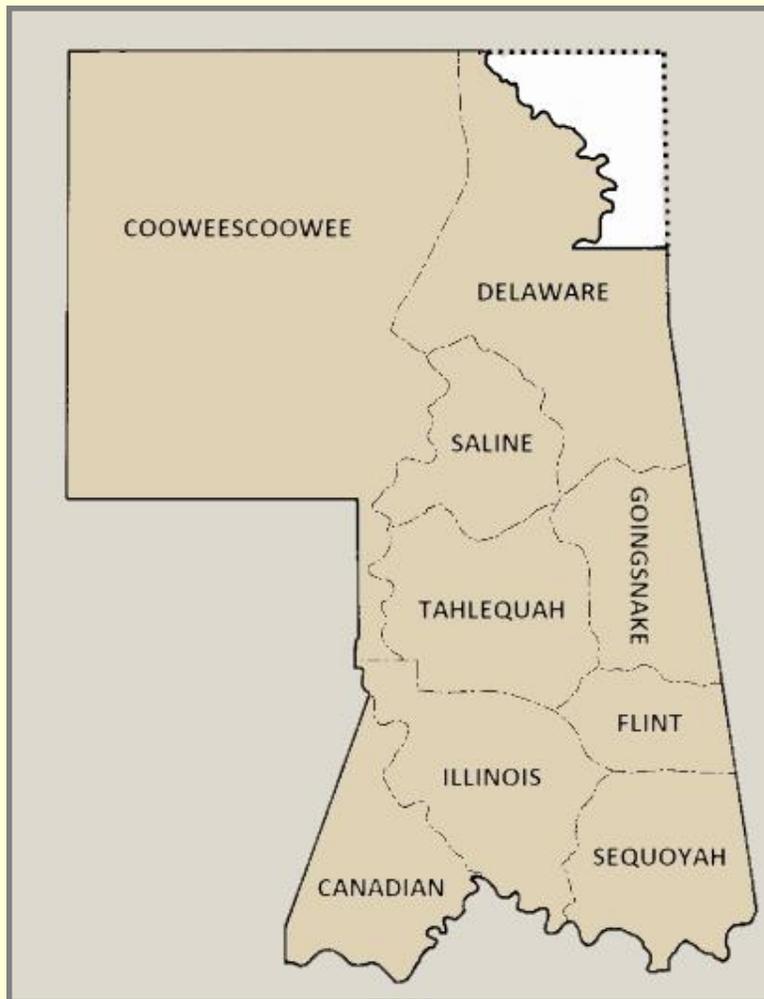
**It dissolved tribal ownership, and instead gave allotments to each individual Indian.**

*It was sponsored by Massachusetts Senator Henry Dawes and was sometimes called the General Allotment Act.*



*Tribal ownership of land was called commonality.  
Individual ownership was called severalty.*

*The Dawes Act originally applied only to the reservations,  
but later was amended to include the Five Civilized Tribes.*



# The Dawes Commission began to compile tribal rolls and make land assignments.

*Although the tribes objected at first, they later accepted the allotments.*

RESIDENCE: Lawacha TOWN  
 POST OFFICE: Scott's Falls, Ok. Ter.

**Seminole Nation. Seminole Roll.**  
(BY BIRTH PRESENT.)

CARD NO. 303  
 FIELD NO. 293

Dawes Roll No.	NAME	Relation-ship to Person Listed	AGE	SEX	BLOOD	TRIBAL ENROLLMENT		TRIBAL ENROLLMENT OF PARENTS						
						Year.	CLASS.	Year.	CLASS.	Name of Father.	Year.	CLASS.	Name of Mother.	Year.
1007	Larney, John		35	M	Full	1897	Class. B	227	Sita Larney	1897	Class. B	Scott's Lockage	Dead	Class. B
1008	" " , Lucy	wife	47	F	"	1897	"	227	Pocahontas	Dead	Class. B	"	"	"
1009	" " , Solomon	son	"	M	"	1897	"	227	No 1					
1010														
1011														
1012														
<i>No 1 Dead April 11 1900 Proof filed Land Office Notified May 31 1905</i>														

**In 1898, Charles Curtis,  
a Kansas Congressman,  
drafted a bill  
to increase funding  
for Indian education.**

**But after many revisions,  
The Curtis Act  
actually abolished all  
remaining tribal rights.**



**Pressure mounted to open the two million acres in the heart of Indian Territory to white settlers.**



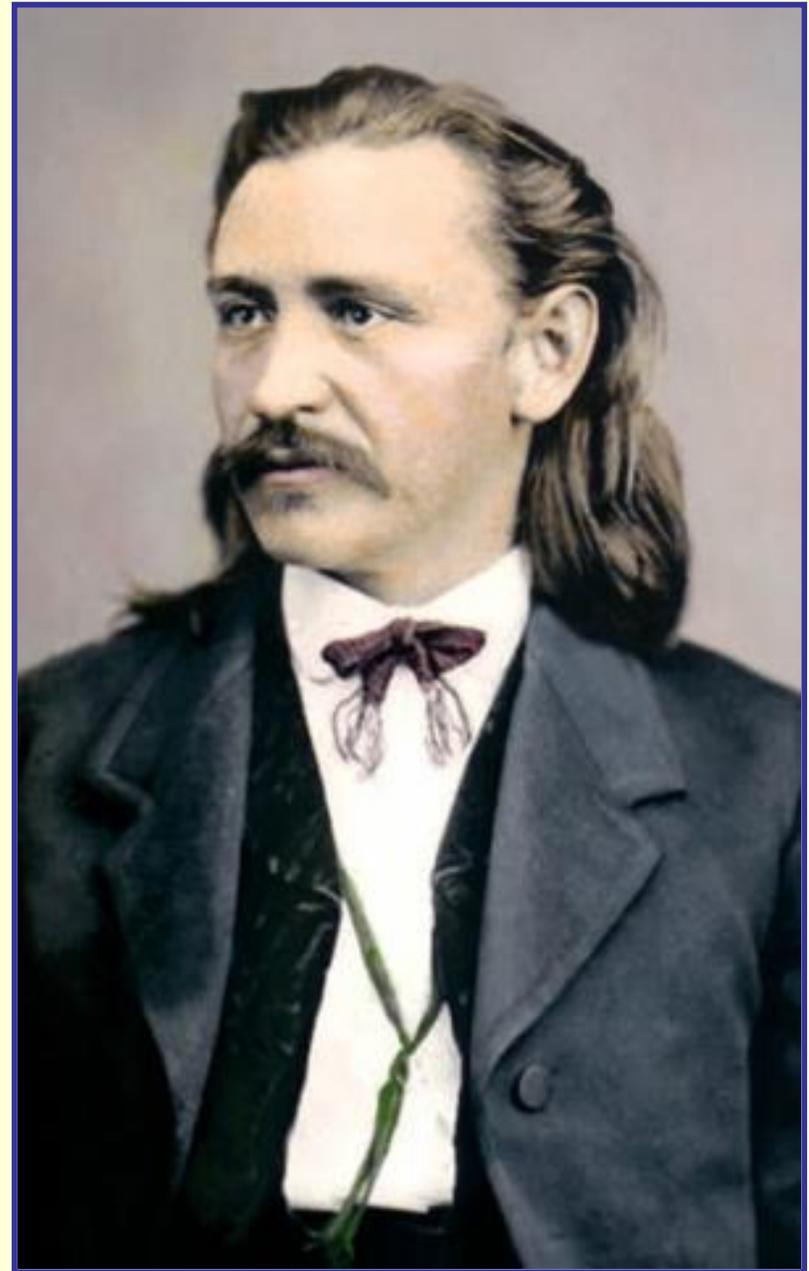


The  
“Unassigned Lands”  
included all or parts of  
present-day  
Kingfisher, Logan,  
Payne, Canadian,  
Oklahoma, and  
Cleveland Counties.

**Cherokee businessman  
Elias C. Boudinot  
openly promoted the  
unoccupied lands  
for settlement.**

*He argued that the tribes would not  
be able to keep the lands,  
and should sell them  
rather than give them away.*

