

The Evolution of the Oklahoma County Boundaries

by

Mike Sharp

State Geographic Information Coordinator

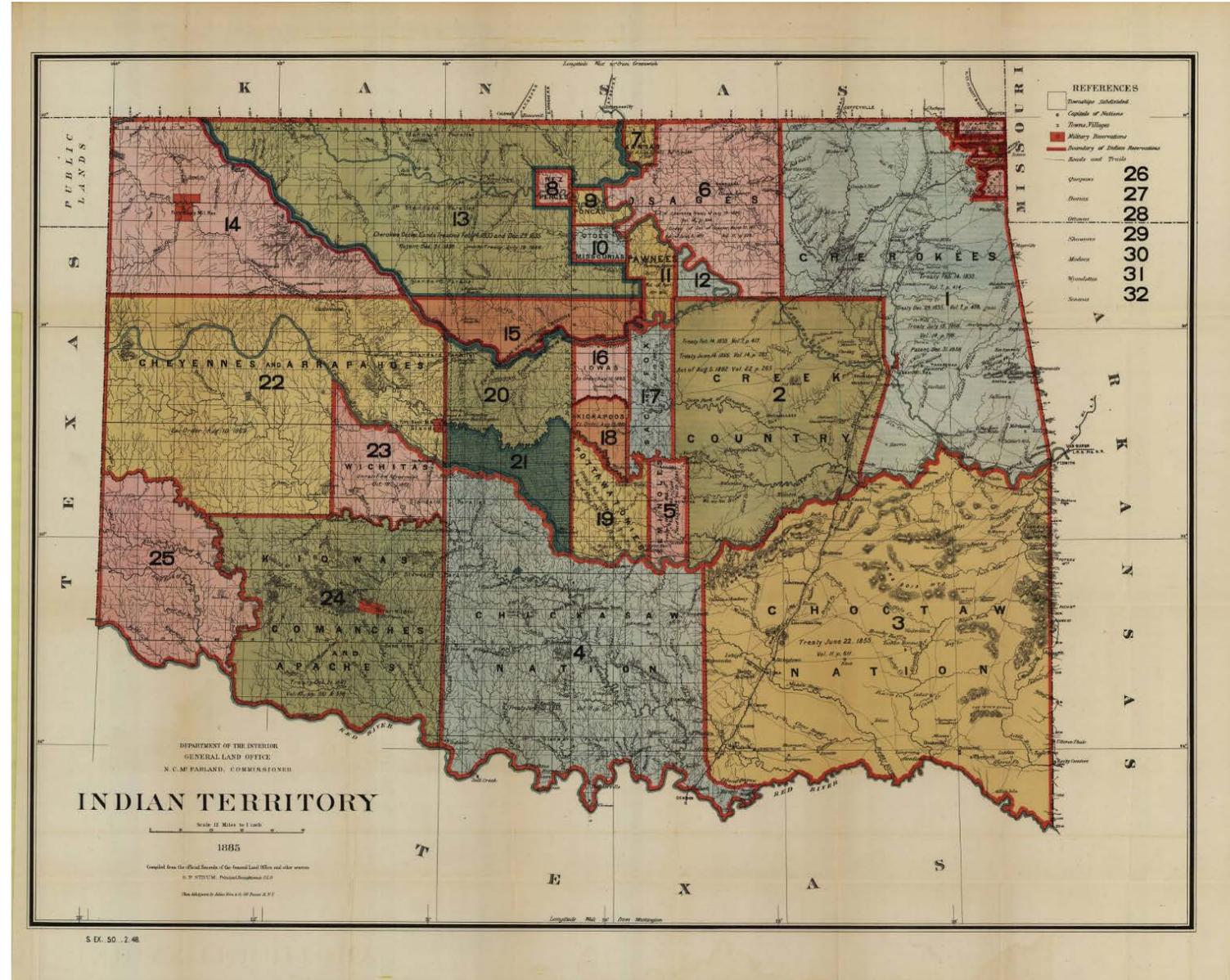
Oklahoma Office of Geographic Information

Purpose: To present a brief historical background and important context that will help understand the development of Oklahoma's County Boundaries during the late 1800's through the early 1900's. Building upon this information, the State Geographic Information Council will develop an authoritative jurisdictional county boundary dataset that can be provided to the US Census for use in the 2030 Census.

INDIAN TERRITORY 1885

Configuration of Indian Territory before passage of the Organic Act of 1890 and the creation of Oklahoma Territory.

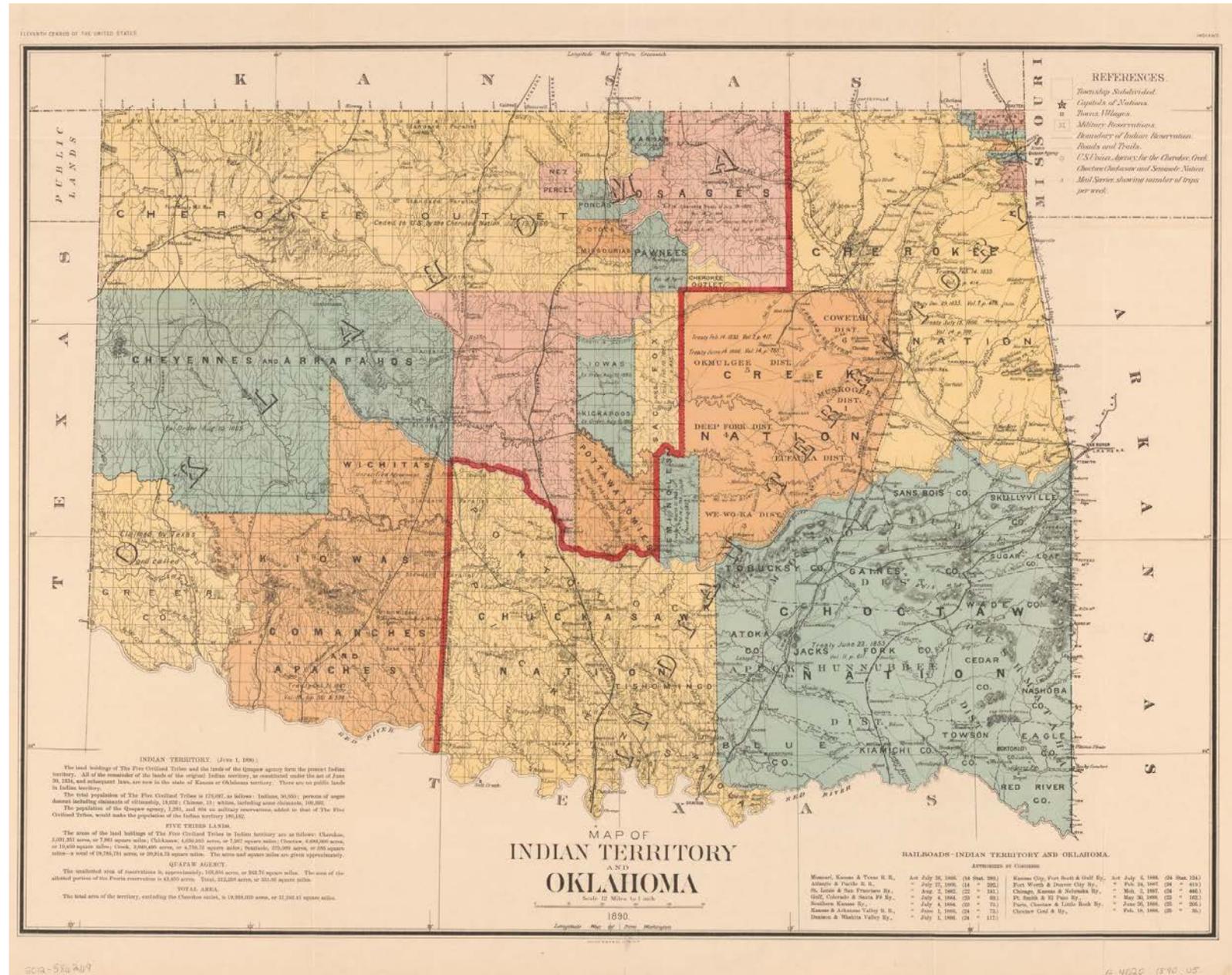
<https://dc.library.okstate.edu/digital/collection/OKMaps/id/4437>



ORGANIC ACT

May 2, 1890

- Established the boundaries of Indian and Oklahoma Territories.
- Act of March 3, 1889 opened the unassigned lands for settlement.
- Established 7 counties out of the unassigned lands with names consisting of numbers 1-7. Boundaries fixed by the Governor.
- 1-Logan
- 2-Oklahoma
- 3-Cleveland
- 4-Canadian
- 5-Kingfisher
- 6-Payne
- 7-Beaver





