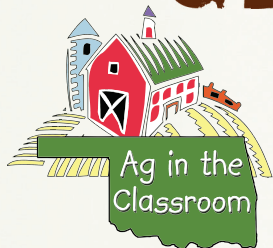


RED DIRT GROUNDBREAKERS



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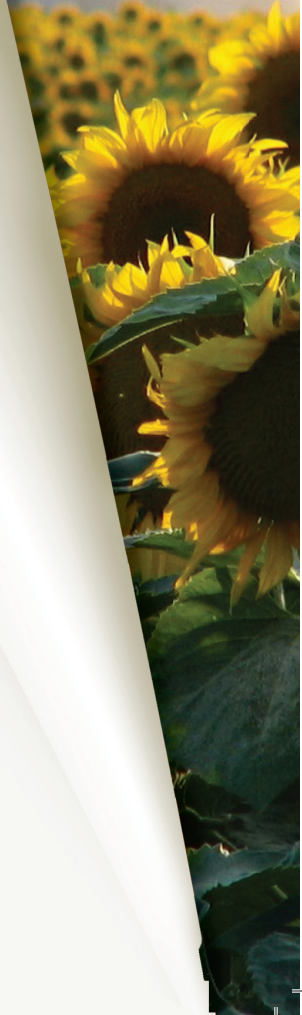


OKLAHOMA GROUNDBREAKERS

No one knows the name of the first person to clear a patch of ground in the land we call Oklahoma. By the late 13th Century farming had grown from small patches of native plants (sunflowers, amaranth, etc.) to a well-coordinated system of community fields. The ancestors of the Caddo and Wichita grew beans, squash and corn along river banks. Plains Indians came later, using fire to clear grazing areas for the huge bison herds.

The Five Civilized Tribes brought sophisticated farming and ranching traditions that were disrupted by the Civil War. After the war returning soldiers became cowboys, and the cattle industry grew. Unoccupied lands were opened to pioneer farmers, and when Oklahoma became a state, agriculture was a central concern. Critics called the authors of the Oklahoma constitution “corn field lawyers” because of the importance they attached to agriculture in the constitution.

Oklahoma’s groundbreakers were men and women of many cultures. Some worked the land, some were promoters who encouraged others to migrate here and farm. There were farmers, cattlemen, businessmen, scientists, inventors, educators and entertainers. In the pages that follow are the stories of only a few.



HENRIETTA VANN: A CHEROKEE CHATELAINE

When the Europeans first encountered the Five Civilized Tribes in the eastern part of the continent, they were living in agricultural villages. Men were hunters and warriors, and they cleared land. Women cultivated fields and raised children. Women held very high status in these communities. They owned virtually all of the family possessions, including the home, the fields, and the crops.

Women continued to play an important role in managing farm operations after the tribes came to Indian Territory. They brought their knowledge to start farms in the new land. Henrietta Vann was the wife of a prominent Cherokee, Judge John Vann. In the *Chronicles of Oklahoma* Carolyn Thomas Foreman provides a glimpse into her life on her farm near Muskogee.

"In a big house built of oak logs this Cherokee woman ruled her household like a real chatelaine. On the rich land were grown corn, oats, millet and some wheat, tobacco in a limited quantity, and cotton. There being no gins the cotton seeds had to be removed by hand before the lint could be carded and spun. There were peaches, apples, pears, plums, berries, grapes and melons grown on this farm.... Many vegetables were grown and while some of them were stored in the cellar, many were dried for winter consumption. Fruits were preserved with sugar and quantities were dried but no fruits or vegetables were canned.... Sheep were raised on the farm and their wool was utilized to spin cloth and for yarn from which socks and stockings were knit.... In winter... hogs were butchered for making sausage, hams and bacon.... When cattle were butchered parts of the animal were dried and proved very palatable when fresh meat was not available."

Henrietta managed the farm, but much of the work was done by slaves. The Cherokees held slaves and fought with the Confederacy during the Civil War. In retaliation, the Union troops burned the farms of many Cherokees, including that of Henrietta Vann. Hundreds of Cherokees headed south by wagon and ox cart to wait out the war in Texas. After the war they returned to their farms in Indian Territory.