**Boudinot helped  
inspire a new  
political movement.**



**The Boomers were people who took part in the settlement “explosion” that started in 1879.**

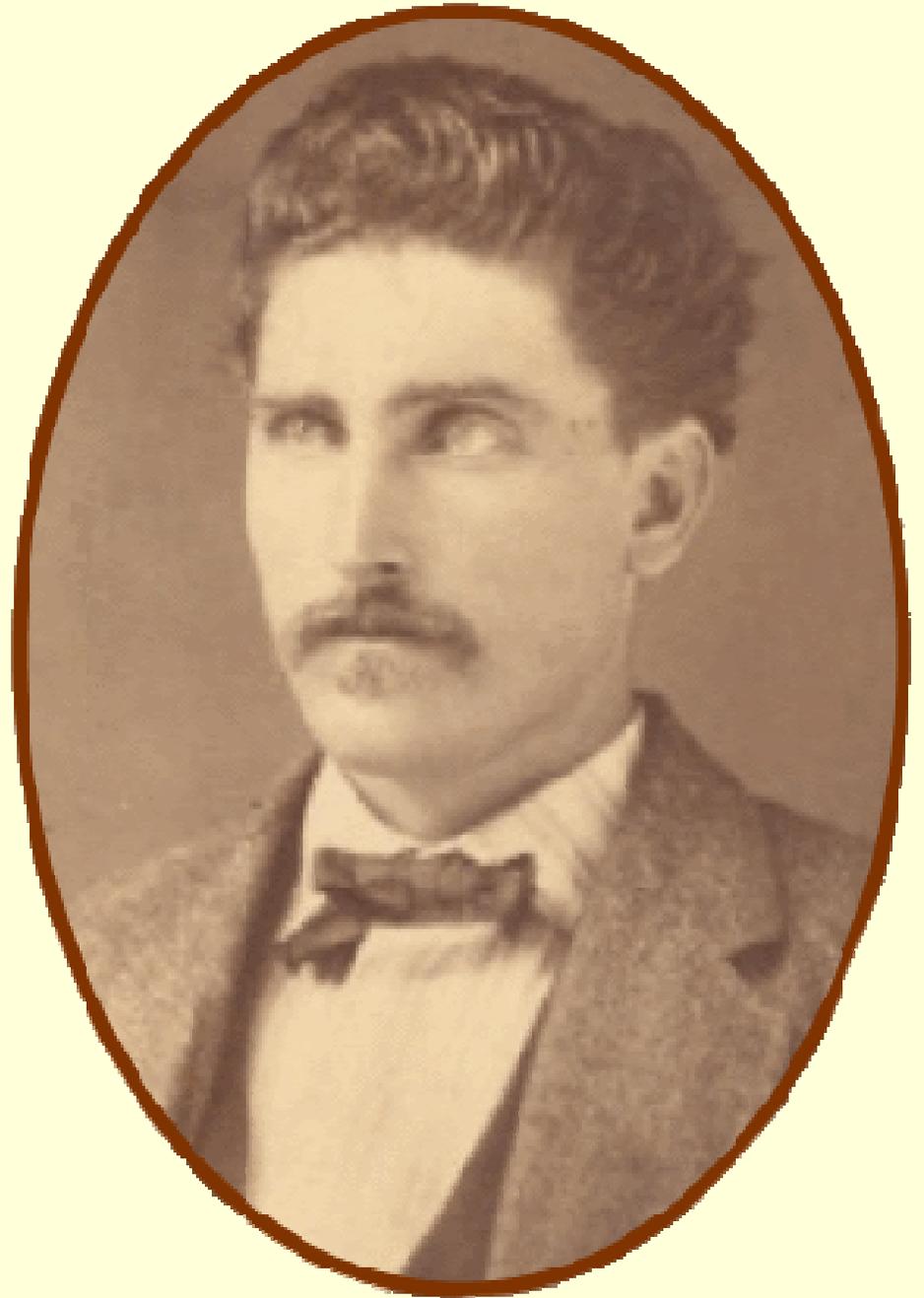
*An attempt that year failed, and soldiers escorted them back to Kansas.*



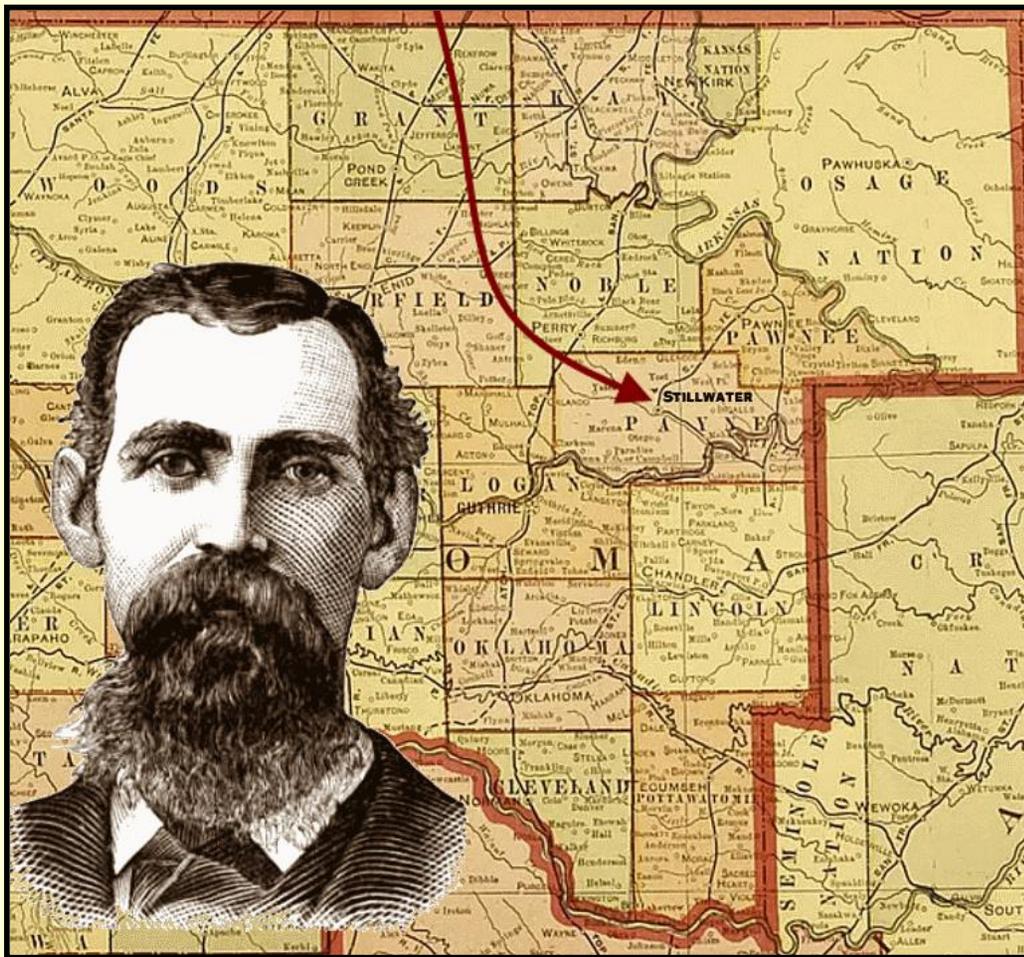
**The Boomer Movement  
was headed by  
David Payne,  
a Kansas pioneer.**

*He led several attempts  
to establish camps in  
the Unassigned Lands.*

*The homesteaders were always  
caught by U.S. troops  
and taken out of Indian Territory.*



**William Couch took over leadership of the movement in 1884 when Payne died unexpectedly.**



**He led 400 men, women, and children to the site of present-day Stillwater.**

*Army troops surrounded them, cut off their supplies, and forced them to go back to Kansas.*

# Realizing that settlement was inevitable, the tribes sold the Unassigned Lands.

*They were paid a total of \$2.25 million dollars.*



**The Springer Amendment, which opened the lands,  
was added to the annual Indian Appropriation Act.**



**The outgoing president,  
Grover Cleveland,  
signed the bill into law.**

*Anyone eligible under the Homestead Act  
would be allowed to enter the area  
at noon on Monday, April 22, 1889.*

The new president, Benjamin Harrison, decided the territory would be opened with a land run.

## **THE PROCLAMATION ISSUED**

***OKLAHOMA TO BE OPENED  
FOR SETTLEMENT APRIL 22.***

**The President Sends Forth The Fiat  
And The Interior Department  
Organizes Two Land Districts With  
Offices At King Fisher's Station  
And Guthrie.**

Washington, March 27 - [Special] The proclamation opening Oklahoma to settlement within 30 days was signed by the President to-day. Western senators and members of Congress say that its issue will serve as a sort of safety valve for the excited conditions now existing on the borders of the promised land.



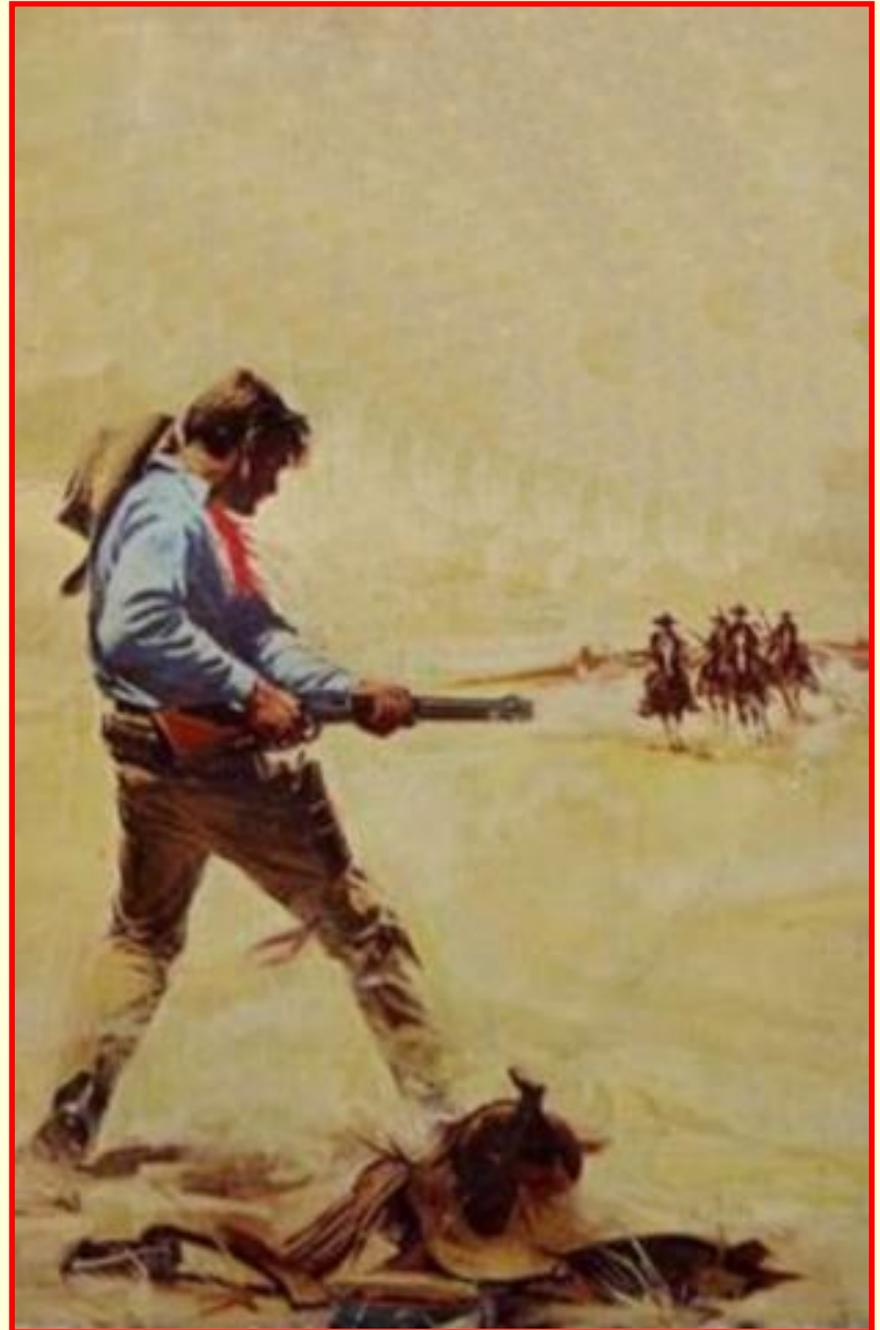
**The event became known as “Harrison’s Horse Race.”**