Indian Territory

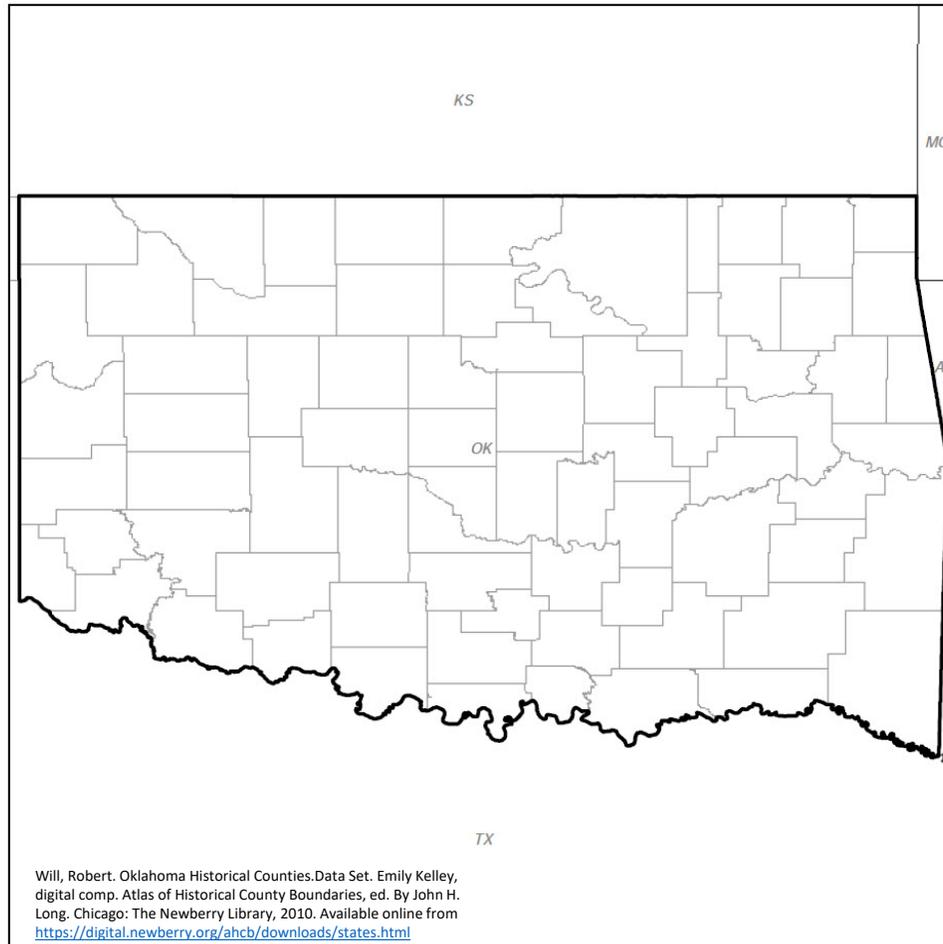
Version 2

5/6/1828 - 5/1/1890

Heavy line depicts historical boundary.
Base map shows present-day information.

Map scale is unavailable.

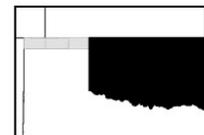
© The Newberry Library 2010



Indian Territory gained from Arkansas Territory when the Treaty of Washington bet. the U.S. and Choctaw Indians established the eastern line of the Choctaw Session (present Ark. - Okla. boundary) and affirmed Choctaw control of the area west of the line.

64,191 sq. mi.

(U.S. Stat., vol. 7 [1828]/pp. 311-315; Van Zandt, 119)





Indian Territory

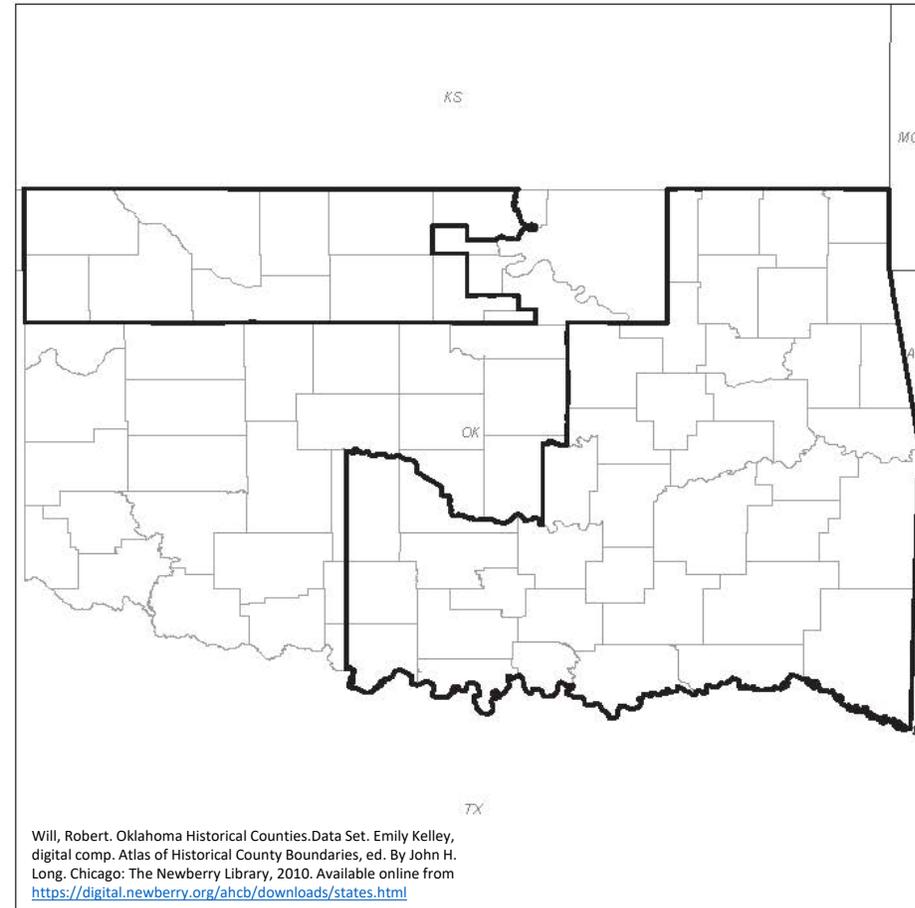
Version 3

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5/2/1890 - 8/18/1893

Heavy line depicts historical boundary.
Base map shows present-day information.

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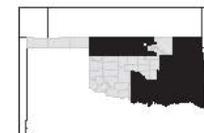


Will, Robert. Oklahoma Historical Counties. Data Set. Emily Kelley, digital comp. Atlas of Historical County Boundaries, ed. By John H. Long. Chicago: The Newberry Library, 2010. Available online from <https://digital.newberry.org/ahcb/downloads/states.html>

Indian Territory lost to creation of Oklahoma Territory.

40,394 sq. mi.

(U.S. Stat., vol. 26, ch. 182 [1890] pp. 81-82; Van Zandt, 139-140)





Indian Territory

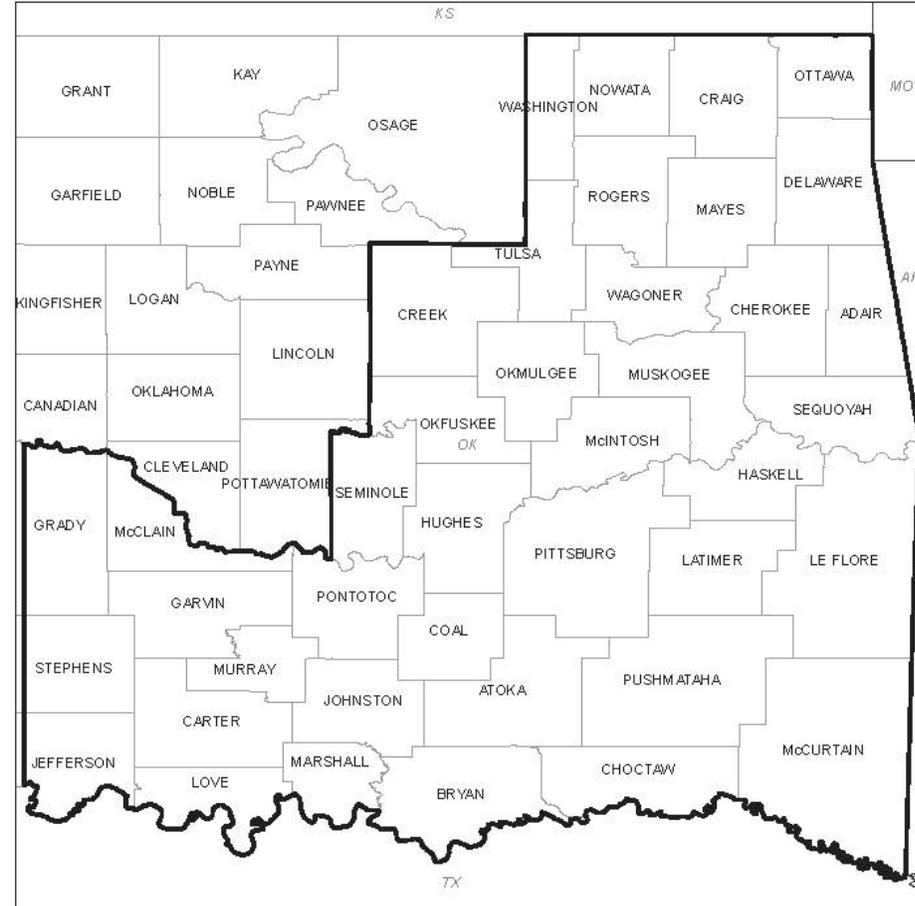
Version 4

Map scale is unavailable.

8/19/1893 - 11/15/1907

Heavy line depicts historical boundary.
Base map shows present-day information.

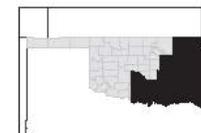
©The Newberry Library 2010



Indian Territory lost the Cherokee Outlet to Oklahoma Territory under a treaty between the United States and the Cherokee Nation, dated 19 Dec. 1891, ratified by Congress on 3 Mar. 1893, and proclaimed by Pres. Grover Cleveland on 19 Aug. 1893.

31,075 sq. mi.

