

Boomer Sooner! The Run for Land in Oklahoma

Dannell (Danni) Altman-Newell ◆ Talking Box Genealogy
danni@talkingboxgenealogy.com ◆ <https://talkingboxgenealogy.com>

(All website addresses were current as of 08/20/2022)

Overview

Depicted in various popular culture mediums ranging from books to movies, the Oklahoma Land Run of 1889 heralded the opening of the Unassigned Lands in Oklahoma for settlement. The decision to open this area for settlement had a history of its own, stretching over approximately a 20-year period, which eventually led to the official opening of the Unassigned Lands for settlement. The events that ensued changed the United States forever. There were a total of four additional land runs held in Oklahoma, each dissecting a different piece of the Unassigned Lands and each creating records which can provide genealogists with detailed information about the people and land involved.

History

Oklahoma is a federal-land (public-domain) state, where unclaimed land was surveyed, then granted or sold by the government through federal and state land offices. Individuals could acquire land from the government through cash purchases or by homesteading the land. Claims had to be registered at land offices. After land was distributed to private ownership, subsequent transactions, including deeds and mortgages, were recorded by the county.

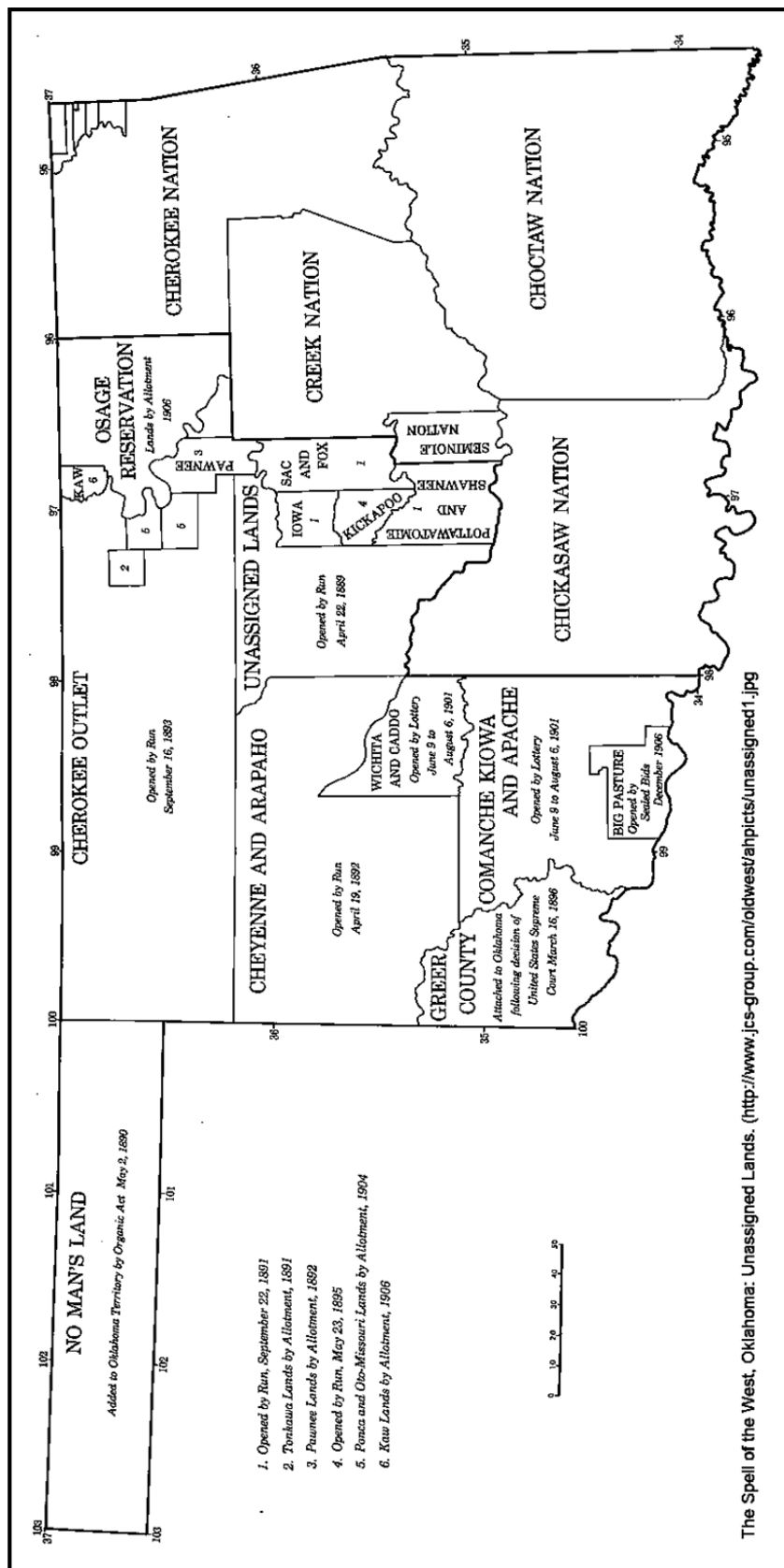
Oklahoma Land Offices:

