

The Oklahoma Land Rush

On March 2, 1889 Congress passed the Indian Appropriations Bill, proclaiming that unassigned lands were part of the public domain. This was the first step toward the famous Oklahoma Land Rush.

On April 22, 1889, people who gathered on the Arkansas and Texas borders of Oklahoma could seek a parcel of unclaimed land and file for ownership with the federal government.

Buglers were stationed at intervals around the perimeters of the region and they announced the opening of the new land at noon. People burst westward in droves on the Sante Fe Railroad, in covered wagons, and on horseback. They rode frantically racing to secure the best parcels of land before anyone else could.

The riders on horseback burst ahead of the droves of land seekers, but as they spread across the horizon they were discouraged to see that covered wagons and even men on foot had already occupied many prime places. As many as nine out of ten of these settlers had jumped the gun, earning themselves the name "Sooners". Those who entered the territory legally would challenge these premature claims in court, but the government's officials claimed that all squatters had been chased out before the land rush.

Sadly the Indian people who occupied the land were not considered in this white occupation and were uprooted. It is commonly believed that the Cherokee were uprooted by this the later land rush known as the Cherokee Strip. However the land given by the US government actually belonged to the Osage and Quapah tribes. All of Oklahoma but the panhandle had previously been set aside for displaced Indians from other parts of the United States, many of whom entered the territory on the Trail Of Tears from the east. The Choctaw, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Creek and Seminole tribes were called "the Five Civilized Tribes" because they brought with them a willingness to abide by white laws, and had their own school systems, police forces, and government agencies already in place within their populaces.

The Cherokee Strip was actually the Cherokee Outlet land which the Cherokee had been allotted for hunting buffalo. It was intended to be a permanent hunting grounds, but it was among the lands appropriated by white settlers. In fact the Cherokee had already been coerced into acceding much of their land prior to the 1893 Cherokee Strip land rush. It wasn't long until the natives and dislocated Indians alike were relegated to reservations, generally on the poorer plots of land.

thereon in quantities as follows:

To each head of a family, one-quarter of a section;

To each single person over eighteen years of age, one-eighth of a section;

To each orphan child under eighteen years of age, one-eighth of a section;

SEC. 6. That upon the completion of said allotments and the patenting of the lands to said allottees, each and every member of the respective bands or tribes of Indians to whom allotments have been made shall have the benefit of and be subject to the laws, both civil and criminal, of the State or Territory in which they may reside; . .

Dawes
Act

Summary:

Federal Indian policy during the period from 1870 to 1900 marked a departure from earlier policies that were dominated by removal, treaties, reservations, and even war. The new policy focused specifically on breaking up reservations by granting land allotments to individual Native Americans. Very sincere individuals reasoned that if a person adopted white clothing and ways, and was responsible for his own farm, he would gradually drop his Indian-ness and be assimilated into the population. It would then no longer be necessary for the government to oversee Indian welfare in the paternalistic way it had been obligated to do, or provide

meager annuities that seemed to keep the Indian in a subservient and poverty-stricken position.

However, many instances the results were very different. The land given to the Indians included desert or near-desert lands unsuitable for farming. In addition, the techniques of self-sufficient farming were much different from their tribal way of life. Many Indians did not want to take up agriculture, and those who did want to farm could not afford the tools, animals, seed, and other supplies necessary to get started. There were also problems with inheritance. Often young children inherited allotments that they could not farm because they had been sent away to boarding schools. Multiple heirs also caused a problem; when several people inherited an allotment, the size of the holdings became too small for efficient farming.

Questions:

1. What was Hen law?
2. How was the l
3. What were 2 n the Dawes Act

Wounded Knee Massacre

By August of 1890, the U.S. government was afraid that the Ghost Dance was actually a war dance and, in time, the dancers would turn to rioting. By November, the War Department sent troops to occupy the Lakota camps at Pine Ridge and Rosebud, convinced that the dancers were preparing to do battle against the government.

Sioux Chief Sitting Bull, returned from Canada with a promise of a pardon following the Battle at Little Bighorn and was an supporter of the Ghost Dance.