(U.S. Stat., vol. 27, ch. 209[1893]/ pp. 640-641 and vol. 28, procl. 5/pp. 1225-1227; Morris, 120-123; Morris, Goins, and McReynolds, map 54; Van Zandt, 140)





Oklahoma Territory

Version 1

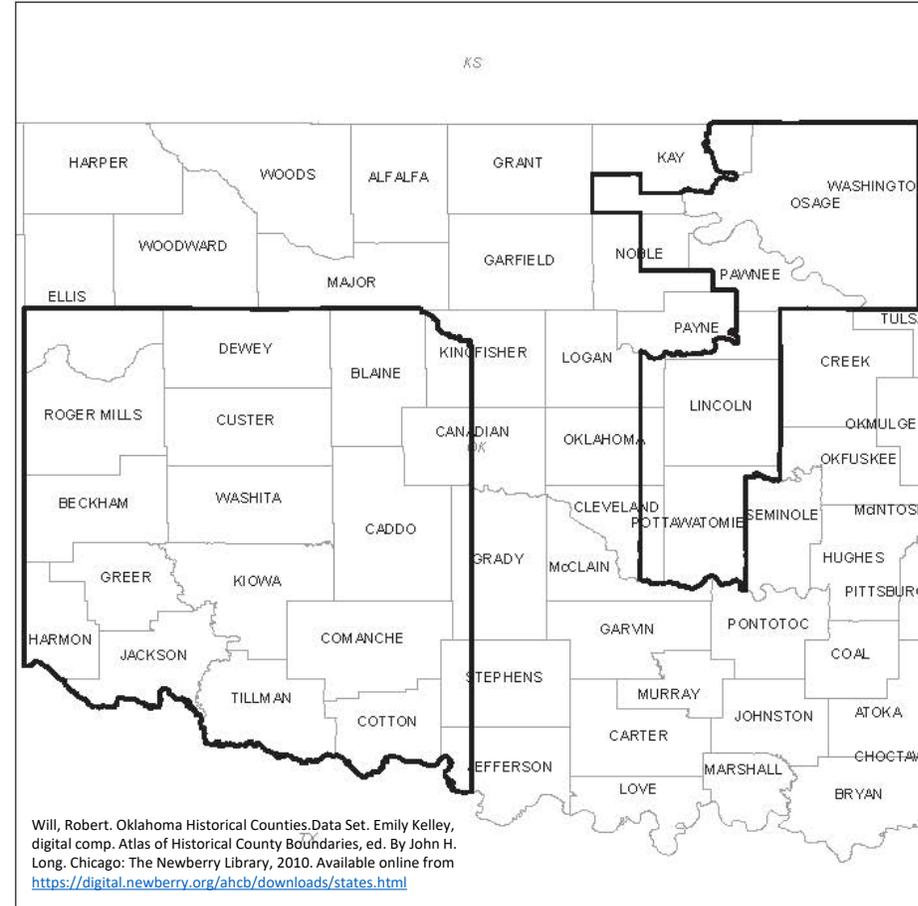
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5/2/1890 - 8/31/1891

Heavy line depicts historical boundary.

©The Newberry Library 2010

Base map shows present-day information.

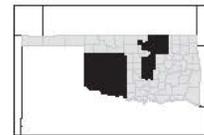


Will, Robert. Oklahoma Historical Counties Data Set. Emily Kelley, digital comp. Atlas of Historical County Boundaries, ed. By John H. Long. Chicago: The Newberry Library, 2010. Available online from <https://digital.newberry.org/ahcb/downloads/states.html>

The United States created Oklahoma Territory from Indian Territory and unorganized federal territory (the Oklahoma panhandle or Public Land Strip). Map depicts non-county area in Oklahoma Territory.

20,690 sq. mi.

(U.S. Stat., vol. 26, ch. 182 [1890]/ pp. 81-82; Van Zandt, 139-140)





Oklahoma Territory

Version 2

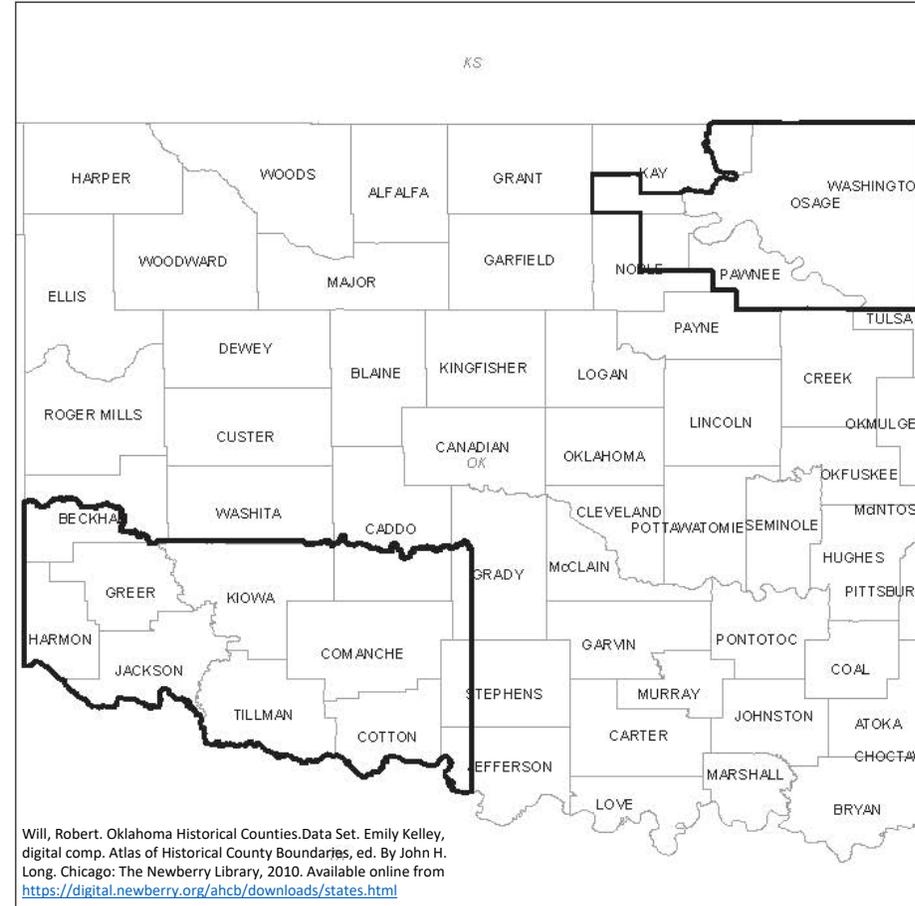
Map scale is unavailable.

9/1/1891 - 8/18/1893

Heavy line depicts historical boundary.

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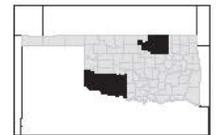
Base map shows present-day information.



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Non-county area in Okla. Terr. lost to creation of Counties A to I: BLAINE, CUSTER, DAY (extinct), DEWEY, LINCOLN, POTTAWATOMIE, ROGER MILLS, WASHITA, and COUNTY I (extinct); also lost to CANADIAN, CLEVELAND, KINGFISHER, LOGAN, OKLAHOMA, and PAYNE.

10,522 sq. mi.



("Will Open," Weekly Oklahoma State Capital [newspaper], 25 July 1891; Morris, 119-120; Morris, Goins, and McReynolds, map 54)

1890-1905

- Interest in Statehood building
- Became a political football between Republicans and Democrats
- Also difference between House and Senate
 - House favored each territory as a single state
 - Senate favored one state out of both territories
- Five Civilized Tribes opposed to single statehood (OT+IT).
- Five Civilized Tribes of Indians each had a written constitution – made and enforced laws

A History of the Constitutional Convention of the State of Oklahoma by Albert H. Ellis;
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.35112105459467&view=2up&format=plaintext&seq=1>

The Original Constitution of the State of Oklahoma 1907 & the Road to Statehood, Centennial Edition, Kathy Jekel, Oklahoma State Library, 342.766 Jek

- The Five Civilized Tribes decided to act alone to seek statehood for Indian Territory
- Executive Committee members appointed by the Chief Executives of each tribe
- All were Indians by blood except William H. Murray who represented the Chickasaw Governor
- Issued call for a Convention – August 1905 – 150/187 delegates
 - Pleasant Porter (Creek) –President
 - Each Governor-Vice President; Haskell for Pleasant Porter, Murray for Chickasaw Governor Johnston
- Sequoyah Constitution
 - Principal Authors-Murray and Haskell
 - Ratified by majority of 65K votes- 86%
 - Submitted to Congress and President Roosevelt- Rejected

State of Sequoyah 1905 Counties

Map of the proposed State of Sequoyah showing county boundaries as described in the State of Sequoyah Constitution, Article XI, Section 2.
<https://www.loc.gov/item/2013592417/>