JESSE CHISHOLM AND THE CHISHOLM TRAIL

Jesse Chisholm was an Indian trader, guide, and interpreter. He is famous for the Chisholm Trail, which ranchers used to drive their cattle from Texas to eastern markets in Kansas. Before the beginning of the Civil War, Chisholm had built several trading posts in what is now western Oklahoma. He never drove cattle on the trail named for him.

Chisholm's mother was a Cherokee. In the late 1820s he moved with her to the Cherokee Nation and settled near Fort Gibson. He became a trader and took trade goods west and south into Plains Indian country. He was fluent in 14 dialects, established small trading posts, and was soon in demand as a guide and interpreter. He was trusted by all for his fairness and neutrality.

He left the Cherokee Nation and settled in the Creek Nation, in what is now Hughes County. At various times he had trading posts on the edge of the Great Plains, including one near the site of Lexington (in what is now Cleveland County) and one at Council Grove (near what is now Oklahoma City). Much of his trading was done by taking wagons and going to the villages of the Comanche and other Great Plains tribes. At various times he rescued captive children and youths from the Comanches and Kiowas. He adopted them and reared them with his own family, treating them just as he did his own children.

In 1865, Chisholm and James R. Mead loaded a train of wagons at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and established a trading post at Council Grove on the North Canadian River, near the site of the Overholser Lake Dam in present Oklahoma City. Many of his Wichita friends followed. Their route became the Chisholm Trail, which connected Texas ranches with markets on the railroad in Kansas.

Chisholm died of food poisoning after eating rancid bear meat at Left Hand Spring, near the site of present Geary, on April 4, 1868.



BILL PICKETT BULLDOGGIN' COWBOY

Bill Pickett, Oklahoma cowboy, was the originator of a dazzling rodeo act called “bulldogging.” In his time, he was known as “the best bulldogger in the world.”

A descendant of South Carolina slaves, Bill was born and raised in central Texas. He was one of 13 children born to a family with a long history of cowboys’ ways. In movies and TV shows about the old West, cowboys are usually white. In real life, nearly one out of seven cowboys was an African American freed from slavery by the Civil War.

Bill didn’t go to school past the fifth grade. That was not unusual for a black child growing up in Texas in the early 1900s. Many children were not allowed in the schools because of their skin color. Instead, Bill concentrated on learning all he could about horses and ranch life. He would stand for hours studying the mannerisms of the cowboys as they swung their lariats to break horses and throw cattle down on the ground for branding.

One day in 1881, Bill watched in amazement as a bulldog bit a cow on its upper lip—and hung on! The cow stood perfectly still until the dog let go. A few days later, Bill decided he would use the dog’s trick to wrestle a cow to the ground. He grabbed the cow’s ears and bit down on her upper lip. With an easy flip, Bill threw the animal to the ground, all the time holding on with his teeth. The trick came to be known as “bulldogging” among the cowboys in the area, who used it as a way to get cattle to the ground for branding.

Bill began rodeo bulldogging after he got married, because he needed to earn extra money. His fame spread quickly, and on June 11, 1905, Bill went to work for the Miller Brothers 101 Wild West Show near Ponca City. The show’s name came from the fact that it was located 101 miles from Tulsa, 101 miles from Oklahoma City and 101 miles from Wichita, Kansas. Pickett’s bulldogging act was soon a featured attraction. Sometimes he did the act as many as three times a day. Pickett estimated that during his lifetime he bulldogged about 5,000 head of cattle.

One day in March, 1932, Bill and some other cowboys were gathering up some horses for a sale. A three-year-old unbroken gelding knocked Bill to the ground and kicked him in the head. He was rushed to a Ponca City hospital but never regained consciousness. On April 2, 1932, the man who invented bulldogging died. Bill Pickett is buried in the triangle pasture that once was part of the famous 101 Ranch.