**Almost immediately,  
“Sooners” moved in.  
A Sooner was someone  
who illegally settled  
on the land  
in order to own it.**

*Patrolling troops removed  
hundreds of these squatters  
between March and April.*

*Finally, the day arrived.*



*People were up early on the morning of April 22.*

*Estimates of the number who made the Run vary between 50,000 and 100,000.*



**Settlers in their prairie schooners, or covered wagons, waited on the banks of the South Canadian River.**



**At noon, the signal was given, and the race was on.**

*By sundown, all of the two million acres had been claimed.*



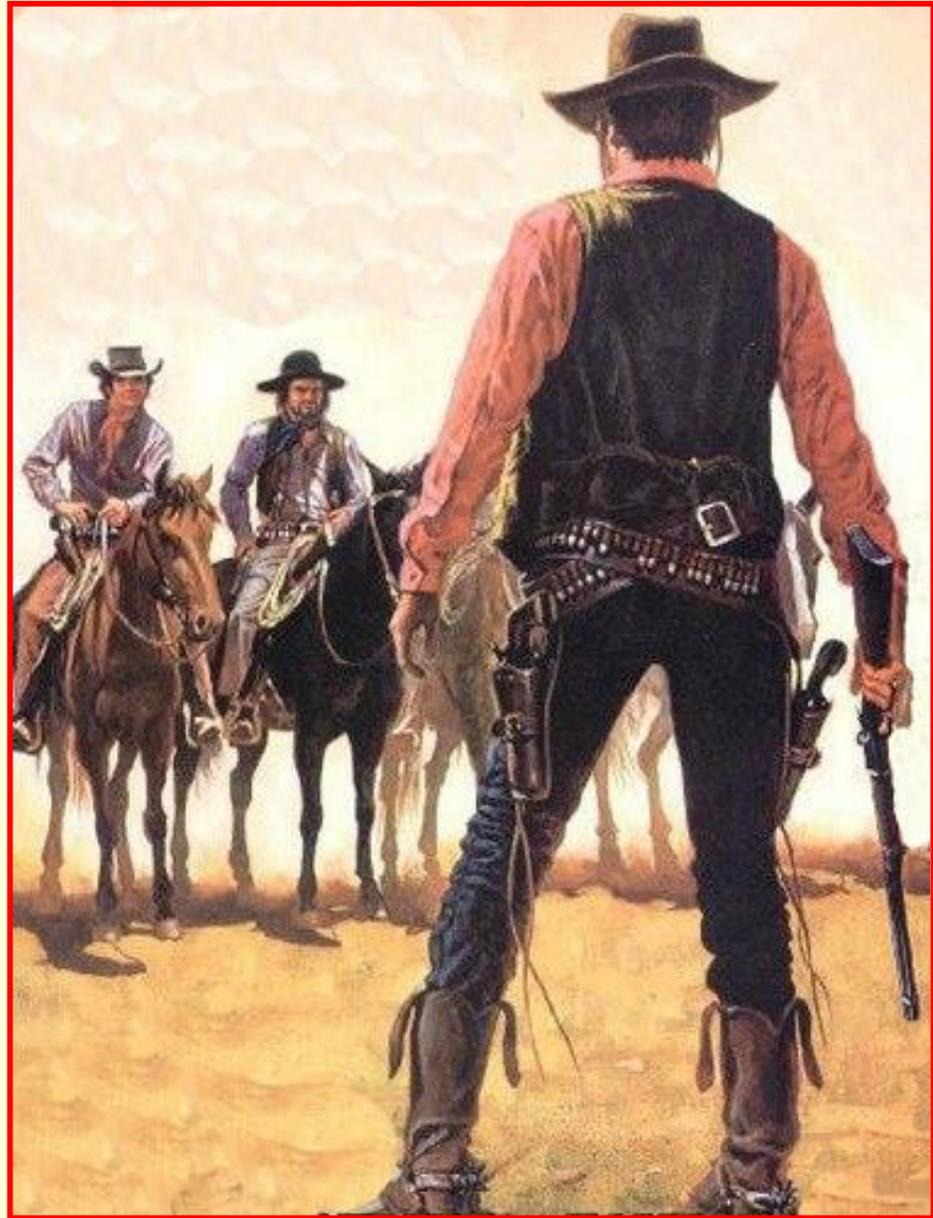


**Surveyors had  
previously left  
an inscribed  
cornerstone  
on each  
quarter section  
of land.**

*Claimants had to  
find the stone  
and file the land description  
at a federal office  
in Guthrie or Kingfisher.*

*There were often  
disputes over  
who filed first  
for a particular  
section of land.*

*Some cases were  
settled in court,  
while others were  
settled with fists  
– or guns.*



**Oklahoma City was “Born Grown.”  
It had a population of 12,000 on its first day.  
Other First Day cities were Guthrie, Edmond,  
Moore, Norman, Kingfisher, and Stillwater.**



*In Guthrie, a man set up a private latrine on Cottonwood Creek and charged 10¢ per use.*

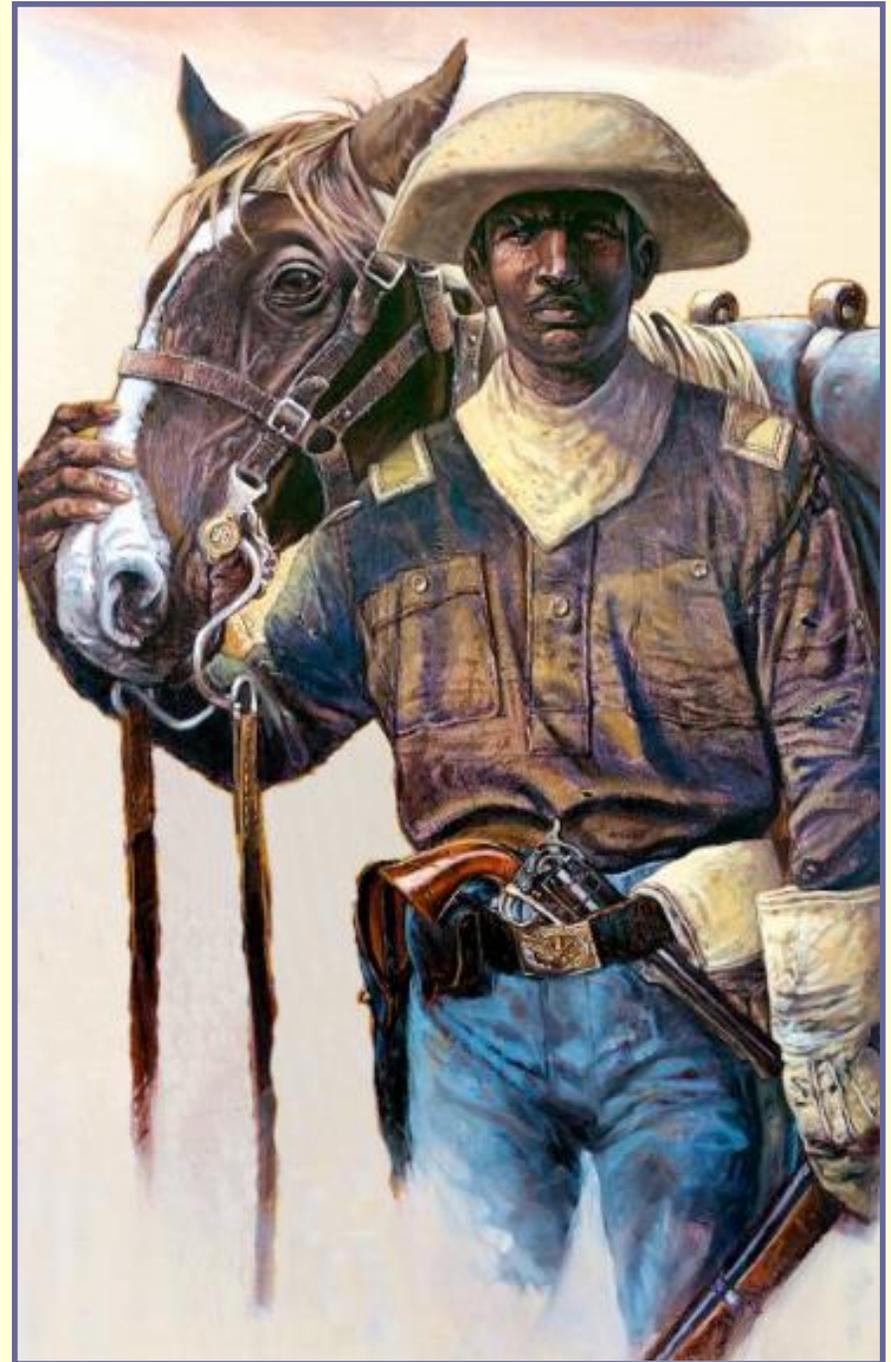




*Three men  
with only \$8.31  
between them  
opened  
The Bank of Guthrie  
using an old  
pot-bellied stove  
as their vault.*