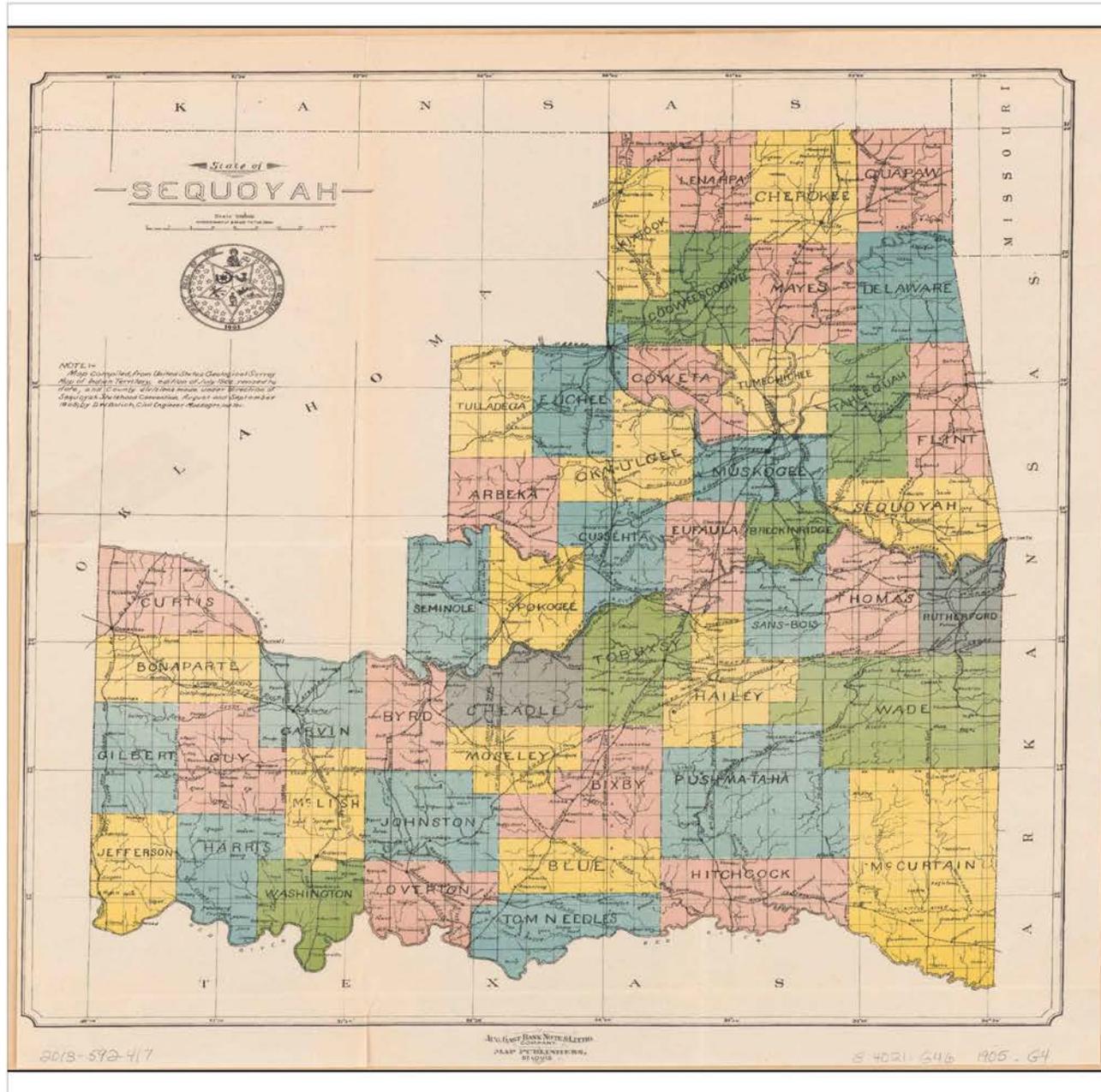
48 Counties



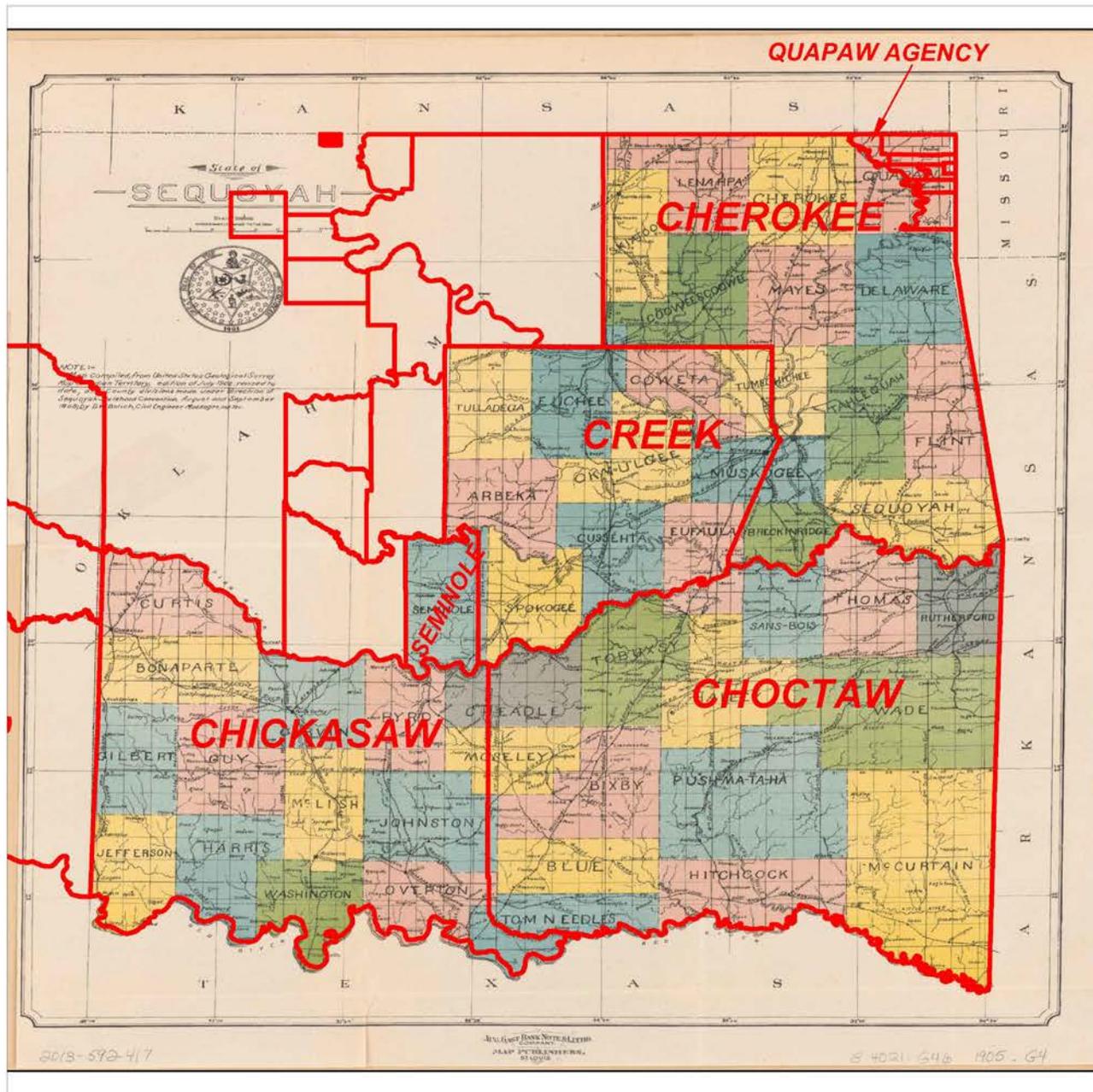
Note from Library of Congress Map:
Map compiled from United States Geological Survey Map of Indian Territory, edition of July 1902, revised to date, and County divisions made under direction of Sequoyah Statehood Convention, August and September, 1905; by D.W. Bolich, Civil engineer, Muskogee, Ind. Ter.

<https://www.loc.gov/item/2013592417/>

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October 25, 2021



What Relative Importance did the Tribes have for their reservation boundaries versus the importance of jurisdictional boundaries of the Counties or the State of Sequoyah?



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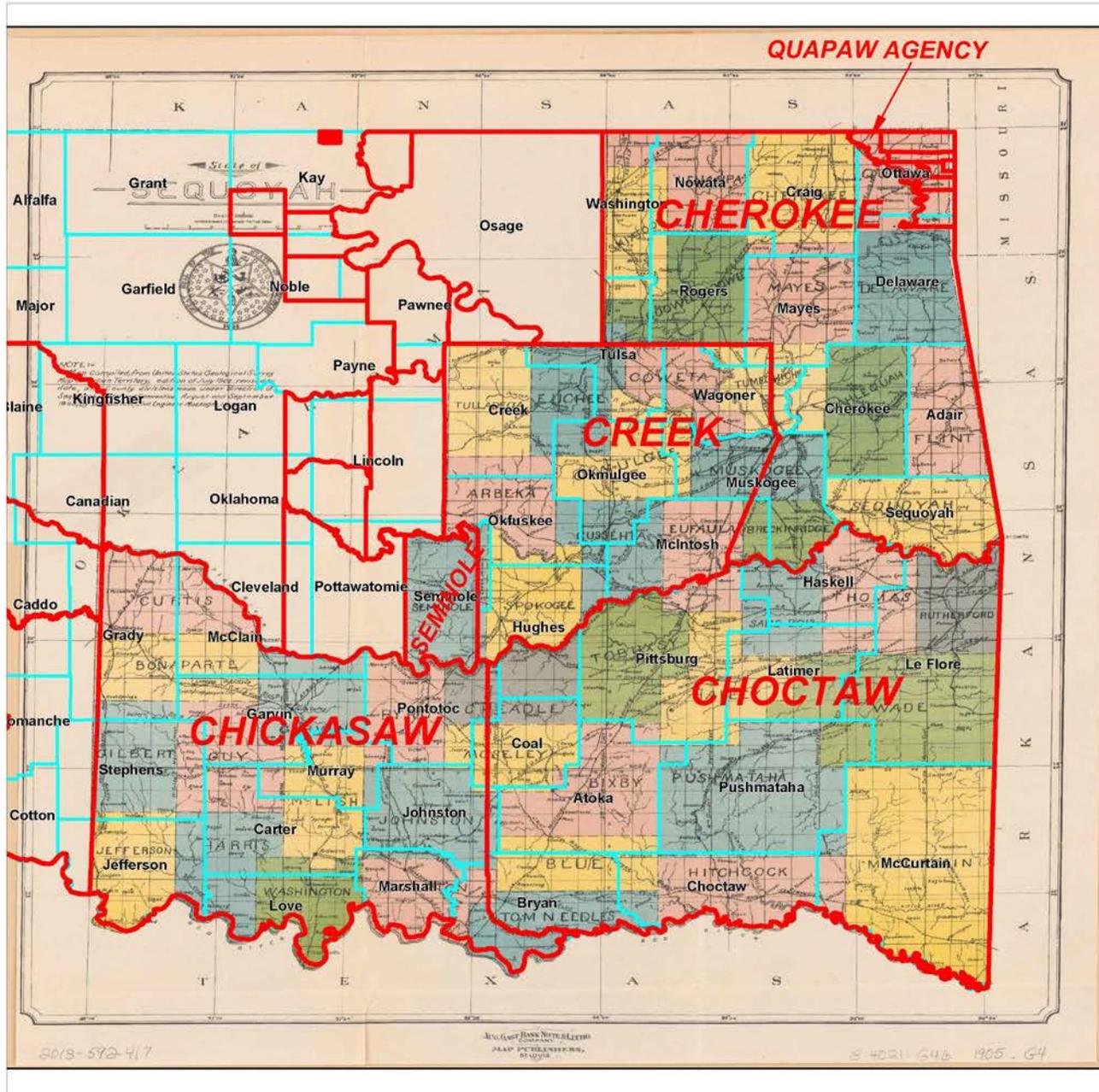
Tribal Boundaries 