JUAN CRUZ LUJAN AND THE PASTORES

In the mid-to late-19th Century sheep herders, or *pastores*, from New Mexico pastured their flocks in the western section of present Cimarron County. The area offered vast, continuous grasslands in the watersheds of the Cimarron, Beaver (North Canadian), and South Canadian Rivers. Playa lakes also dotted the landscape. The Santa Fe-Missouri trade route, which developed in the 1820s, crossed through the area. This connection provided New Mexicans with a market for wool and woven goods. In addition, breeding-stock sheep and sheep destined for slaughterhouses were driven from central New Mexico for sale in Kansas and Nebraska. Because of these activities, in the last half of the 19th Century numerous Hispanic communities, or *placitas*, developed near the trail's path through Cimarron county.

After spring lambing in east-central New Mexico, the *pastor*, or sheep herder, moved the herd eastward into the grasslands. In summer and autumn the flock covered a wide area through the grassy plains around the Cimarron and Canadian rivers and returned to the mountain valleys for the winter. Sheep needed grass but could survive without much water. The *pastores* established various "base camps," often building small houses and corrals of native stone, when available.

In 1885 Juan Cruz Lujan turned a sheep camp on Corrupa Creek into his own ranch. He was joined by his brothers Francisco, Lorenzo, and Alejandro, who came from Mora County, New Mexico. The Lujan ranch had a flat-roofed adobe house, a chapel, and beehive-shaped baking ovens, called *hornos*.

The descendants of the *pastores* continued to live and ranch in the Oklahoma Panhandle. The 1900 and 1910 US censuses recorded sizeable concentrations of Hispanic stock raisers, including the Lujans, in Harrison Township of Cimarron County. In 1899 a widely circulated newspaper report asserted that a "colony of three hundred New Mexicans" were raising sheep there, and approximately 125 individuals (25 surnames) are represented in the 1900 census. As late as 1920 and 1930 Juan Cruz Lujan still appeared in the census as a sheep rancher. He died in Cimarron County in 1943.

The Hispanic presence in Cimarron County is reflected in local place names that include Carrizo, Castañeda (at Wolf Mountain, on the Santa Fe Trail), Cimarron, Delfin, Hidalgo, and Nieto Junction. Geographical designations include Corrupa, Cienquilla, Tesesquite, Carrizozo, and Carrizo creeks, and Trujillo Springs. In the 20th Century some of the environment that served as pasture in the four-state area was preserved as the Rita Blanca National Grassland in Texas and Oklahoma, the Kiowa National Grassland in New Mexico, and the Comanche National Grassland in Kansas.



WILSON N. JONES: CHOCTAW CATTLE BARON

Although some members of the Choctaw tribe held slaves and sided with the South, Wilson N. Jones, remained neutral during the Civil War. At that time, Choctaw land was communal, which meant it belonged to all the Choctaws. Any member of the tribe could use it. Jones worked hard during the war and saved \$500, enough to set himself up with a farm on Shawnee Creek in Blue County (now Bryan County). Later he opened a mercantile business and got his start in the cattle business by accepting livestock in exchange for merchandise. By 1890 Jones was one of the wealthiest men in the Territory. He held 17,000 acres of Choctaw land. He farmed 550 acres and grazed cattle on the rest. He was known as the “Indian Cattle King of the Territory.” In addition to his cattle business and store, Jones had a cotton gin and investments in the coal business. The employees on Jones’ ranch were mostly full blood Indians. He was very popular with his employees.

Because individual tribal members could not hold title to tribal land, much of Indian Territory was a vast open range under constant dispute by armed competitors. Jones was one of a handful of “cattle barons” in Indian Territory who made and enforced their own regulations, surrounded by “armed retinues,” much like the characters in a western movie.

In 1892, Wilson N. Jones was elected principal chief of the Choctaw Nation. He fought to oppose the allotment of tribal land to individual tribal members because it would destroy the open range that had contributed to his success. Jones lost the fight in 1897 when the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations signed an agreement with the federal government to divide their land among all tribal members.



EDWARD P. MCCABE AND THE ALL BLACK TOWNS

Blacks first came to Indian Territory as slaves owned by members of the Five Civilized Tribes. The next Black migrations were the result of organized efforts by people like Edward P. McCabe. McCabe was an African American businessman who helped found the all-Black town of Langston and later the Colored Agricultural and Normal University (now Langston University).