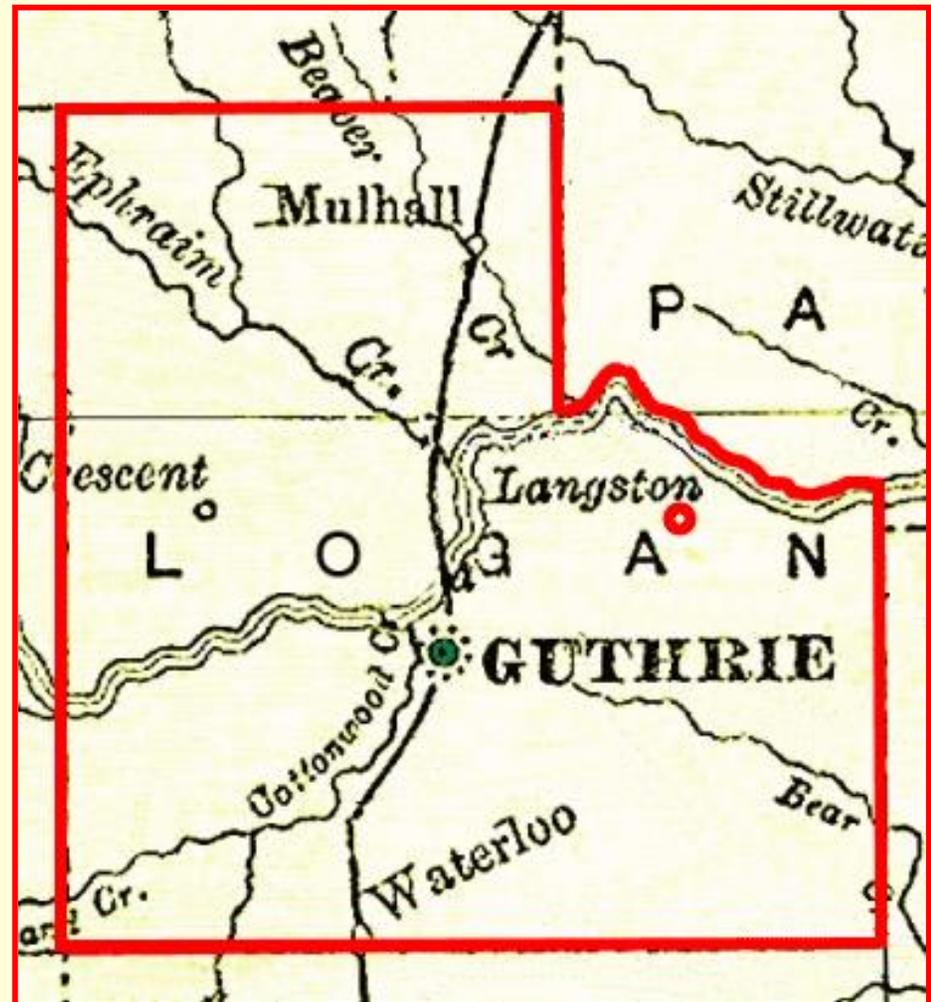
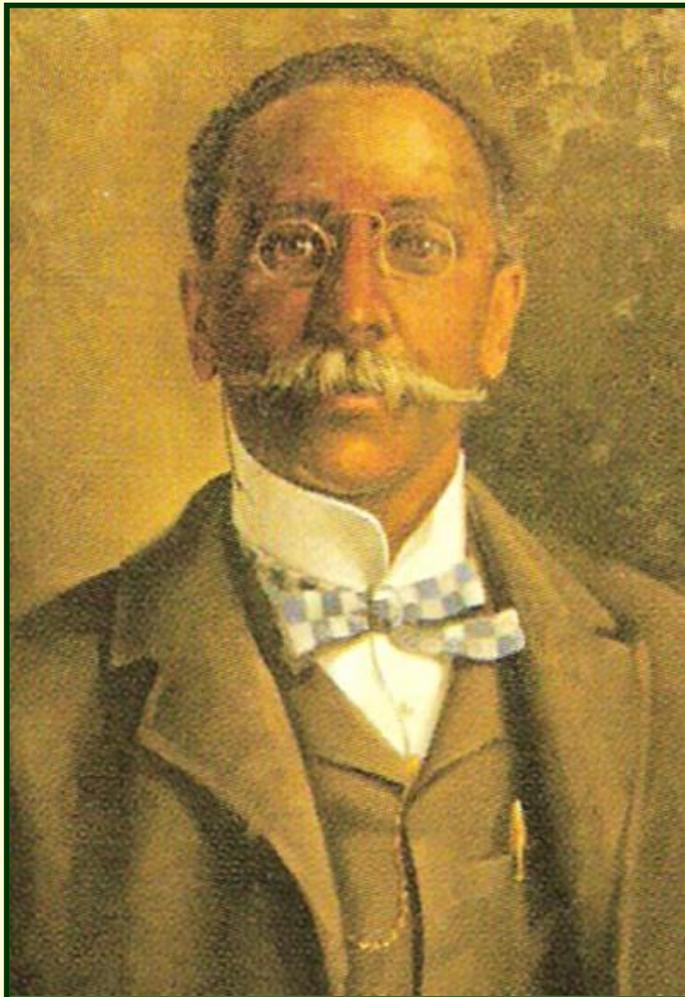
**Nearly a thousand  
African Americans  
made the  
1889 Land Run,  
and many others  
came to the Territory  
soon afterward.**

*They hoped to escape the prejudice  
they had found in the  
South and Midwest.*



**Edward McCabe, the state auditor of Kansas, established the town of Langston east of Guthrie.**

*He was also the founder of Langston University.*



# TAFT

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FASTEST GROWING COLORED COMMUNITY IN

## OKLAHOMA

Surrounded by Unexcelled  
Farming Lands

Pronounced by Geological Experts to Lie Directly in  
the Path of the

**FAMOUS OIL BELT**  
OF EASTERN OKLAHOMA

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## TAFT

Has a Territory of Nearly Fifty Square Miles to Draw  
From and Is Bound to Be an Important  
Trade Center

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**There Has Never Been Any  
Race Trouble at Taft**

*McCabe published  
The Langston Herald  
newspaper  
and promoted  
the creation of  
an all-black state.*

*West of the Cross Timbers, there were few trees,  
and hauling in lumber was too costly.  
Some farmers lived temporarily in dugouts.*