<https://okmaps.org/OGI/search.aspx?mapcenterlon=-98.716556549068&mapcenterlat=35.326779506251&mapscale=7&Layers=b8e0ca7c-7757-4430-b34f-915887dbce1a%2C&maptype=OLMap&Visibility=true%2C&Opacity=1%2C>



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Tribal Boundaries
 Oklahoma Counties



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2013-592-417

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
 MAP PUBLISHED BY
 ST. LOUIS

8 4021 246 1905 - G4

1906

- Enabling Act June 16
 - Oklahoma and Indian Territories -> One State
 - New Mexico & Arizona Territories – Decide
- Delegates to Constitutional Convention
 - 57 Oklahoma Territory – 2 Osage Nation
 - 55 Indian Territory – 34 Delegates to Sequoyah Convention
 - 99 Democrats, 1 Independent, 12 Republicans
- Convened November 20, 1906 in Guthrie
- William H. Murray elected President
 - Committee Appointments – 36 Standing Committees
 - Committee on Counties and County Boundaries - #28



Wm. H. MURRAY

PRESIDENT OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Original from
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URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Committee on Counties and County Boundaries

- 15 members appointed by President Murray
 - 11 members from Indian Territory
 - 4 members from Oklahoma Territory
 - 2 – Greer County
 - Beaver County
 - Dewey County
- Most Delegates from OT campaigned for no change in county boundaries.
- OT 26 counties – some larger than some eastern states.
- Much debate on division of counties already established.
- No Counties in Indian Territory, ... But, they had a starting point

State of Sequoyah 1905 Counties

Map of the proposed State of Sequoyah showing county boundaries as described in the State of Sequoyah Constitution, Article XI, Section 2.
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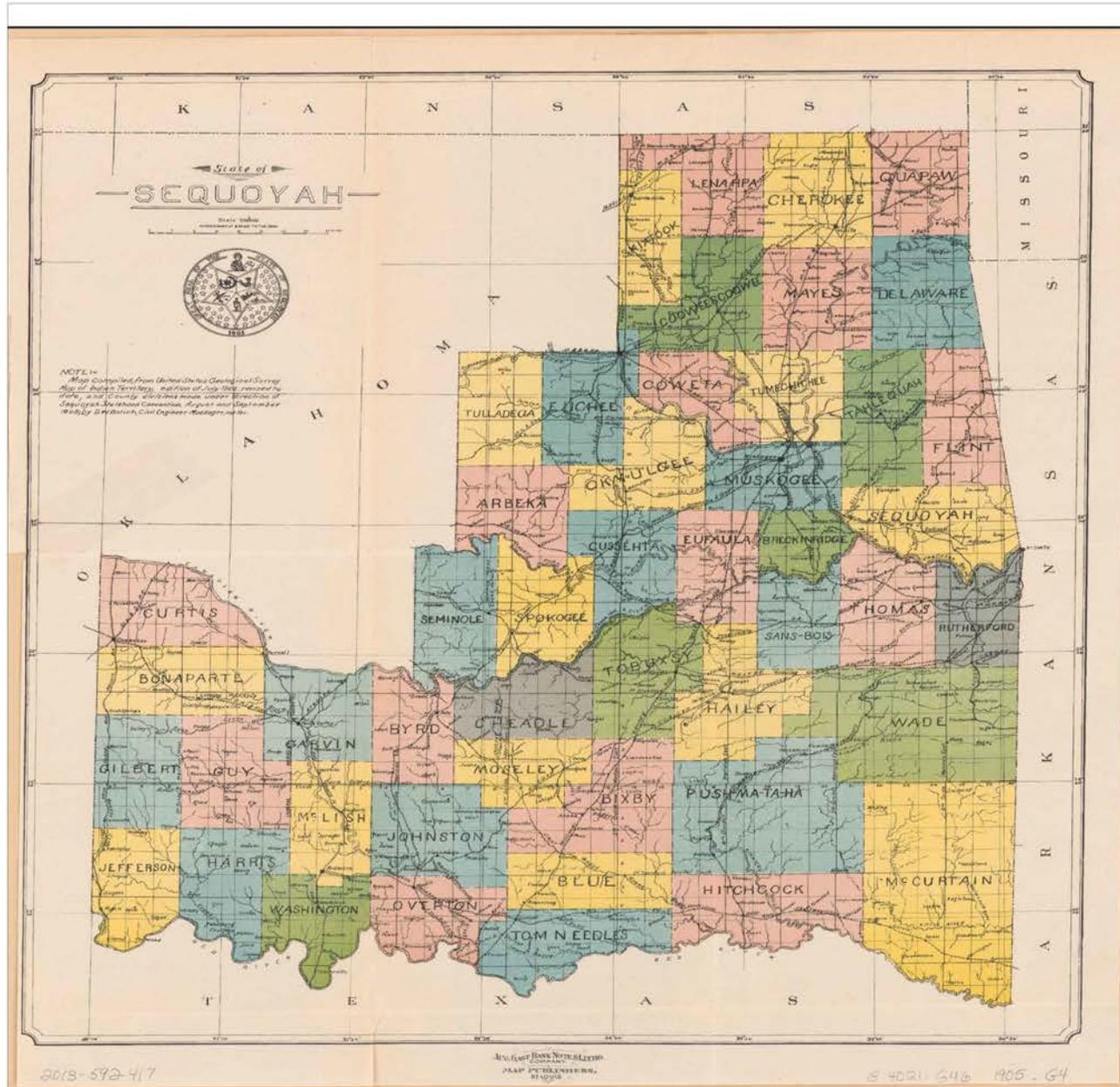
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Committee on Counties and County Boundaries

- Committee met and debated - December 4-18, 1906
- County Boundaries Report No 68 sent to full convention- 18 Dec
 - Debate spread over 3 days, extending into the night
 - Many amendments were offered – only a few minors ones approved.
- Approved December 21, 1906

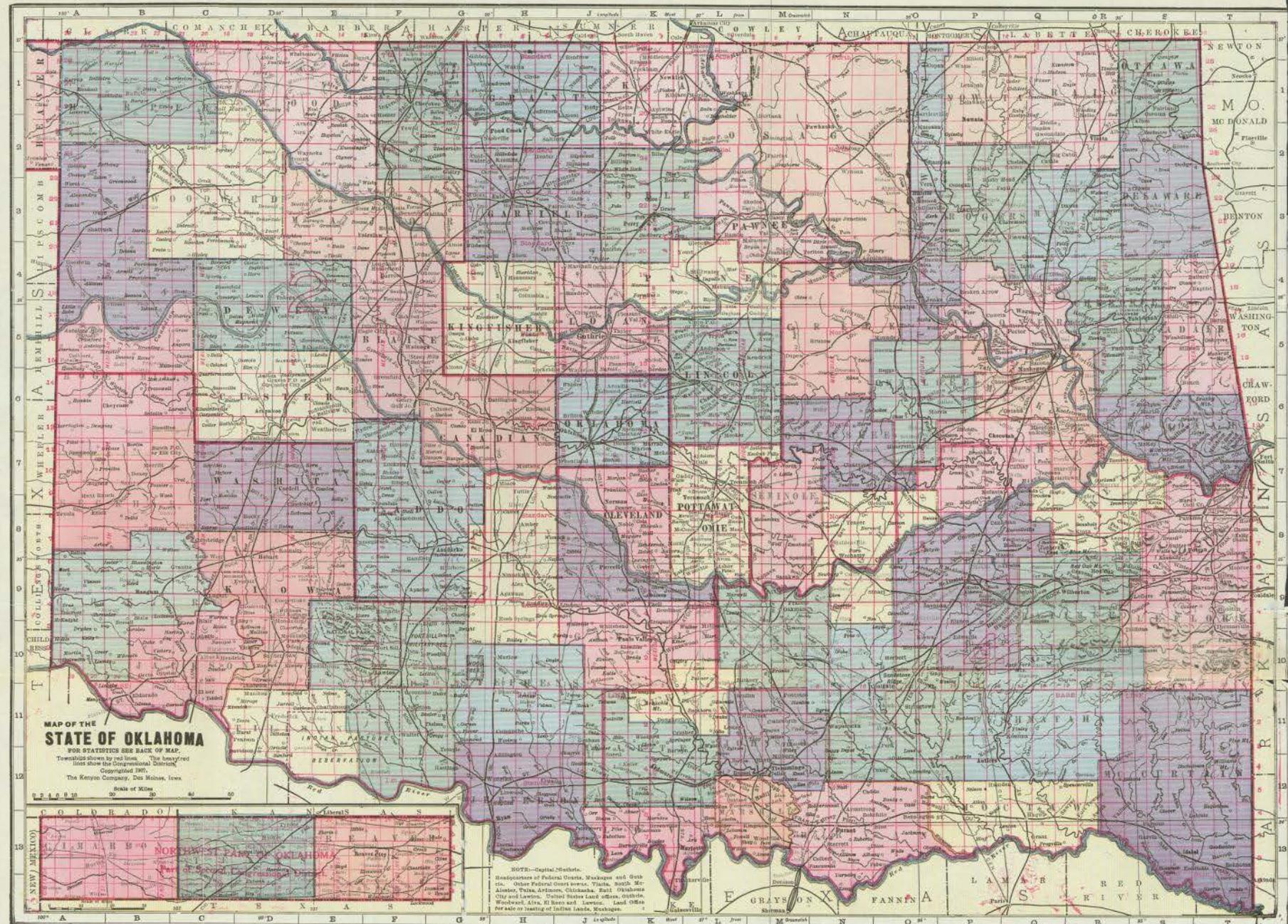
1907

Counties in Indian Territory reduced from 48 to 40.