McCabe and a partner began publication of the *Langston City Herald* in 1890. Copies of the paper were circulated throughout the South. Each issue included homesteading instructions to help immigrants understand the procedure before they arrived in Oklahoma Territory. McCabe advised homesteaders to come with enough money to support themselves for one year.

As a result of the advertisements Langston's population swelled to nearly 2,000 people in the weeks before the 1891 Sac and Fox opening. Approximately 1500 African Americans made the run from Langston. An estimated 1,000 secured land.

The first crops grown by African American homesteaders were subsistence crops of corn, sweet potatoes, turnips, peas, melons and beans. Black farmers also raised hogs for pork. They planted large orchards of peach, plum, apricot and apple trees. As they became more established, Black farmers produced enough eggs, butter, fruits and vegetables to sell to grocers in nearby towns. Peaches grew well in the area around Langston, and some Black farmers took advantage of new markets, both local and national. Other commercial crops were wheat, oats, hay and cow peas.

Edward P. McCabe went on to have some success in the politics of the new state, but he did not remain in Oklahoma. He sold his holdings and left for Chicago in 1908.



LAURA ELLA CREWS

Laura Ella Crews was born January 23, 1871, the sixth of seven children. Her father died in 1873 while the family was living in Kansas. The family staked claims in Oklahoma Territory in three land runs. Two of Laura's brothers and a brother-in-law made the first Land Run of 1889 and staked claims near Guthrie. Her brother and mother staked claims in the Sac and Fox-Iowa-Pottawatomie Land Run of 1891.

Laura had an adventurous spirit and tried to stake a claim in the 1892 Cheyenne-Arapaho Land Run. She was 21 and unmarried. It was unusual for a woman to stake a claim on her own, but not impossible. Under the Homestead Act, a widow, a female head of household, a woman deserted by her husband or an unmarried woman who was 21 and a US citizen could seek homestead.

Laura failed in her first attempt, but the next year she and her brother lined up for the Cherokee Strip Land Run and managed to stake adjoining claims halfway between Garber and Covington. They built a home overlapping both claims to meet "proving up" requirements. A homesteader had to be the head of a household or at least 21 years of age to claim a 160-acre parcel of land. Each homesteader had to live on the land, build a home, make improvements and farm for five years before they were eligible to "prove up".

Ella's homestead proved to be part of the Garber-Covington oil field. The production royalties enabled her and her family to move to Enid. She never married but raised her brother's six orphaned nieces and nephews.

Laura Crews lived to be 105 and was the last survivor of the Cherokee Strip Land Run. At age 100 she told her great-great nephew, "If I were younger, I'd like to homestead on the moon."



A.C. MAGRUDER AND THE MAGRUDER PLOTS

Professor A.C. Magruder is probably best known for the experimental winter wheat field plots that bear his name. He planted them in 1892 on the grounds of Oklahoma A&M College (now Oklahoma State University). They are the nation's oldest, continually-producing plots west of the Mississippi. They were established to evaluate wheat production on native prairie soils without fertilization. They are examples of long-term experiments. The plots became the center for wheat soil research in the region and provided constant data which helped farmers get maximum yield from their arid climates and naturally dry soils. The Magruder Plots were entered into the National Register of Historic Places in 1979.

Magruder came to Oklahoma A&M College (now Oklahoma State University) in 1891 at the age of 24, with a BS degree in agricultural science from Mississippi Agricultural College. He had also attended graduate school in Germany and worked for a short time at the West Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station. Magruder met groups of farmers in homes, barns, fields and pastures, providing science-proven recommendations and soliciting feedback through round table discussions. He spent many hours answering specific requests by mail.