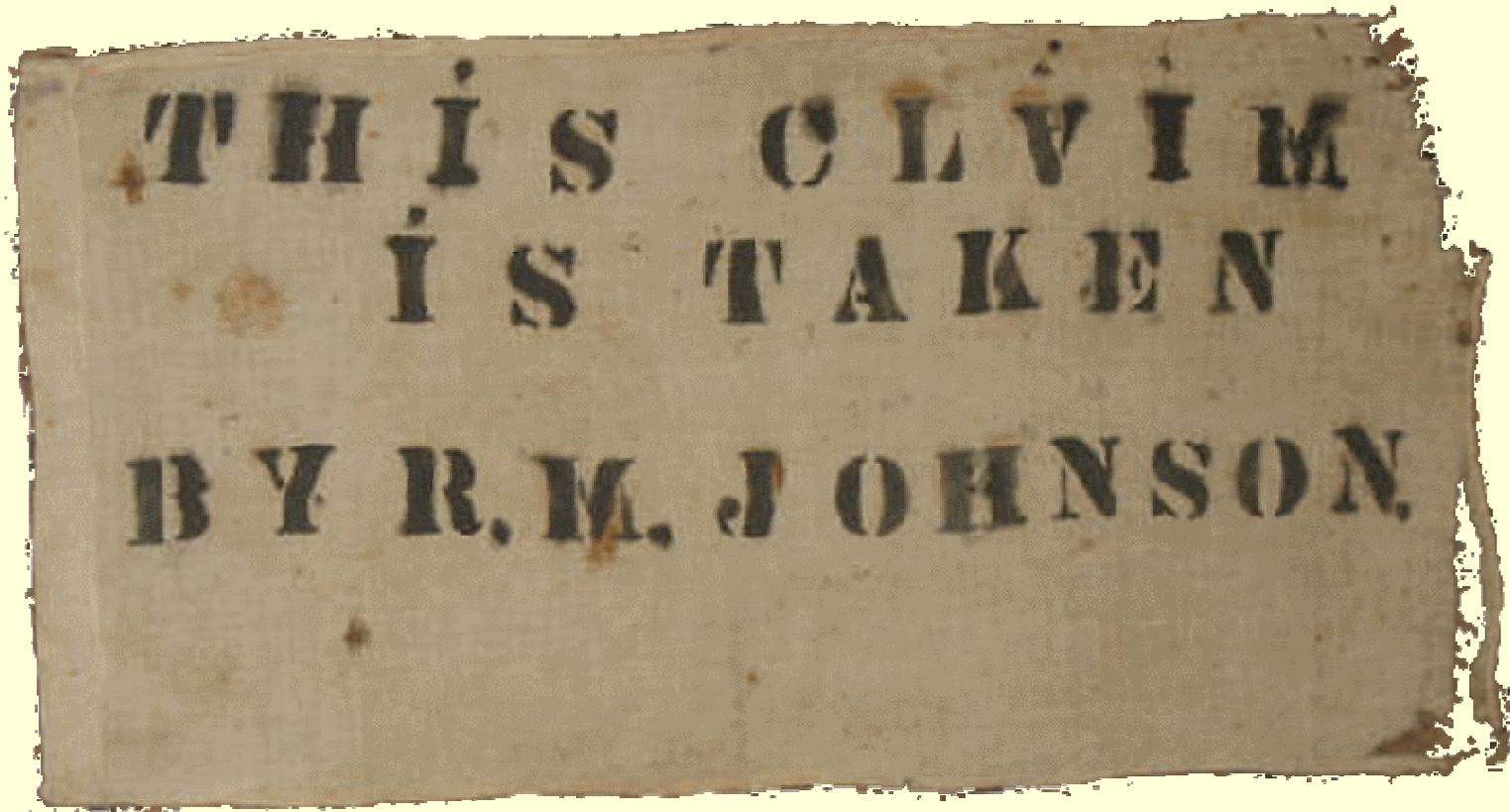


**“Sodbusters” built their houses from plowing up the prairie grass and stacking the strips for walls.**

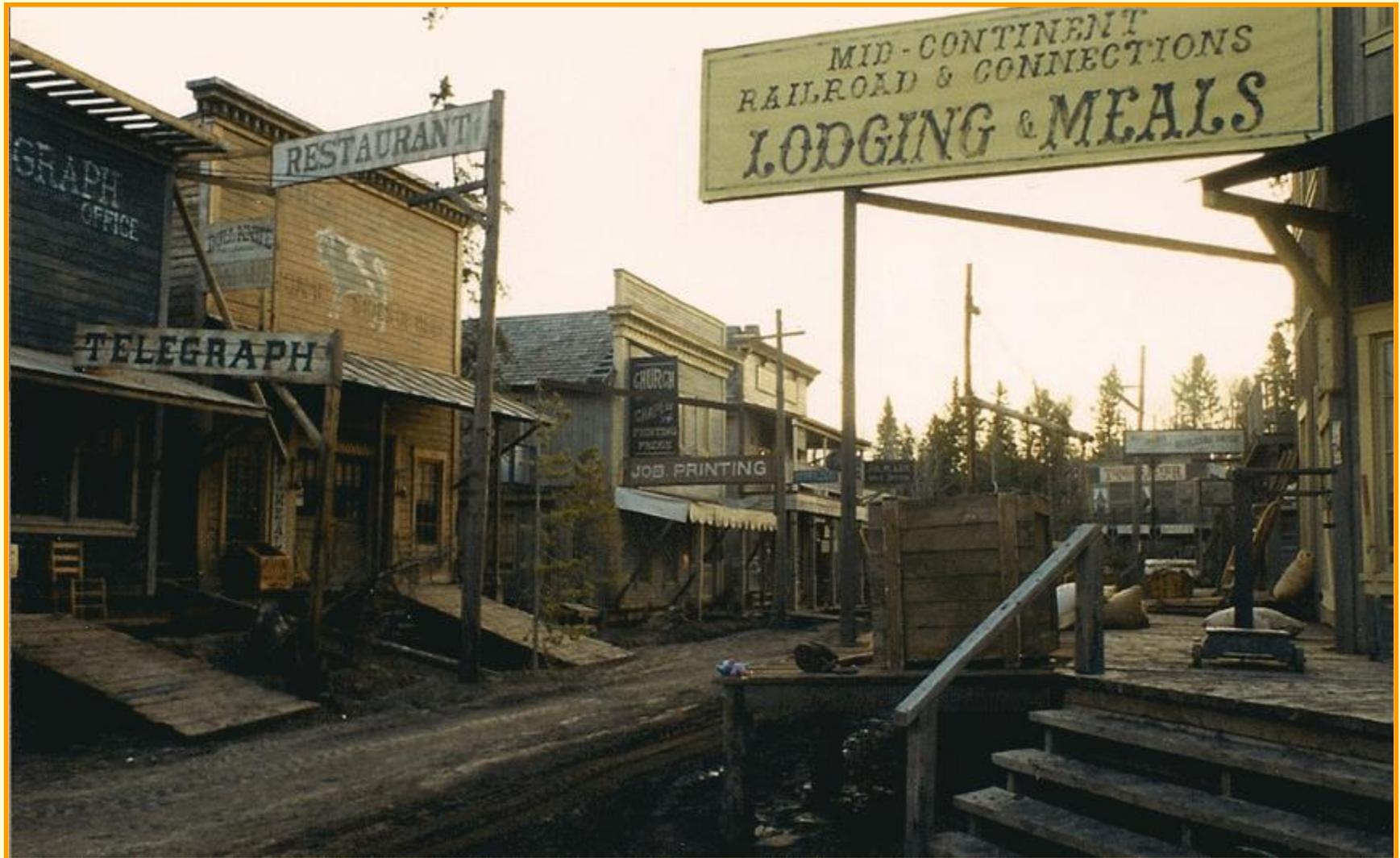


*"There was nothing but land...  
not a country at all,  
but the material out of which countries are made."*

*from "My Antonia," by Willa Cather*



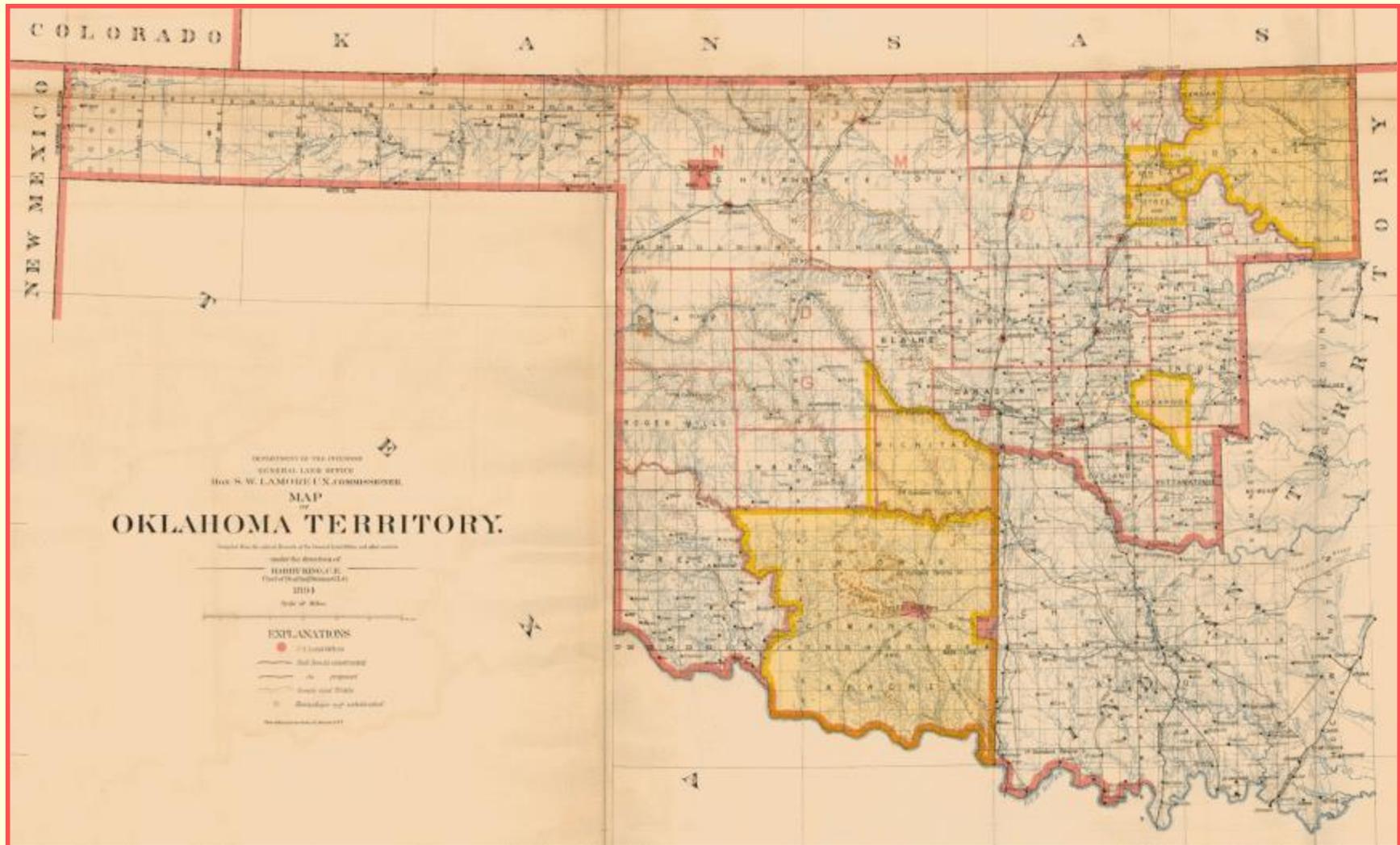
## *Section 2: Organizing Oklahoma Territory*