Reservation agents began to fear that Sitting Bull's influence over other tribes would lead to violence. By December reservation official grew increasingly alarmed by the Ghost Dance outbreak, and the military was called upon to locate and arrest those who were considered agitators, such as the Sioux Chiefs, Sitting Bull and Big Foot.

On December 15, 1890, Sitting Bull and eight of his warriors were arrested by agency police sent to arrest him at the Standing Rock reservation. Sitting Bull was shot during the arrest. The official reason given for the shooting claimed that he had resisted arrest. Fearing further punishment, some of his followers fled in terror to Big Foot's camp of Miniconjou Sioux.

Under cover of the night on December 23, a band of 350 people left the Miniconjou village on the Cheyenne River to begin a treacherous 150-mile, week-long trek through the Badlands to reach the Pine Ridge Agency. Although Chief Big Foot was aged and seriously ill with pneumonia, his group traversed the rugged, frozen terrain of the Badlands in order to reach the protection of Chief Red Cloud who had promised them food, shelter, and horses.

On December 28, the group was surrounded by Major Samuel M. Whitside and the Seventh Cavalry (the old regiment of General George Custer). Big Foot's band hoisted a white flag, but the army apprehended the Indians, forcing them to the bank of Wounded Knee Creek.

The soldiers ordered that the Indians be stripped of their weapons, and this further agitated an increasingly tense and serious situation. At some point, a gun discharged (possibly a deaf Native American,

Black Coyote). At the sound the Soldiers reacted by shooting the Indians with small arms, as well as the Hotchkiss canons which overlooked the scene.

With only their bare hands to fight back, the Indians tried to defend themselves, but the incident deteriorated further into bloody chaos and the 350 unarmed Indians were outmatched and outnumbered by the nearly 500 U.S. soldiers.

Bighorn

Late 1875, Sioux and Cheyenne Indians defiantly left their reservations, outraged over the continued intrusions of whites into their sacred lands in the Black Hills. They gathered in Montana with the great warrior Sitting Bull to fight for their lands. The following spring, two victories over the US Cavalry emboldened them to fight on in the summer of 1876.

To force the large Indian army back to the reservations, the Army dispatched three columns to attack in coordinated fashion, one of which contained *Lt. Colonel George Custer* and the Seventh Cavalry. Spotting the Sioux village about fifteen miles away along the Rosebud River on June 25, Custer also found a nearby group of about forty warriors. Ignoring orders to wait, he decided to attack before they could alert the main party. He did not realize that the number of warriors in the village numbered three times his strength.

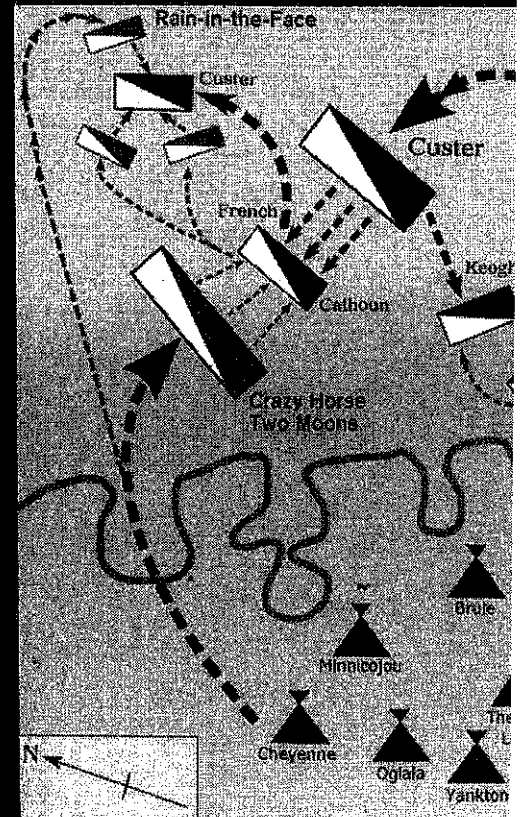
Dividing his forces in three, Custer sent troops under Captain Frederick Benteen to prevent their escape through the upper valley of the Little Bighorn River. Major Marcus Reno was to pursue the group, cross the river, and charge the Indian village in a coordinated effort with the remaining troops under his command.