In 1947 the plots were moved to make way for a new dormitory. University officials dispatched workers to carefully move the surface and immediate subsurface soils from six of the ten main plots to a location about one mile west, on the OSU agronomy farm. The reddish clay subsoil under the new location was similar to the subsoil under the original plot. The top eight inches of soil was removed with a bulldozer from an area of 100 feet in length near the center of each plot and was piled on each end of that plot. The subsurface soil from 8 to 16 inches was excavated and transferred to prepared trenches dug in a east-west direction on the agronomy farm. Studies conducted on the site after the move, when compared to similar studies conducted before, showed that moving the plots of soil did not significantly change their relative crop-producing capacities. No evidence has indicated that the move disturbed the soil or hindered the research value of the area, which continues to be used for its original purpose.



BERMUDA JOHN FIELDS

One of the first acts of the legislature of the Oklahoma Territory was to establish an agricultural college in Stillwater. Iowa-born John Fields was one of the first two assistant professors. In 1899 he was appointed first director of the Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station. The purpose of the Experiment Station was to conduct experiments to help Oklahoma farmers.

Fields was a very good speaker. For the next several years he became the most familiar figure in Oklahoma associated with agriculture. He was one of the authors of a territorial law passed in 1905 making the teaching of agriculture in the public schools mandatory. The next year the Oklahoma Constitutional Convention included a provision in the new constitution for the compulsory “teaching of the elements of agriculture, horticulture, stock feeding and domestic science.”

Fields was responsible for popularizing and distributing Bermuda grass in the state. This all purpose pasture and lawn grass made its appearance in Oklahoma around the turn of the century. Fields gathered the available information on the grass and planted it on the college farm in 1900. He sodded the campus with it, pastured livestock on it and published an experiment station bulletin on the subject. As late as 1903, some farmers still believed the plant to be harmful to livestock. To overcome their worries, Fields raised and shipped Bermuda grass roots to all who would pay the shipping costs. He was very happy when important citizens, such as former governor Thompson B. Ferguson of Watonga, requested Bermuda grass for their lawns. The giveaway brought the grass and Fields a great deal of publicity. By June, 1906, roots had been shipped to more than 600 farmers, and some were calling Fields “Bermuda John.”

In 1906 Fields resigned from the experiment station to become editor of the *Oklahoma Farm Journal*. He ran for governor in 1922 but was defeated by his opponent, John Walton.



LUCILLE MULHALL: THE FIRST COWGIRL

As a small child, Lucille Mulhall rode her pony over her father's large ranch in Oklahoma Territory. She learned to rope and tie a steer and to shoot a rifle. Her teachers were the men who rode herd in the cattle drives of the Old West.

By the time she was seven, Lucille had her own herd of cattle. Her father had promised she could have all the yearlings she could rope and brand herself. He soon had to get out of this bargain because Lucille had claimed too many calves.

Lucille got her start in show business as the star of her father's "Congress of Rough Riders and Ropers" at the 1899 St. Louis World's Fair. The show also featured the young Will Rogers.

After she threw and tied a steer at an El Paso roping, the rodeo crowd went wild and swarmed over her, trying to tear her clothes to see if she was really a girl. Her brother had to rescue her.

She was among the first women to compete in roping and riding events against men and earned such titles as "Champion Lady Steer Roper of the World" at the Winnipeg Stampede. She starred in "Mulhall's Wild West," the "Miller Brothers' 101 Ranch Wild West Show," and in "Vaudeville." In 1913 she formed her own troupe. In 1916 she produced her own rodeo, Lucille Mulhall's Roundup.

Lucille Mulhall's popularity was due to her skill, the result of perfect timing with her rope, unusual balance on her horse, and her small size and ladylike behavior. She was inducted into the Rodeo Hall of Fame in 1975 and National Cowgirl Hall of Fame in 1977.



JOHN KROUTIL: YUKON MILLS

John Kroutil immigrated from Czechoslovakia with his parents in 1881. The family first settled in Nebraska before coming to Oklahoma Territory in 1890. John and his brother Frank purchased the Yukon Mill and Grain Company in 1902.

Other Czechs had migrated to the young territory in the land runs of the 1890s, north from Texas and south from Nebraska and Kansas. Because many had been wheat farmers in their native country, they grew wheat in the new land and were happy to take their grain to the Kroutil brothers, where they could do business in their native tongue.