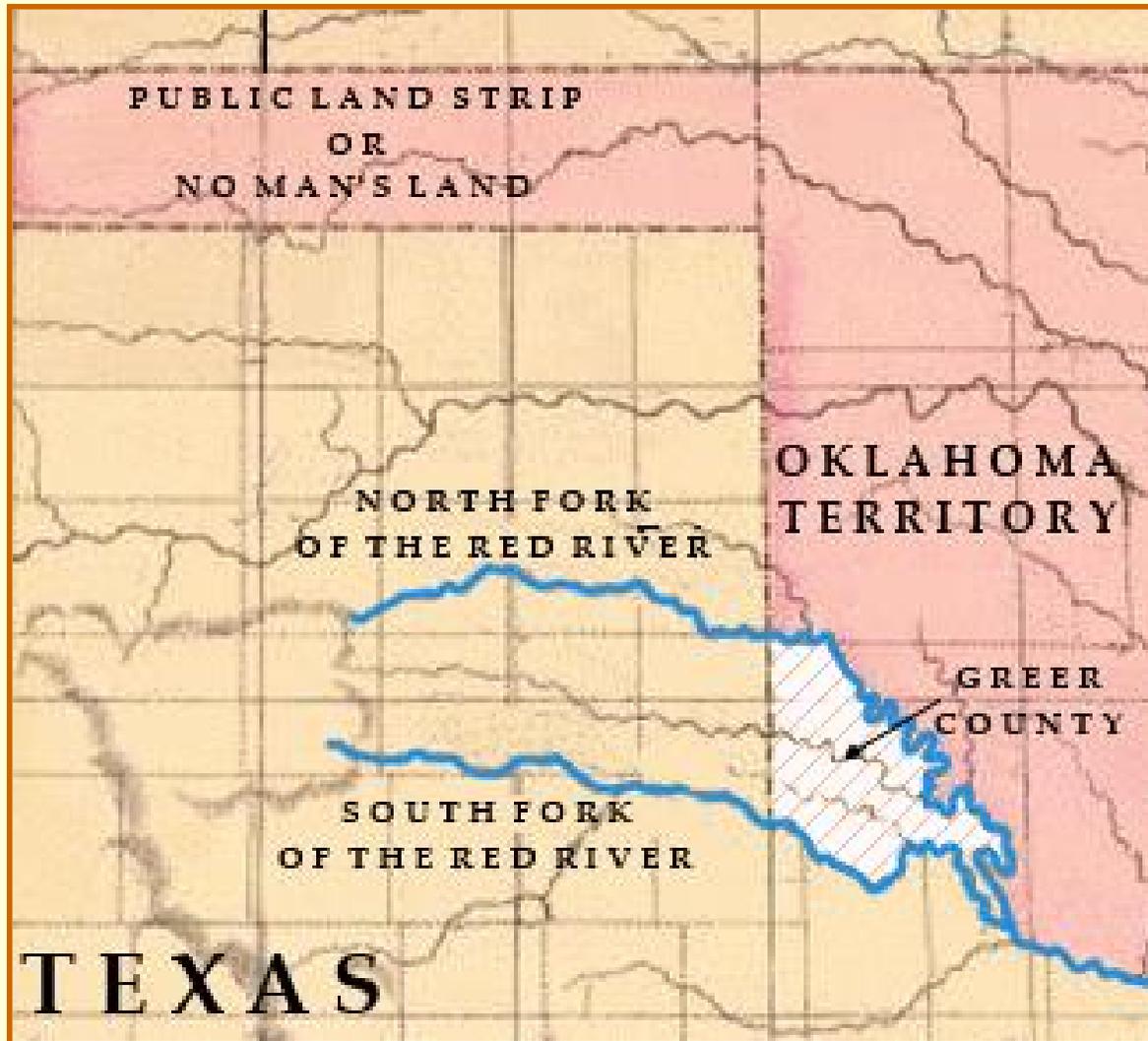
*In May 1889, citizens met in Guthrie to ask the U.S. Congress to form a territorial administration.*



**In 1890, Congress passed The Organic Act, joining the western lands and the Panhandle to create Oklahoma Territory.**



**The Organic Act also determined ownership of Greer County, which had been claimed by Texas.**



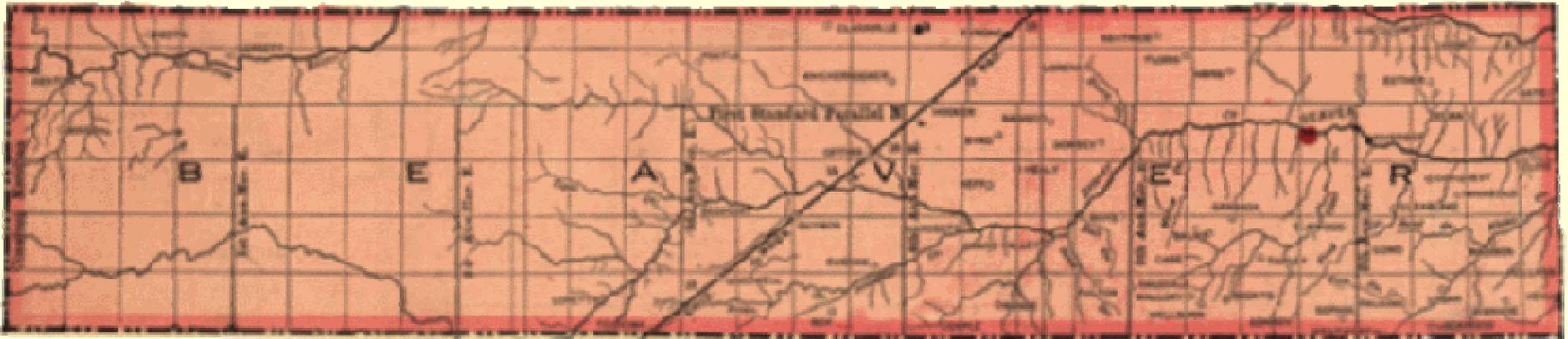
*Texas argued  
the North Fork of  
the Red River  
was the boundary.*

*The U.S. Supreme Court  
disagreed,  
setting the deeper  
South Fork,  
or Main Branch,  
as the actual border.*

## Squatters also tried to establish Cimarron Territory.

*The Panhandle was originally called "No Man's Land" or The Public Land Strip.*

*But due to its small population,  
it was attached to Oklahoma Territory in 1890.*



*The entire area was called Beaver County until statehood, when it was divided into three counties: Beaver on the east end, Texas in the center, and Cimarron on the west end.*

**George W. Steele  
of Indiana  
was appointed  
as the first  
territorial governor.**

*The Republican president,  
Benjamin Harrison,  
disappointed the  
mostly-Democratic settlers  
when he chose a  
major contributor  
to his campaign.*



*Geo W Steele*



Locals thought Steele was a “carpetbagger,” taking advantage of the opportunity for his own profit.

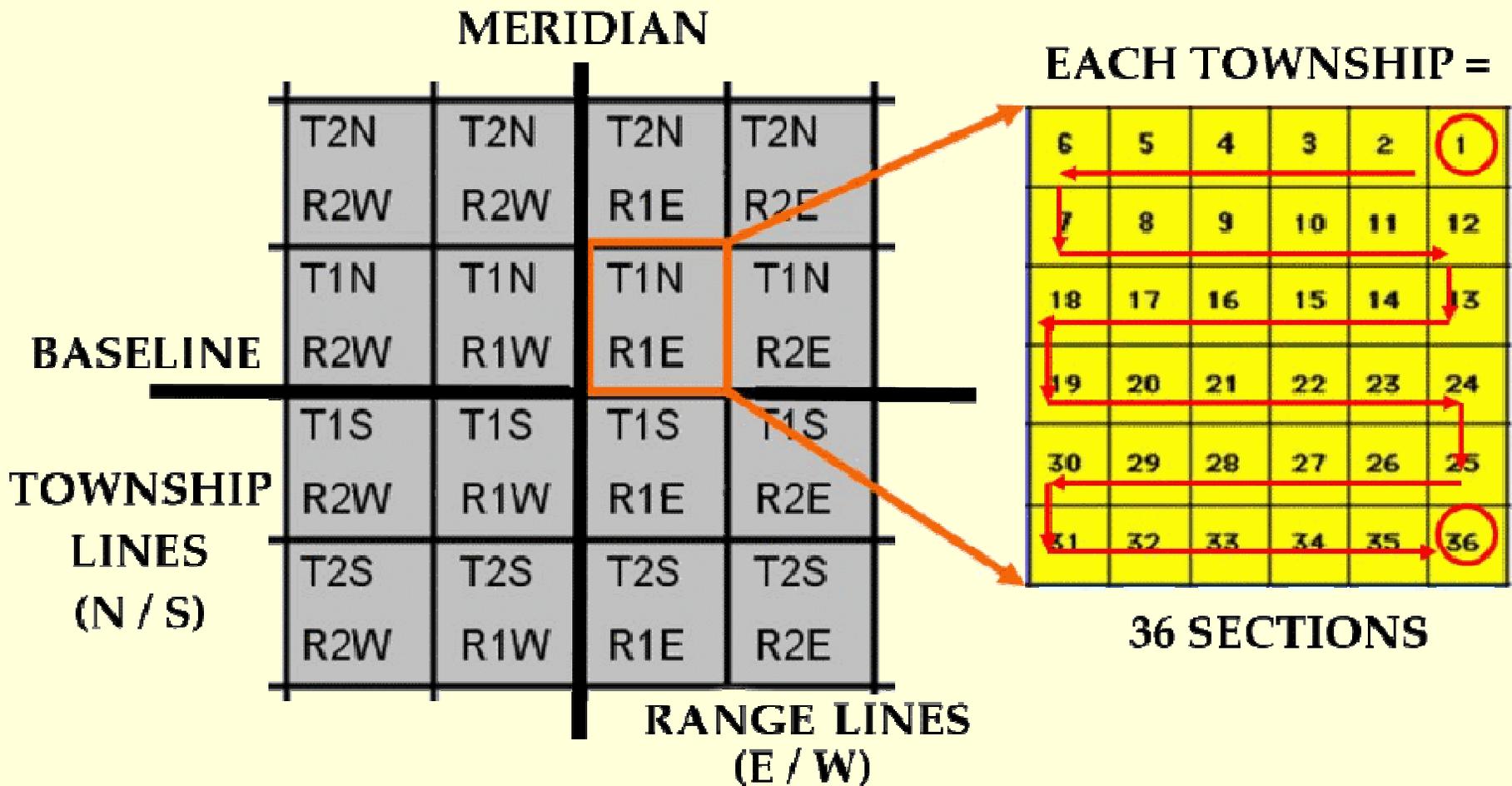
*Although Steele was a retired Army officer and known for his administrative skills, he was regarded as a “northern” outsider.*