Reno's squadron of 175 soldiers attacked the southern end. Quickly finding themselves in a desperate battle with little hope of any relief, Reno halted his charging men before they could be trapped, fought for ten minutes in dismounted formation, and then withdrew into the timber and brush along the river.

Meanwhile, another force, largely Oglala Sioux under Crazy Horse's command, swiftly moved downstream and then doubled back in a sweeping arc, enveloping Custer and his men in a pincer move. They began pouring in gunfire and arrows.

As the Indians closed in, Custer ordered his men to shoot their horses and stack the carcasses to form a wall, but they provided little protection against bullets. In less than an hour, Custer and his men were killed in the worst American military disaster ever.

Little Bighorn was the pinnacle of the Indians' power. They had achieved their greatest victory yet, but soon their tenuous union fell apart in the face of the white onslaught. Outraged over the death of a popular Civil War hero on the eve of the Centennial, the nation demanded and received harsh retribution. The Black Hills dispute was quickly settled by redrawing the boundary lines, placing the Black Hills outside the reservation and open to white settlement. Within a year, the Sioux nation was defeated and broken. "Custer's Last Stand" was their last stand as well.



Ghost Dance Religion

By the late 1880s, many Indian tribes, desperate and facing poverty, hunger and disease, sought a means of salvation to bring their traditional culture back to life. The evolution of a new religion, *the Ghost Dance*, was a reaction to the Indians being forced to submit to government authority and reservation life. In early 1889, a Paiute shaman, Wovoka, had a vision during an eclipse of the sun in which he saw the second coming of Christ and received a warning about the evils of the white man.

Knowledge of the vision spread quickly through the Indian camps across the country. Word began to circulate among the people on the reservations that a great new Indian Messiah had come to liberate them, and investigative parties were sent out to discover the nature of these claims. They believed him to be the incarnation of Jesus, returned to save the Indian nations from the scourge of white people. Delegations were sent to visit Wovoka in western Nevada and returned to their camps disciples, preaching a new religion that promised renewal and revitalization of the Indian nations.

According to Wovoka, converts of the new religion were supposed to take part in the Ghost Dance to hasten the arrival of the new era as promised by the messiah. Although the Bureau of Indian Affairs banned the Ghost Dance (as they did all other Indians spiritual rituals), the Lakotas adopted it and began composing sacred songs of hope:

The Ghost Dance religion promised an apocalypse in the coming years during which time the earth would be destroyed, only to be recreated with the Indians as the inheritors of the new earth. According to the prophecy, the recent times of suffering for Indians had been brought about by their sins, but now they had withstood enough under the whites. With the earth destroyed, white people would be obliterated, buried under the new soil of the spring that would cover the land and restore the prairie. The buffalo and antelope would return, and deceased ancestors would rise to once again roam the earth, now free of violence, starvation, and disease. The natural world would be restored, and the land once again would be free and open to the Indian peoples, without the borders and boundaries of the white man. Hearing rumors of the prophecy and fearing that it was a portent of renewed violence, white homesteaders panicked and the government responded.

The government agent at Standing Rock, James McLaughlin, described the Ghost Dance as an "absurd craze" -- "demoralizing, indecent, disgusting." Reservation agents described the Indians as "wild and crazy," and believed that their actions warranted military protection for white settlers.

Carlisle Indian School

In Cumberland County, Pennsylvania is a school that changed the lives of many American Indians. Instead of learning the Indian culture the U.S. stripped the culture of the American Indians.

American Indian Boarding Schools came into affect in the late nineteenth century. The first school and still in operation is the Chemawa Indian School in Salem, Oregon. The most famous school was the Carlisle Indian School located in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

Richard H. Pratt got the idea in 1875 for the Carlisle Indian School after running detail at the St. Augustine prison in Florida where seventy-two of the "most hostile" of the Indians from the Plains were imprisoned. At the prison, he had the Indian inmates educated and it proved to be successful.