Milling was an important industry in the early years of statehood. In 1910 the flour milling industry was by far the most productive. There were 295 plants and 842 workers. Total sales were \$19 million of the state's \$53 million industrial output. Yukon Mill and Grain Company was among the most successful, along with Shawnee Mills, owned by J. Lloyd Ford.

John Kroutil served as president of the Yukon Mill and Grain Company until his death in 1954. In 1912, he and his brother opened the Yukon National Bank. John Kroutil also served as president of the Yukon Electric Company, which was formed in 1907 after a steam-powered electric generating plant was built near the mill.

For his philanthropy and business leadership Kroutil was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame in 1933. On June 12, 1954, he died of a heart attack on his farm near Piedmont, Oklahoma.



BEN MARSHALL AND HIS PRIZE PEACHES

Porter, Oklahoma, is well-known in Oklahoma for its peaches, and that all started with Ben Marshall. Marshall was the son of a wealthy and prominent mixed-blood Creek who brought 19 slaves with him when he came west from Alabama in 1835 and settled at the fork of the Verdigris and Arkansas Rivers.

Ben was born in 1866 on his father's farm. He attended Tullahassee Mission and then went on to Carlisle in Pennsylvania, a college for Indian students. The famous athlete Jim Thorpe also attended Carlisle.

When Ben returned home he poured his energy into farming. He raised hundreds of acres of corn and cotton, cattle and hogs, and his operation was known as one of the finest farms in Indian Territory.

In 1890 he planted a peach orchard, the first in the area, about five miles southeast of Porter. The orchard was a great success. In 1904 Ben took his peaches to the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis. The peaches were highly acclaimed at the World's Fair and were awarded a Gold Medal for their quality. Peaches emerged as a major cash crop in the area after that and have been an economic mainstay ever since.



WILLIAM BENTLEY AND THE AG DEMONSTRATION TRAINS

Cotton was Oklahoma's number one crop at the time of statehood, just as it was throughout the South. A few years earlier the cotton crop had been threatened by an invasion of the boll weevil, an insect pest from Mexico that destroyed crops in Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas. Because cotton was so important to the US economy, the US Congress set aside money to investigate ways to stop the boll weevil. The US Department of Agriculture appointed Seamon Knapp to be in charge of the investigation. Knapp believed farmers needed to change the way they farmed. He thought the best way to convince them was through farming demonstrations.

One of the farmers Knapp hired to conduct these demonstrations was William Bentley, a successful fruit farmer from Wichita Falls, Texas. Bentley had used diversification and careful management to become one of the most successful farmers in his county. Agricultural demonstration trains carried Bentley and other demonstrators, who conducted meetings in the leading towns along the railroad line. The demonstrators organized institutes at each stop and gave lectures on a variety of farm topics. This was the first of what was to become the Extension Service.

As one of the first six Extension agents in the nation, Bentley spent long days riding from farm to farm signing up farmers to demonstrate the techniques he was teaching. The first programs consisted of instruction in seed purity, deep plowing, frequent shallow cultivation and growing of all home supplies. Demonstration trains were part of Extension work for the next 10 years. In 1907, Bentley was appointed to extend his work into Oklahoma. He retired 25 years later as the first director of the Oklahoma Extension Service. Along the way he and his agents also started 4-H clubs in Oklahoma.



ANNIE PETERS: HOME DEMONSTRATION AGENT

Boley, Oklahoma, was incorporated in 1905 as Boley, Creek Nation, Indian Territory, before Oklahoma became a state in November 1907. In the early 20th century, Boley was the largest predominantly Black town in the US. Booker T. Washington declared it “the most enterprising and in many ways the most interesting of the Negro towns in the US.” In 1912, with a population of 4,000, the town had five grocery stores, five hotels, seven restaurants, four cotton gins, three drugstores, a jewelry store, four department stores, two insurance companies, photographer studios, and an ice plant. It had the first black-owned bank and electric company in the state.

Annie Peters, with her husband, William H. Peters, was a Boley pioneer. She would become the first federally-appointed Black home-demonstration agent in the country. She began her home demonstration career in 1912, two years before the Smith-Lever Act established federal funding for the program, and paved the way for other home-demonstration educators.