*Stereotypical carpetbaggers.*

# Townships were set up by the Territorial Legislature as the basis for a public school system.

*Townships had been created from the Baseline / Indian Meridian grid.*

*Two sections of each township were reserved for public schools.*

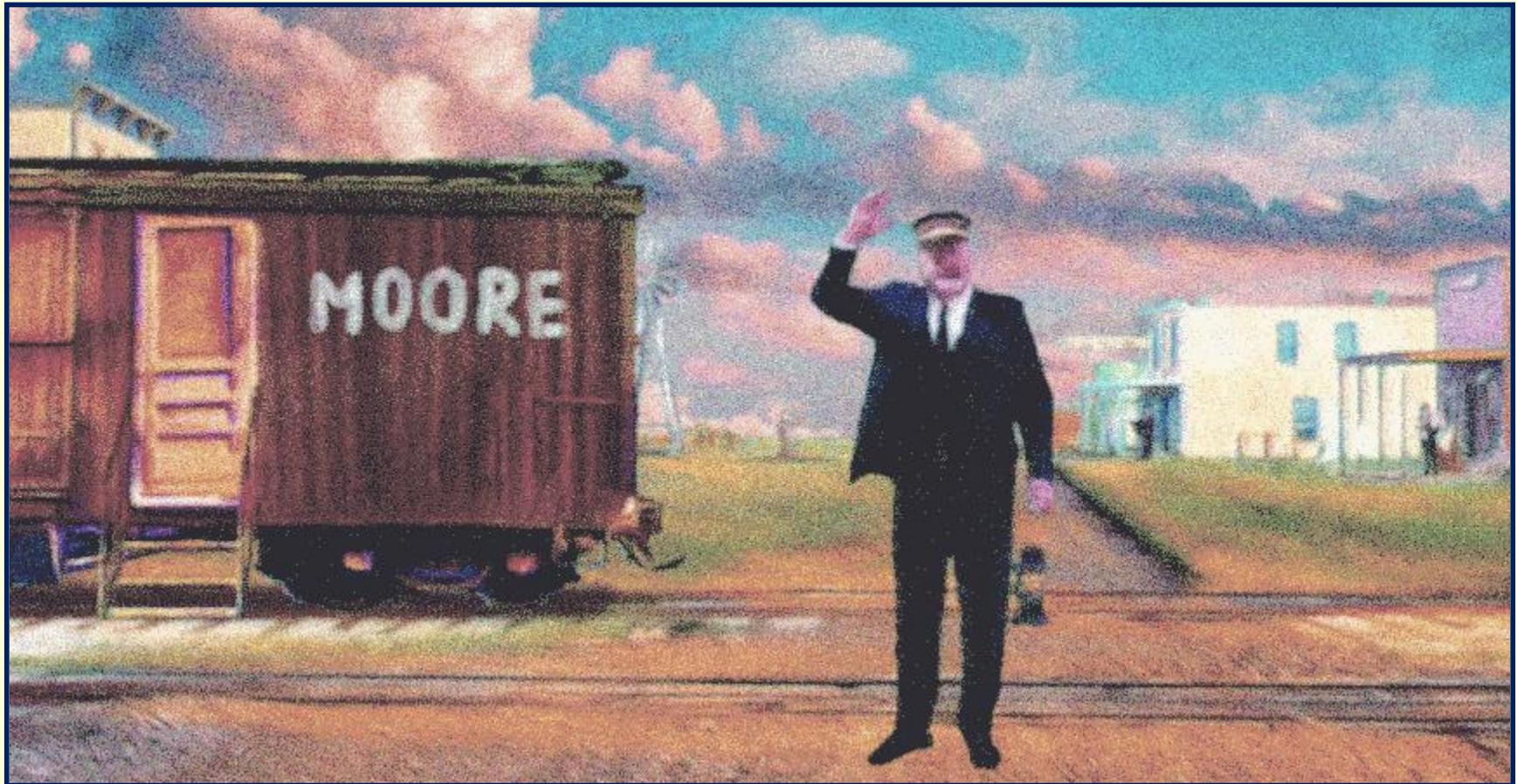


*Heavily-populated townships had four schools:  
two primary (grades 1-8) and two secondary (9-12).  
Smaller communities had one-room schools with multiple grades.*



# A township called Verbeck was on the AT&SF Railroad just south of Oklahoma City.

*A railroad employee named Al Moore lived in a railcar there, but had difficulty receiving his mail. He painted his last name on the boxcar, and people gradually began think it was the town's name.*

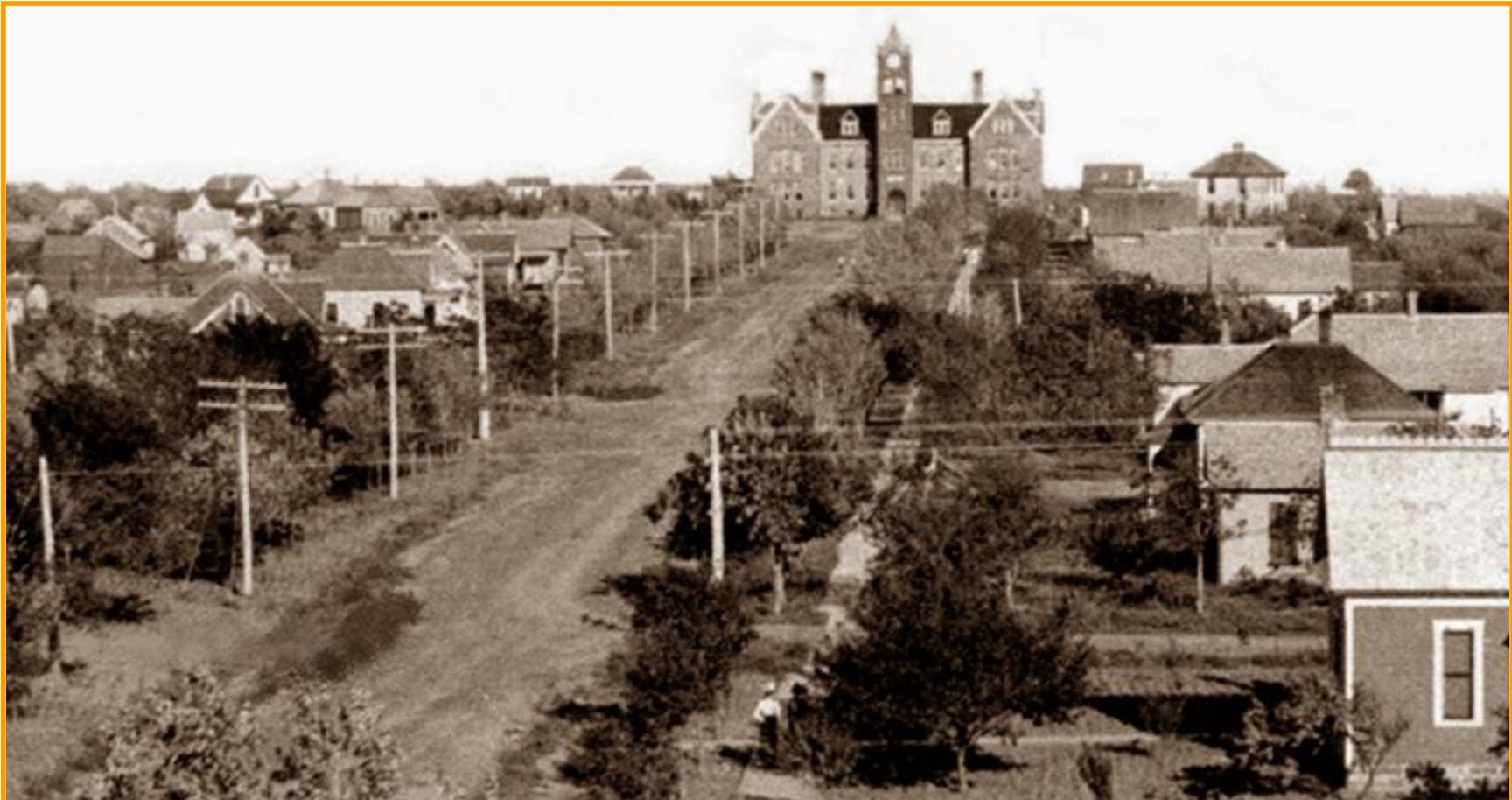


**Verbeck became the City of Moore in 1893.**



**The first Legislative session also established  
a teacher training institution in Edmond  
called the Territorial Normal School.**