Counties in Oklahoma Territory increased from 26 to 35.

75 Counties
Missing Harmon and Cotton

<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/m2t9tph213979/citation/#responsibilities>



1907-Present

- November 16, 1907 – Oklahoma Constitution, Article 17, Section 8
 - Created 50 new counties, modified 11 existing counties
 - Resulting in 75 counties
- Through actions of local referendum's, governor proclamation's, legislative action and annexations there have been several boundary changes.
 - Harmon from Greer – May 22, 1909 – Special election
 - Cotton from Comanche – November 18, 1912 – Special election
 - Last change – Love from Jefferson in 1925
- Chronology of Oklahoma State and County Boundaries
 - Newberry Library –
 - https://digital.newberry.org/ahcb/documents/OK_Consolidated_Chronology.htm#Consolidated_Chronology
 - <https://digital.newberry.org/ahcb/map/map.html#OK>

Descriptions of County Boundaries

Ottawa County: Beginning on the State line between Kansas and Oklahoma at its intersection with the center line of the Neosho River; thence east along said State line to its intersection with the Missouri State line; thence southward along the Missouri State line to its intersection with the section line one mile south of and parallel to the south line of township twenty-six North; thence west along said section line to its intersection with the range line between ranges twenty-one and twenty-two East; thence north along said range line to its intersection with the center line of the Neosho River; thence up along the center line of said Neosho River to the point of beginning.

- **Newberry Atlas:** 16Nov 1907 OTTAWA created from former Indian Territory. (Okla. Constitution [1907], art. 17, sec. 8; Swindler, 8:152)
- **No Changes after 16 Nov 1907**

Garfield County: Said County shall be and remain as it now exists under the Territory of Oklahoma, until hereafter changed under the provisions of this Constitution.

- **Newberry Atlas:** County O, which became GARFIELD, was created in Oklahoma Territory from part of the Cherokee Outlet. (U.S.Stat., vol. 27, ch. 209[1893]/ pp. 640-641 and vol. 28, procl. 5/pp. 1225-1227; Morris, 120-123; Morris, Goins, and McReynolds, map 54; Van Zandt, 140)
- **No Changes after 16 Nov 1907**

Descriptions of County Boundaries (con't)

Blaine County: Said County shall be and remain as it now exists under the Territory of Oklahoma, until hereafter changed under the provisions of this Constitution.

- **Newberry Atlas:** 01 Sep 1891 County C, which became BLAINE, was created from non-county area in Oklahoma Territory and a small area of KINGFISHER by proclamation of the U. S. Asst. Secretary of the Interior. ("Will Open," *Weekly Oklahoma State Capital* [newspaper], 25 July 1891; Morris, 119-120; Morris, Goins, and McReynolds, map 54)
- **Newberry Atlas:** 08 Jul 1901 BLAINE gained part of COUNTY I (Okla. Terr., extinct; the Wichita Indian Reservation); COUNTY I eliminated. ("President's Proclamation, The Boundary Lines," *The Daily Oklahoman* [newspaper], 9 July 1901; Morris, 124)
- **Newberry Atlas:** 16 Nov 1907 BLAINE lost small area to CADDO; BLAINE became a county in the state of Oklahoma. (Okla. Constitution [1907], art. 17, sec. 8; Swindler, 8:142)
- Beginning at the NW corner of Kingfisher County (**SW corner L3 Sec 31-T20N-R9W on the Cherokee Outlet line**), West along the Cherokee Outlet to a line between R13W and R14W, south to the SW corner of T13N-R13W, east 18 miles to a line between R11W and R10W, north 12 miles to a line between T12N and T11N, then east to a line between R10W and R9W, thence north to the beginning (Morris, Boundaries of Oklahoma, pgs.119-120).

Descriptive Elements of County Boundary Descriptions in the State Constitution and Pre-/Post-1907 Documents

- Surrounding State Boundaries
- Various Meridians such as 100th , 98th , Cimarron, etc.
- Various Indian Nation Boundaries
- Other Boundaries such as the Cherokee Outlet
- Public Land Survey System (PLSS) descriptions
- Centerline of Watercourses such as Rivers and Creeks

- ***Retracement of County Boundaries dependent on Authoritative PLSS Data***

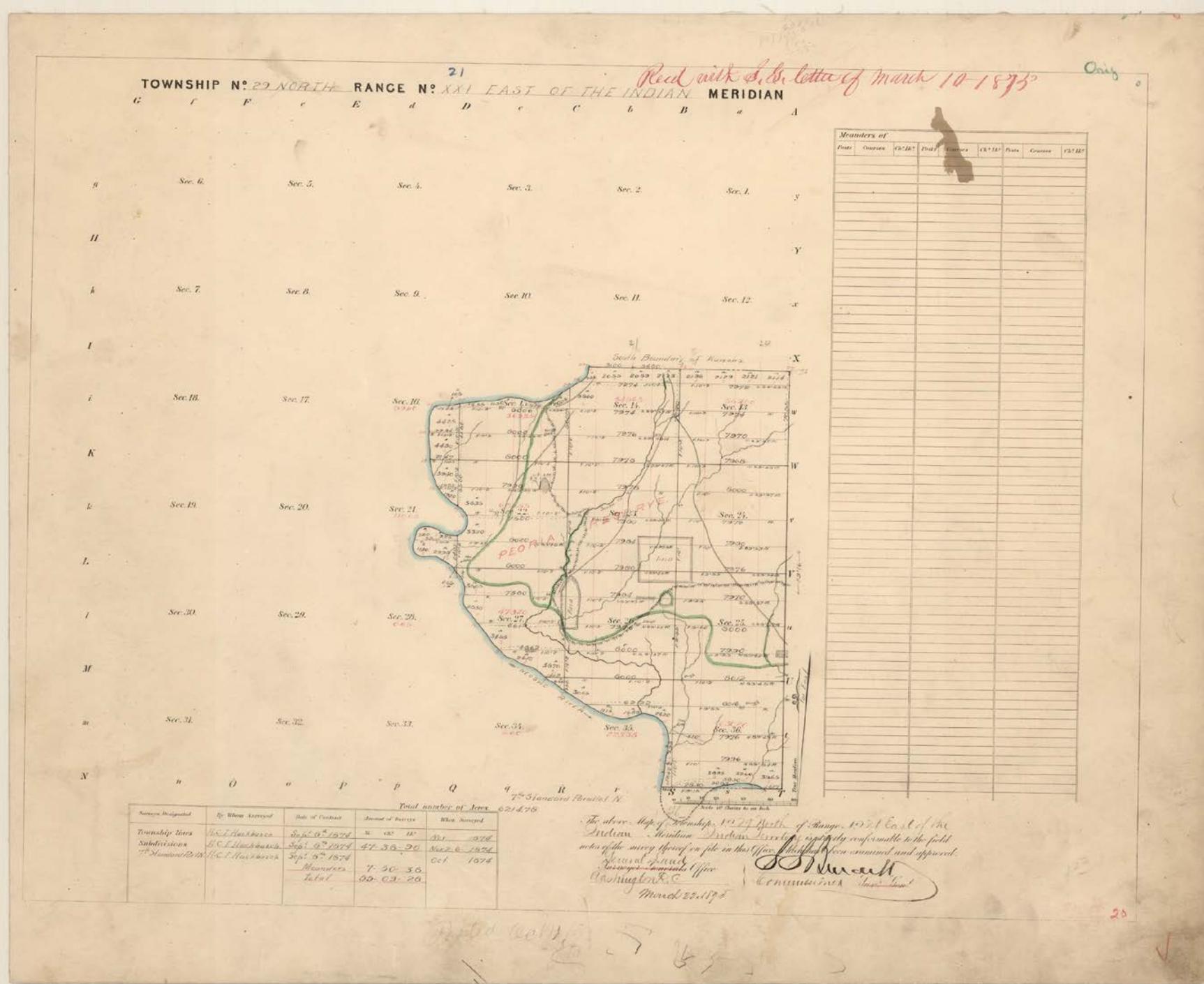
Public Land Survey System (PLSS)

- Established by Land Ordinance of 1785
- Administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- Implementation- Manual of Survey Instructions (9th Edition)
- Congress 1864- Survey Lands in Indian Territory
- Oklahoma First Initial Point established 1870
 - 34°30'24"N Lat, 97°14'49"W Lon
 - Established the Indian Meridian and Indian Base Line
 - SE corner, Section 36, Township 1 North, Range 1 West, Indian Meridian
- Second Initial Point established 1881
 - Established Cimarron Meridian and Cimarron Base Line
 - OK/TX State Line a few hundred feet south of the Base Line

Fractional T29N-R21E

- East of Neosho River
- General Land Office
Surveyed November 1874
- Map Published March 22,
1875
- Scale: 40 chains/inch
 - 1:31,680
- **Authoritative**
 - **Maps**
 - **Field Notes**