Educational programs were needed for both the Black farmer and his wife. Wives were considered business partners. Most homes at that time did not have electricity, running water, refrigeration, or a reliable source of heat. Annie Peters was hired to help Black farm families become self-sufficient by teaching them to raise gardens and preserve enough food to get them to the next growing season.

Although food conservation was the chief line of work of home demonstration agents, they also taught rural women to make or install a variety of labor-saving devices, including fireless cookers, iceless refrigerators, home water systems and more.

Annie first worked with girls through canning clubs. Her instructions for canning demonstrations remained in use until the 1940s. Although the implements were unsophisticated, the procedure was moderately efficient. Her canning method was copied in churches and schools and spread to the homes of many Black families as well.



JOHN SIMPSON: A RADICAL VOICE FOR FARMERS

The Farmers Union movement started in Texas in 1902 and quickly moved into Oklahoma and Indian Territories. Some of the goals of the union were to help farmers get fairness in mortgage and credit practices, to help them get fair prices for their crops and to promote the use of science in agriculture. In 1905 the Indian Territory Farmer's Union requested the first study of soils ever made by the US Department of Agriculture. The state union played an important part in drafting the Oklahoma constitution. Union leadership represented almost half the elected delegates and was responsible for the election of "Alfalfa Bill" Murray as convention president. Murray was an organizing member of the Oklahoma Farmers Union.

Enrollment in the union dropped dramatically after statehood, partly because of the union's objections to US involvement in World War I. When the US did enter the war, groups that had been opposed were called unpatriotic and cowardly.

John Simpson was a teacher, lawyer and banker who migrated from Kansas to Oklahoma Territory to become a farmer. In 1914, after serving one term in the Oklahoma House of Representatives, Simpson joined the Oklahoma Farmers Union. Two years later he was elected president.

In his 16 years as president Simpson helped revive the organization with his outspoken speeches. He criticized federal officials for setting prices for farm goods during the war. He was convinced farmers were being cheated. After the war Simpson organized more than 110 farm cooperatives to help farmers join together to get fair prices. His other accomplishments included establishing the Farmers Union Insurance Company and the *Oklahoma Union Farmer* as the official state newspaper for the union. Under his direction the Oklahoma Farmers Union became the largest state organization in the nation. In 1930 Simpson was elected president of the national Farmers Union.



JOSEPH DANNE

Joseph Danne was a self-taught plant geneticist who developed a variety of wheat well-suited to Oklahoma and the Southern Plains. The son of German immigrant parents, Danne moved to Kingfisher County in 1893. He received eight years of formal education before purchasing a farm in Beckham County at age 23. He studied the inheritance laws of Gregor Mendel and conducted genetic research, combining different strains of wheat to create new genetic hybrids.

The result was Triumph Wheat, a 13-year research project conducted between Sweetwater and Sayre in Beckham County. In 1924 and 1925 he combined two locally-grown selections from Turkey wheat with a lesser-known white wheat type from Australia. This produced a rare hybrid uniquely adapted to Oklahoma's growing conditions. It had shorter and stronger straw to withstand prairie winds and it matured early enough to escape Oklahoma's hot summers. It also had milling and baking characteristics that were favored by the milling and baking industries. Triumph was released in 1940. It was the first widely-grown wheat born in, and bred for, the Southern Plains.



FRED HOEME: THE CHISEL PLOW

Fred Hoeme was a farmer living near Hooker during the Dust Bowl era. Like many farmers during that time, he was concerned about wind erosion. Common plowing practices were part of the problem because of their tendency to blow the soil around. Hoeme noticed that equipment used to maintain roads kicked up dirt clods instead of dust. Inspired by this realization, he invented a different kind of plow, the chisel plow. Hoeme's plow helped stabilize the soil by leaving the residue of previous crops exposed. This method also encouraged the soil to take in and hold rainwater because it prevented the formation of surface crust.