*It would later become the University of Central Oklahoma.*



**They also established a liberal arts college  
and a vocational training college.**



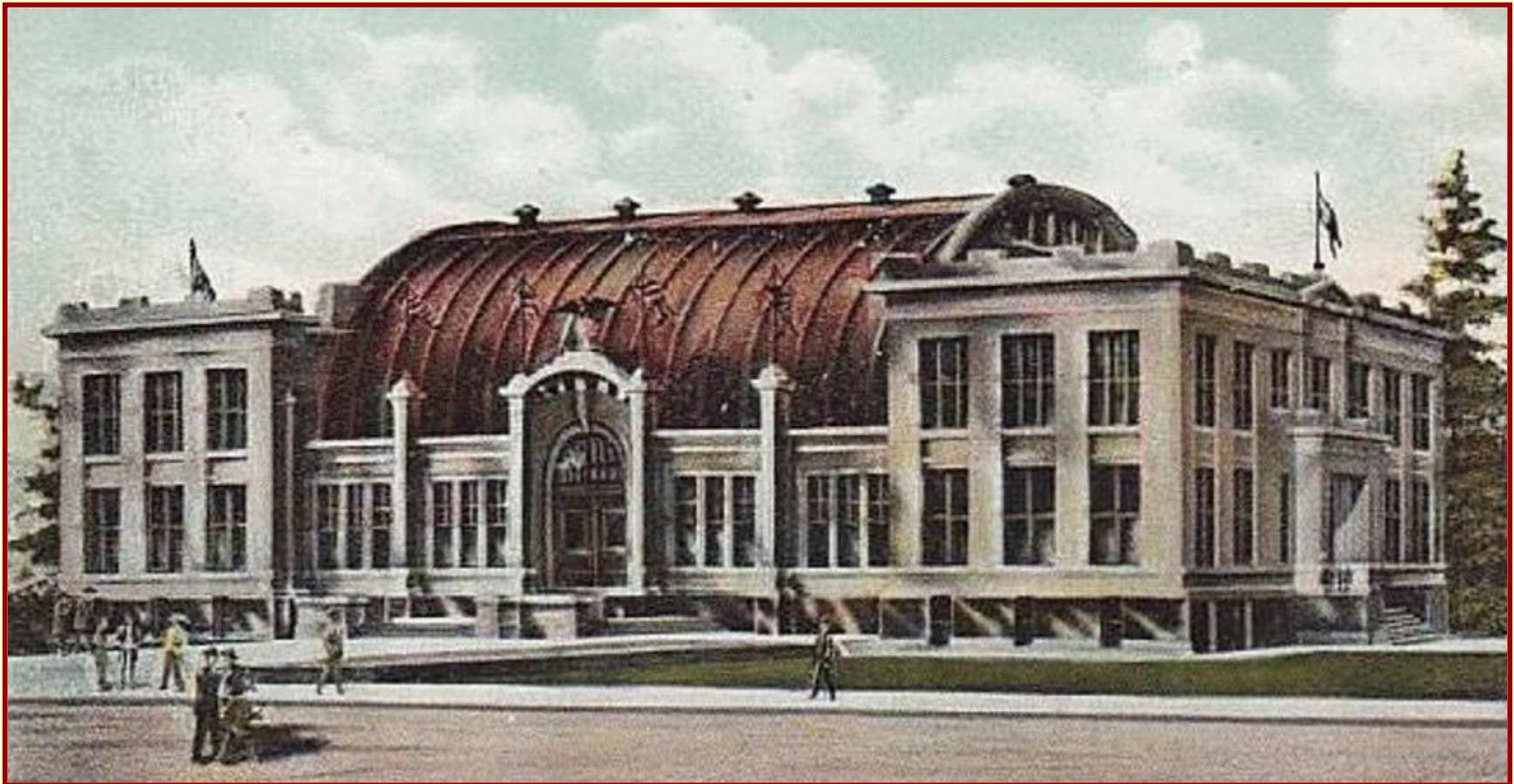
**The Norman Territorial University would become  
the University of Oklahoma.**

**The school in Stillwater was originally called  
Oklahoma Agricultural & Mechanical College.**

*In 1957, the name was changed to Oklahoma State University.*

**Politicians wrangled over locating the capital.  
Governor Steele chose the city of Guthrie.**

*The Territorial Legislature met in Guthrie's Convention Hall.*



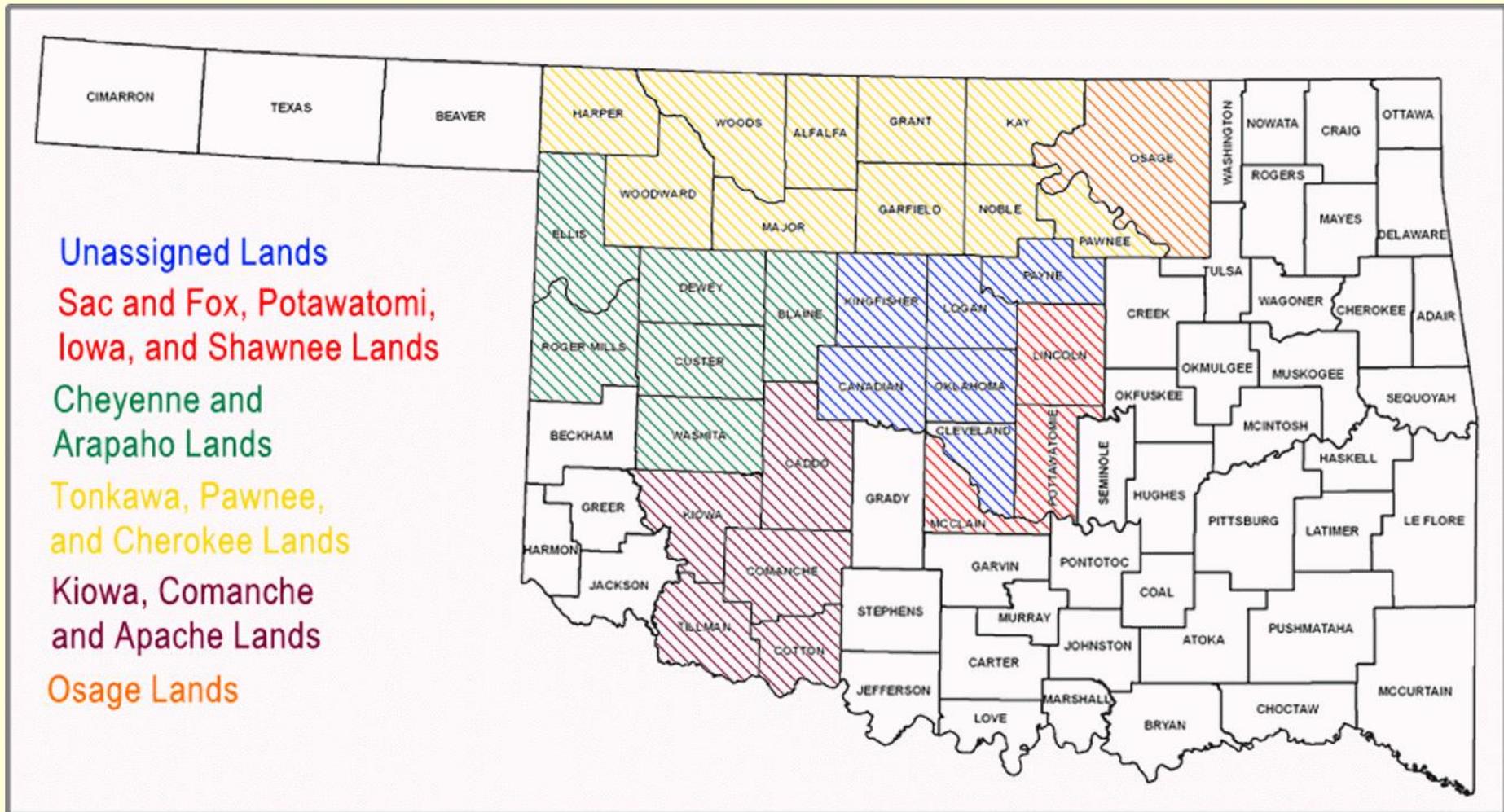
*Oklahoma Territory had nine governors in the 17 years before statehood.*

**In 1890, the Jerome Commission began negotiations with the reservation tribes to buy their surplus lands.**



**The reservations were dissolved, and former Michigan Governor David Jerome opened more than 15 million acres to homesteaders.**

**Between 1891 and 1906, all remaining Indian lands - with the exception of the Osage Reservation - were allotted and the surpluses sold.**



*A Chicago Daily Tribune editorial said:  
“Oklahoma will be knocking at the door  
of the Union before we are aware of it.”*