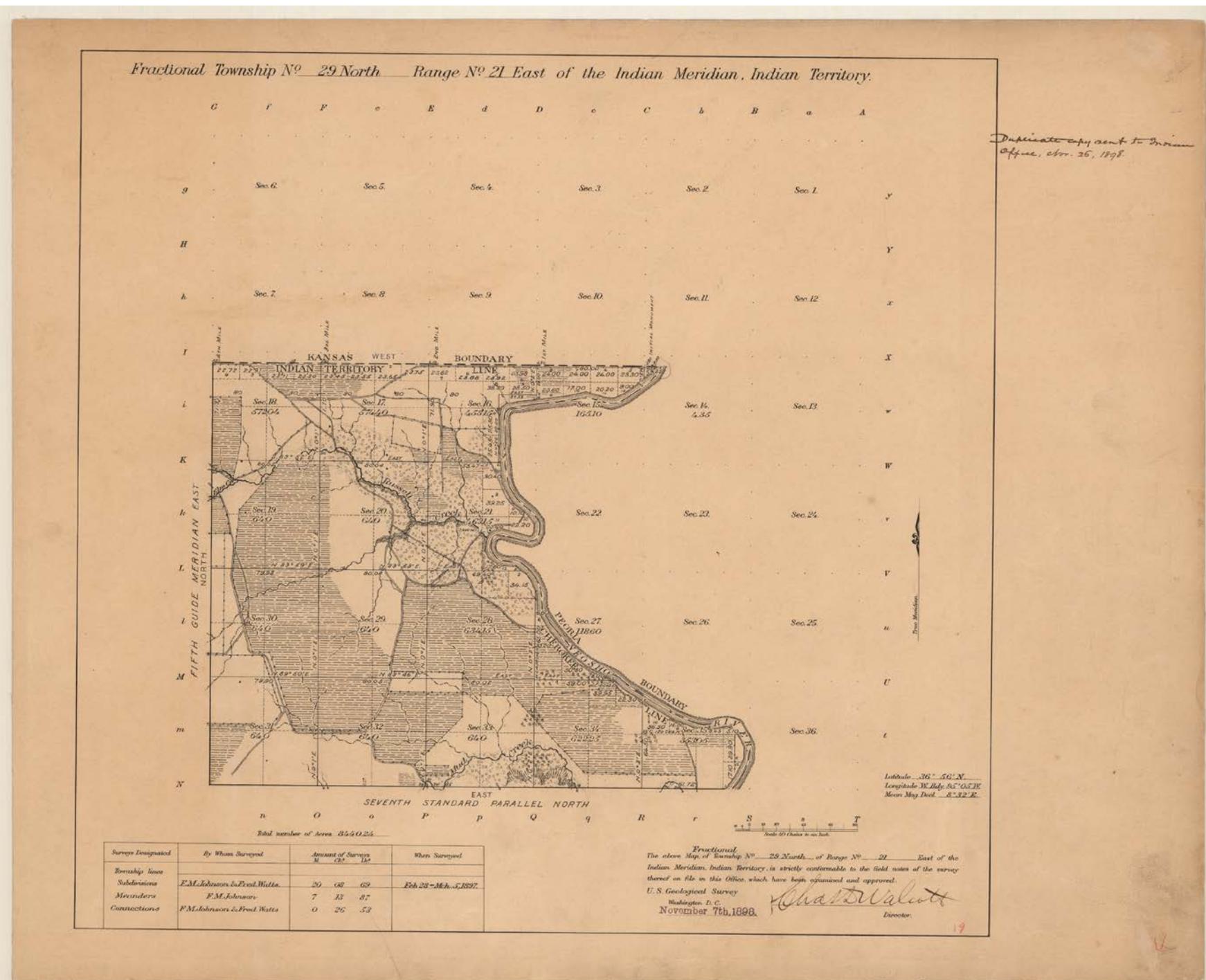
https://gloreports.blm.gov/detail/s/survey/default.aspx?dm_id=26101&sid=whccxbrq.hfh#surveyDetailsTabIndex=1



Fractional T29N-R21E

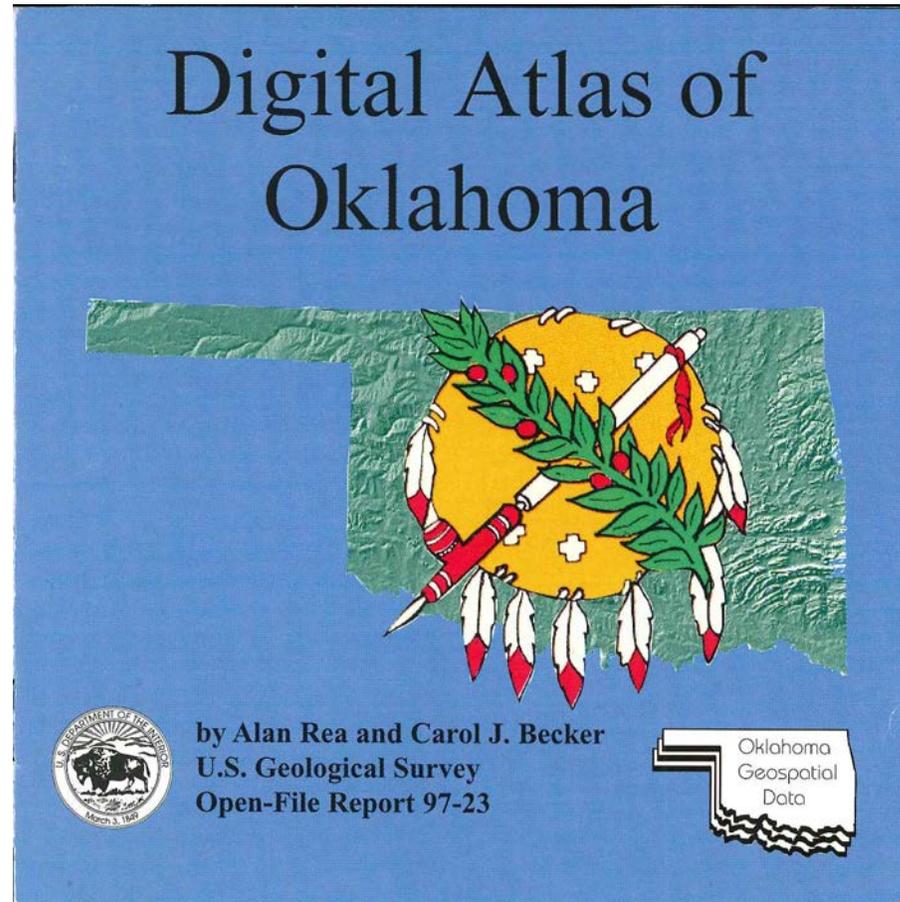
- West of Neosho River
- USGS Surveyed Feb/Mar 1897
- Map Published November 7, 1898
- Scale: 40 chains/inch
 - 1:31,680
- **Authoritative**
 - **Maps**
 - **Field Notes**

https://gloreports.blm.gov/details/survey/default.aspx?dm_id=87970&sid=whccxbrq.hfh#surveyDetailsTabIndex=1



PLSS GIS Layers for Oklahoma

- Digital Atlas of Oklahoma – March 31, 1997

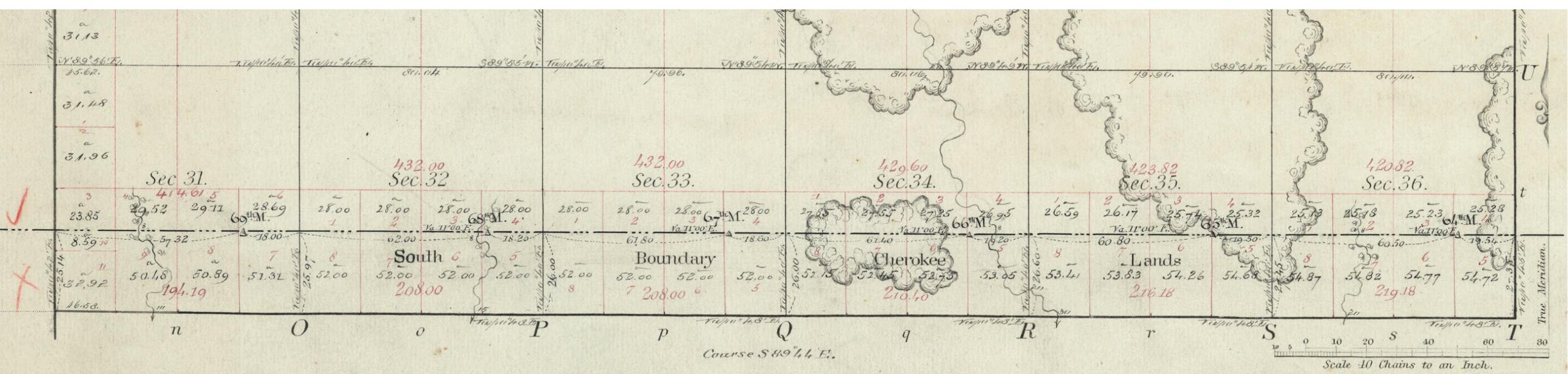


PLSS GIS Layers for Oklahoma

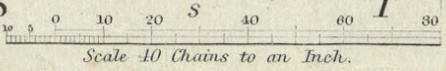
- TNRGSEC Layer on Digital Atlas
 - No Statewide layer, only Provided by County
 - Only Sections, No Township layer, No Divisions below Sections
 - Originator: Alan Rea and Carol Becker, USGS
 - Source: " This data set was created by appending and editing U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Digital Line Graph (DLG) data sets (1994) based on 1:100,000-scale topographic quadrangles."
- COUNTY Layer on Digital Atlas
 - Statewide county boundary layer
 - Originator: Mark Gregory, Oklahoma State University
 - Source: "The boundaries were derived from U.S. Geological Survey 1:100,000-scale Digital Line Graph data sets (1994)."

PLSS GIS Layers for Oklahoma

- BLM NM Region CadNSDI – September 18, 2018
 - Townships For OK
 - First Division For OK
 - Second Division For OK
 - *Source*: “Generated from official records (GMM), Digitized (Protraction Diagrams, USGS quadrangles) Digitized from georeferenced survey plats (official records) (ArcMap)”



Course S 89° 44' E.