Hoeme and his sons manufactured and sold about 2,000 plows from their farmstead. In 1938 W.T. Graham bought the rights to make and sell the plows. Graham modified the plow and advertised it as the Graham-Hoeme Plow, the "Plow to save the Plains." It was sold worldwide. By the 1950s, about half of all Great Plains farmers owned chisel plows. The widespread use helped control wind erosion during the seven-year drought of the 50s. In 2000 a plaque was installed in Hoeme's honor at the Williams Homesteaders Park in Hooker.



ROY TURNER: HAZFORD RUPERT 81ST

Roy Turner was governor of Oklahoma from 1947 to 1951, but he may have been more famous for his prize bull, Hazford Rupert the 81st.

Hazford Rupert 81st was the 1936 international champion and the nation's first "million dollar bull." Featured in various articles in *Time* and *Life* magazines, the bull in its lifetime produced hundreds of descendants valued at well over \$1 million.

Turner was born near Kendrick in 1894. He built his ranch near Sulphur with royalties from his oil-rich land. Turner's ranch along with other ranches in the areas were called "Hereford Heaven" because they produced some of the most important sires and dams in the national Hereford registry. In 1963 Turner sold his ranch to Winthrop Rockefeller.

Governor Turner built highways (including Turner Turnpike) and farm-to-market roads, consolidated some small school districts, and secured passage of a common school bill that provided free text books. President Harry Truman asked Turner to become secretary of agriculture in 1949, but Turner declined the offer. While governor of Oklahoma and after leaving office, Turner sponsored livestock exhibitions and judging contests for 4-H Clubs and Future Farmers of America.

Turner's hobby was writing and singing country and western songs. One of his songs was named for the area of Oklahoma in which his ranch was located, Hereford Heaven.



LLOYD NOBLE

In 1921, at the age of 24, Lloyd Noble borrowed \$15,000 from his mother to buy his first oil drilling rig. From this first purchase, he became one of the most successful and respected onshore drilling contractors in the United States.

As Noble's success in the oil business grew, he became more involved in Oklahoma's political and cultural activities. His greatest love lay with stewardship of the land. Noble owned three ranches in Carter County. He regularly flew in and out of Ardmore to manage his businesses. From the air he could see the erosion and other effects resulting from poor farming practices in Oklahoma and north Texas.

Noble regarded the land as very important to the future growth, prosperity and security of our country. In 1945 he formed the Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation. He named the foundation after his father, who he said was the most generous man he had ever known. The primary purpose of the foundation was to help farmers and ranchers preserve and restore their land through research and educational programs. The Noble family still operates the foundation.



ROBERT S. KERR AND RIVER NAVIGATION

Robert S Kerr was born to tenant farmers in the Chickasaw Nation, Indian Territory. In 1929 he established Anderson-Kerr Drilling Company with his brother-in-law. Six years later he began a collaboration with Phillips Petroleum Company that introduced him to geologist Dean A. McGee and led to the establishment of Kerr-McGee Oil Industries.

Kerr was elected Oklahoma's first native-born governor in 1942 and was elected to the US Senate in 1948. He helped secure funding for the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System, a 445-mile long system with 18 locks and dams, that creates a staircase on the Arkansas from the Mississippi River to the Port of Catoosa near Tulsa.

Commercial river navigation on the Arkansas got its start in 1824. The Florence was the first steamboat to navigate the river to Fort Gibson. Service on the Arkansas expanded as emigrant tribesmen established farms and plantations. Steamships carried people and agricultural commodities from 22 landings along the Arkansas in Indian Territory into the commerce of the Mississippi River valley and on to New Orleans. Returning steamers brought passengers and goods to frontier villages and farmsteads. However, as railroads expanded into eastern Indian Territory, commercial traffic on the Arkansas River diminished.

The McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System was the result of many years' effort by various groups to restore navigation on the Arkansas. From 1971 to 1990 an average of 7.6 million tons of commerce was carried on the system. At the end of the 20th Century sand, gravel, and rock registered as the largest percentage of the commodities shipped along the channel. The system provides an important transportation link for agriculture. Cargo includes chemical fertilizers, wheat, soybeans, and other agricultural products.

Robert S. Kerr died in 1963, eight years before the completion of the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System in 1971.





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