

This Day in History... November 16, 1907

Oklahoma Becomes 46th State

On November 16, 1907, Indian Territory and Oklahoma Territory were merged to create the state of Oklahoma.

Arapaho, Caddo, Cheyenne, Comanche, Kiowa, Osage, Pawnee, and Wichita Native Americans lived in the Oklahoma region before Europeans came to the area. These people followed the gigantic herds of buffalo that roamed the grasslands.

Spanish explorers were the first Europeans to reach Oklahoma. In 1541, Francisco Vásquez de Coronado commanded an expedition that traveled from Tiguex, New Mexico, to present-day Oklahoma. Another Spaniard, Hernando de Soto, may have reached the area. Both expeditions were searching for gold. Neither was successful.

In 1682, René-Robert Cavelier, a French explorer, traveled down the Mississippi River. Although he did not enter Oklahoma, he claimed all the land drained by the Mississippi for France. This territory was called Louisiana, and included Oklahoma. This led to many explorers, fur traders, and trappers coming to Oklahoma.

France claimed Louisiana until 1762, when it was sold to Spain. Napoleon regained Louisiana in 1800, and then sold this massive parcel of land to the United States in 1803. Oklahoma then became part of the US.

The Louisiana Territory consisted of 827,987 square miles of land. Congress divided the territory for administrative purposes. The territory was reorganized several times. At first, Louisiana was part of the District of Louisiana. In 1805, it became part of the Louisiana Territory. In 1812, the Missouri Territory was organized from the Louisiana Territory. Then, in 1819, the US settled a boundary dispute with Spain. As part of the settlement, the Oklahoma panhandle was

given to Spain. That same year, sections of Oklahoma became part of the Arkansas Territory.

For more than a hundred years, the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole had lived in close proximity to Europeans in the southeastern US. These people had adopted a great deal of European culture and were known as the Five Civilized Tribes. In 1819, the US government began pressuring the Five Civilized Tribes to move west to Oklahoma. At that time, Oklahoma was mostly unpopulated. The government built Fort Towson and Fort Gibson, and forced the Five Tribes to move there. From 1830-1842, the Natives made the trip to eastern Oklahoma. Thousands of them died along the way. The journey came to be known as the "Trail of Tears."

The Five Civilized Tribes were given control of all of Oklahoma except the Panhandle. Treaties stated they would own the lands "as long as grass shall grow and rivers run." Each tribe developed its own legislature, courts, laws, and capital. Farms and ranches were established, and churches and schools were built. Treaties protected the tribes from white settlement – until the Civil War.

The Five Civilized Tribes owned slaves. Originally from the South, they were invited to join the Confederacy. In 1861, some of the Natives entered into a treaty of alliance with the



"Arrows to Atoms" reflects Oklahoma's evolution from the frontier days to the atomic age.



The Oklahoma flag represents the history of more than 60 Native American groups.



Before Oklahoma was admitted to the Union, it produced more oil than any other US state or territory.



Oklahoma's state bird and flower – Scissor-Tailed Flycatcher and Mistletoe.

This Day in History... November 16, 1907 continued

Confederacy. The leader of the Cherokee, Chief John Ross, formed a brigade of Native Americans to fight for the South. Stand Watie, a Cherokee leader, became a brigadier general in the Confederate Army. A smaller number of Native Americans chose to fight for the Union. After the Civil War, the US government forced the tribes to relinquish their lands in the western portion of the Indian Territory as a punishment for supporting the Confederacy.

The land bordering the Indian Territory was quickly filled with white settlers. White cattle ranchers began driving their herds across these fertile lands as they traveled from Texas to rail centers in Kansas. Over 6 million longhorn cattle crossed the tribal land between 1866 and 1885. Cattlemen leased more than 6 million acres of tribal land for five years, but these leases were declared illegal.



This Greetings from America stamp was issued months after the 34¢ stamp due to a rate change.



Stamp contrasts Oklahoma's historic cattle ranches with the modern buildings of today.

After a great deal of pressure from “boomers” (whites who wanted native American land opened for settlement), the government changed its policy. At noon on April 22, 1889, 1.9 million acres of land that had been ceded by the Creek and Seminole was opened for settlement. Settlers amassed at the border, ready to seize prime land. With a pistol shot, settlers raced into the land. By evening, 50,000 white families had moved to Oklahoma. In the course of a single day, Guthrie and Oklahoma City had become cities with populations over 10,000.

Congress established the Oklahoma Territory in May 1890. Guthrie served as the capital, and the panhandle was added to the territory. (The panhandle had become US territory when Texas joined the Union.)

Over time, the Native Americans were forced to accept individual allotment of their lands. This meant individuals held land titles, rather than tribes. Land not allotted to Native Americans was opened for settlement by whites. The biggest land opening took place on September 16, 1893. On that date, the Cherokee Outlet and the Tonkawa and Pawnee reservations were opened for settlement. On the very first day, 50,000 people claimed 6.5 million acres of land.



“Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin’” is the opening song of the play, Oklahoma!



Set in Indian Territory at the turn of the century, Oklahoma! is one of the most popular musicals of all time

By 1890, Oklahoma was often referred to as the Twin Territories. The Indian Territory consisted of the land still owned by the Five Civilized Tribes. The Oklahoma Territory made up the remaining land. White settlers began demanding access to the Native American land. In 1893, the Dawes Commission was created to negotiate with the tribes and dissolve their nations through forced assimilation.

In 1905, Native American leaders called a constitutional convention and invited white citizens to participate. (Whites outnumbered the native Americans five to one.) A constitution was adopted, but Congress refused to accept the state, instead asking for the two territories to form one larger state. Delegates from both territories met in 1906, and created a new constitution. On November 16, 1907, Oklahoma achieved statehood. Guthrie served as the first capital; Oklahoma City became the capital in 1910.

Oil and natural gas have added a great deal to the state's economy. Agriculture also contributes greatly to the state's economic well being. More than half the agricultural revenue is produced from livestock. Tourism is an important, growing source of income as well.

Mystic Stamp Company • Camden, NY 13316

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