Total number of Acres. 22811.81

Surveys Designated	By Whom Surveyed	Date of Contract	Amount of Surveys	When Surveyed
Township lines	E. A. Darling	December 1870	M. 6 - Ch. 08 - Ik. 84	
Subdivisions	"	"	60 - 08 - 84	Feb 1872
Standard lines	"	"	6. 00 00	

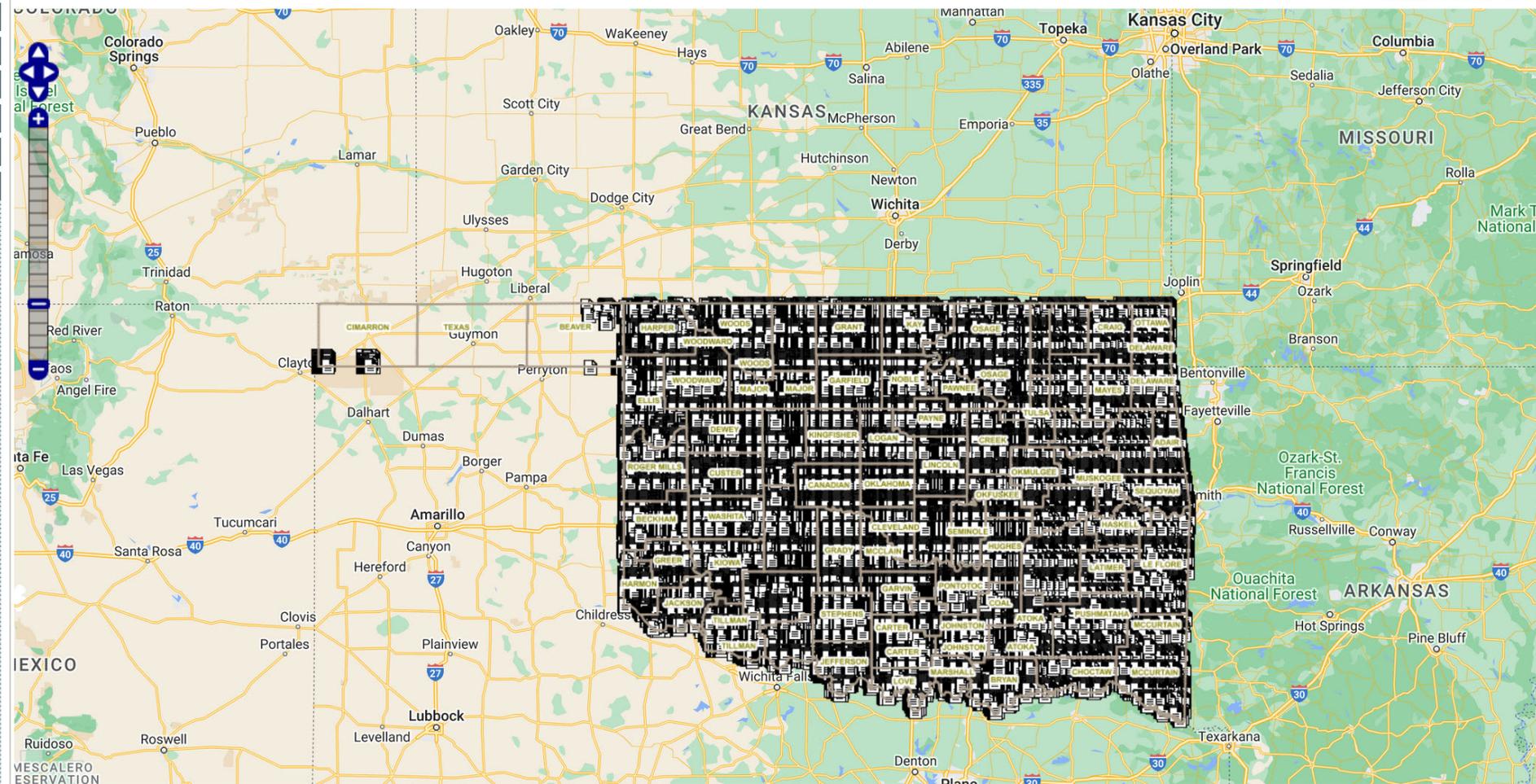
21,555.86
12,53.95

The above Map of Township N. 20 South of Indian Meridian Indian by note of the survey thereof on file in this Office which General Land Office.



Southwest Corner T20N-R1E
S/2 Section 31
Cherokee Outlet
Associated Lots

- Administrative Units
- Education
- Hydrology
- Environment
- Public Safety
- Land Grids
- DOQQ Boundaries
- OK-BLM QQSections and Lots
- OK-BLM Sections
- OK-BLM Townships
- Oklahoma Corner Records Locations
- Sections
- Township/Range
- USGS 100K Quadrangle Boundaries



Measure: 0.00 mi
 Mouseover On

Google Maps Road Layer
 Google Maps Aerial Layer

Oklahoma Counties

Oklahoma Corner Records Locations

Oklahoma Corner Records Location

170,053 Corner Records as of April 11, 2023; Locations courtesy of HubTack, <https://hubtack.com/>

Description of County Boundaries Involving Rivers and Creeks

- **Ottawa County:** Beginning on the State line between Kansas and Oklahoma at its intersection with the center line of the Neosho River ... thence north along said range line to its intersection with the center line of the Neosho River; thence up along the center line of said Neosho River to the point of beginning.
- What did the framers of the Constitution mean by “up along the center line”
 - Boundary line conforms to the center of the water between the banks?
 - Boundary line conforms to the main channel?
 - What role does accretion and avulsion have?
- Mapping of County Boundaries Based on Rivers and Creeks
 - Where do you start?
 - Pre-statehood based on 1870-? GLO surveys?

Mapping of County Boundaries Based on Rivers and Creeks

- Changes of Rivers and Creeks since mapped in GLO Surveys
 - Nature of Flowing Watercourses is that they **meander**
 - USGS: A **meander** is when water flows in a curvy, bendy path, like a snake. As a river makes its way through an area that is relatively flat, it often develops bends as it erodes its way through the path of least resistance. Once a meander starts, it often becomes more and more exaggerated.
 - Accretion and Avulsion are part of this activity
 - If you “***follow the meanders of the centerline of a river***” as a boundary, then the action of accretion and **avulsion** will define the boundary. In other words, the boundary stays with the centerline of the river.

Oklahoma Constitutional Convention- December 18, 1906

- Committee on Counties and County Boundaries Report #68
 - Adopted Friday, December 21, 1906
 - Committee on Revision, Compilation, Style & Arrangement
 - Ottawa County: *Beginning on the state line between Indian Territory and Kansas in the center of Neosho river extending eastward along said State Line to its intersection with the Missouri State Line; thence southward along the Missouri State line to a point one mile South of the South line of township 26 North; thence westward parallel with said South line of Township 26 North and one mile Southward therefrom to the range line between ranges 21 and 22 East. Thence Northward along said range line to its intersection with the center line of the said Neosho river. Thence following the meanderings of said center line of said Neosho river to the point of beginning at said Kansas and Indian Territory state line. Said county to be known as Ottawa County.*

Sequoyah Constitutional Convention- September 1905

- 34 out of 55 Indian Territory Delegates to the Oklahoma Constitutional Convention had been Delegates to the Sequoyah Constitutional Convention
- Quapaw County: All of Township 29 North, Range 21 East, **lying east of the meandering center line of the Neosho river.** – Township 29 North, Ranges 22, 23,24, and 25 East – Townships 28,27,26, 25, North, Ranges 22,23,24, and 25 East.

Red River Compact-Title 74, Section 6106

August 31, 2000

- The permanent *political* boundary line between the states of Oklahoma and Texas along the Red River is the **vegetation line** along the south bank of the Red River except for the Texoma area, where the boundary does not change.
- Should there be a change in the watercourse of the Red River, the party states recognize the rules of accretion, erosion, and avulsion. The states agree that accretion or erosion may cause a change in the boundary between the states if it causes a change in the vegetation line. With regard to **avulsion**, the states agree that a change in the course of the Red River caused by an immediately perceivable natural event that changes the vegetation line **will change the location of the boundary** between the states.

Advantages of Jurisdictional Boundaries not affected by Avulsion

- Easy to recognize where the physical boundary is located
 - Do not have to rely on a survey or physical markers
- Each jurisdiction equally share in a water source
- Easy to map with today's technology

Next Steps

- County Boundaries and PLSS Workgroup
 - Office of Geographic Information
 - OK Department of Commerce
 - OK House of Representatives
 - OK Tax Commission
 - OK Department of Transportation
 - OK Water Resources Board
 - City of Ardmore
 - Center for Spatial Analysis

Questions and Comments?

STATE GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION COUNCIL

Title 82, Section 1501-205.1

G. The duties of the Council shall include overseeing the Office of Geographic Information concerning the following:

1. Development, adoption, and recommendation of standards and procedures that may be applied to geographic information and Geographic Information Systems to promote consistency of data elements;
2. Development of a strategy for the implementation and funding of a statewide Geographic Information System;
3. Development, delivery, and periodic revision of a statewide geographic information plan and annually reporting to the Governor and the Legislature. Such a plan shall include, but not be limited to, provisions for training and education; and
4. Promotion of collaboration and sharing of data and data development as well as other aspects of Geographic Information Systems.

OFFICE of GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Title 82, Section 1501-205.3

D. The Office shall:

4. Coordinate multiagency Geographic Information System projects, including working with state and local agencies in the development and maintenance of statewide data and Geographic Information Systems;

6. Develop, maintain, update, and interpret Geographic Information System standards under the direction of the Council and working with state and local agencies;