In 1878, Pratt got the United States' government to turn an old army post in Carlisle, Pennsylvania into a boarding school for American Indians. In September of the following year Pratt traveled to the Dakota Territory with an interpreter and a teacher from the St. Augustine prison. His goal was to recruit thirty-six students from the Red Cloud and Spotted Tail Agency (Reservation).

The children arrived in Carlisle on October 6, 1879 and soon the assimilation began. The boys were dressed in military uniforms, the girls wore Victorian style dresses. Both male and female were forced to have their hair cut, which to the Lakota the cutting of the hair was symbolic of mourning.

The children had a hard time adjusting to their new living conditions. Under military rule and organized into companies they had to march to their classes, from their classes, and to the dining hall for meals. Speaking in their native language was not allowed.

If the children broke any rules their punishment was determined by an organized justice system of their peers. The most severe punishment would take them to the guardhouse.

A printing program was developed at the school and was popular among the local community. The school's newspaper was available at the local post office and via subscription nation wide. The newspaper brought in revenue for the school and promoted Pratt's "*kill the Indian, save the man*", plan.

Funding for the school not only came from the revenue made on the newspapers, but also from former abolitionists and Quakers. The sponsors came as guests to special programs such as concerts and dramas that were written and performed by the students. The event was advertised through brochures printed by the students and announced in school newspaper.

Illness and death among the children were common. Many of the children suffered from separation anxiety, smallpox and tuberculosis. As most of the children were sent back to their reservations, many others passed away at the school, which made it necessary for a cemetery. A hundred and ninety children are buried in the cemetery, with the majority of those buried are from the Apache tribe. Today the cemetery at the school attracts visitors each year.

Chief Joseph & the Nez Perce

The man who became a national celebrity with the name "Chief Joseph" was born in the Wallowa Valley in what is now northeastern Oregon in 1840. He was given the name Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt, or Thunder Rolling Down the Mountain, but was widely known as Joseph, or Joseph the Younger, because his father had taken the Christian name Joseph when he was baptized at the Lapwai mission by Henry Spalding in 1838.

Joseph the Elder was one of the first Nez Percé converts to Christianity and an active supporter of the tribe's longstanding peace with whites. In 1855 he even helped Washington's territorial governor set up a Nez Percé reservation that stretched from Oregon into Idaho. But in 1863, following a gold rush into Nez Percé territory, the federal government took back almost six million acres of this land, restricting the Nez Percé to a reservation in Idaho that was only one tenth its prior size. Feeling himself betrayed, Joseph the Elder denounced the United States, destroyed his American flag and his Bible, and refused to move his band from the Wallowa Valley or sign the treaty that would make the new reservation boundaries official.

When his father died in 1871, Joseph staunchly resisted all efforts to force his band onto the small Idaho reservation, and in 1873 a federal order to remove white settlers and let his people remain in the Wallowa Valley made it appear that he might be successful. But the federal government soon reversed itself, and in 1877 General Oliver Otis Howard threatened a cavalry attack to force Joseph's band and other hold-outs onto the reservation. Believing military resistance futile, Joseph reluctantly led his people toward Idaho.

Unfortunately, they never got there. About twenty young Nez Percé warriors, enraged at the loss of their homeland, staged a raid on nearby settlements and killed several whites. Immediately, the army began to pursue Joseph's band and the others who had not moved onto the reservation. Although he had opposed war, Joseph cast his lot with the war leaders.

What followed was one of the most brilliant military retreats in American history: Even the unsympathetic General William Tecumseh Sherman could not help but be impressed with the 1,400 mile march, stating that "the Indians throughout displayed a courage and skill that elicited universal praise... [they] fought with almost scientific skill, using advance and rear guards, skirmish lines, and field fortifications." In over three months, the band of about 700, fewer than 200 of whom were warriors, fought 2,000 U.S. soldiers and Indian auxiliaries in four major battles and numerous skirmishes.

By the time he formally surrendered on October 5, 1877, Joseph was widely referred to in the American press as "the Red Napoleon."

*children are freezing
some of them, have
and have no blankets
where they are -- I
I want to have time
and see how many
I shall find them and
my chiefs! I am tired
sad. From where they
fight no more forever*

-Statement of