- Guthrie (1889)
- Beaver (1891)
- Perry (1893)
- El Reno (1901)
- Kingfisher (1889)
- Alva (1893)
- Woodward (1893)
- Lawton (1901)
- Oklahoma City (1890)
- Enid (1893)
- Mangum (1897)

Resources

- **Land entry case files:** held at National Archives and Records Administration (Washington, DC)
- **Introduction and Links to Resources on Land Entry Case Files and Related Records** (<https://www.archives.gov/research/land>): how to do research in Land Entry Case Files at the National Archives
- **Original tract books and township plats of general land offices:** held at Bureau of Land Management (Santa Fe, NM)
- **Bureau of Land Management General Land Office Records** (<https://glorerecords.blm.gov/>): online access to Federal land records for the Public Land States
- **Local land office records:** held at Oklahoma Department of Libraries (<https://libraries.ok.gov/>), State Archives Division (Oklahoma City, OK)
- **Oklahoma Digital Prairie** (<https://digitalprairieok.net/>): electronic library provided by the Oklahoma Department of Libraries which includes state collections containing documents, photographs, newspapers, maps, audio/visual content, and more

- **Oklahoma County Plats, 1889** (<https://www.okhistory.org/research/plat1889>): index of names extracted from *US land patents homesteads: Oklahoma County, Oklahoma Territory Land Run of April 22, 1889* (lists only those who received the final certificate for their land)
- **The Gateway to Oklahoma History** (<https://gateway.okhistory.org/>): an online repository of Oklahoma history from the Oklahoma Historical Society
- **Cherokee Strip Regional Heritage Center** (<http://www.csrhc.org/>): Oklahoma museum focusing on the settlement and development of Northwest Oklahoma, beginning with the Land Run of 1893
- **The Chronicles of Oklahoma** (<https://www.okhistory.org/publications/chronicles>): official journal of the OHS; many issues contain articles about the different land runs
- **Family Search Wiki: Oklahoma Land and Property** (https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Oklahoma_Land_and_Property)
- **Oklahoma Territorial Museum and Carnegie Library** (<https://www.okterritorialmuseum.org/>): museum focusing on Oklahoma Territorial history with documents pertaining to the creation of the Unassigned Lands, the Land Run of 1889, and the homestead experience
- **City Directories**
 - **Oklahoma Historical Society: *Smith's First Directory of Oklahoma Territory For the Year Commencing August 1, 1890*** (<https://www.okhistory.org/research/smiths>): a searchable database of *Smith's First Directory of Oklahoma Territory for the Year Commencing August 1, 1890*
- **Census Records**
 - Online (Ancestry, HeritageQuest, Family Search, etc.)
 - Libraries (microfilm or online access via library subscription)
 - National Archives
- **County and City Histories**
- **Newspapers**
 - Family Search Wiki: United States Newspapers (https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/United_States_Newspapers)
 - Library of Congress – Chronicling America, Historic American Newspapers
 - Genealogy Bank, Newspapers.com, Newspaper Archive, Ancestry
- **Oklahoma GenWeb** (<http://www.okgenweb.net/>)
- **Western History Collections at the University of Oklahoma Libraries system** (<https://libraries.ou.edu/content/western-history-collections-o>): a search for “land rush” will provide a number of different results from books to photographs to special collections
- **All Black Towns of Oklahoma Map, Created by the Oklahoma Historical Society, OHS** (<https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/viewer?entry=AL009&id=26000#page/0/mode/1up>)
- **U.S. Statutes at Large, Volume 26 (1890-1891), 51st Congress**, (<https://www.loc.gov/item/llsl-v26/>): PDF of the act which created Oklahoma from the Library of Congress (the Oklahoma Organic Act begins on the bottom of page 81).



1889 (1st run)

- Unassigned lands

8 May 1890

- The Oklahoma Organic Act of 1889 added the Oklahoma panhandle to the territory and opened it for settlement

22 September 1891 (2nd run)

- Iowa
- Sac & Fox
- Pottawatomie-Shawnee

19 April 1892 (3rd run)

- Cheyenne
- Arapaho

16 September 1893 (4th run)

- Pawnee
- Tonkawa
- Cherokee Outlet

25 May 1895 (5th run)

- Kickapoo

1896

- Supreme Court returns Greer County lands to Oklahoma from Texas

6 August 1901 (auction)

- Wichita-Caddo
- Comanche-Kiowa-Apache

3 December 1906 thru 15 December 1906 (auction)

- "Big Pasture" land in Oklahoma Territory

Select Bibliography

- 1889: The Boomer Movement, the Land Run, and Early Oklahoma City (Michael J. Hightower)
- Historical Atlas of Oklahoma (John Wesley Morris, Charles R. Goins, and Edwin C. McReynolds)
- Boundaries of Oklahoma (edited by John W. Morris)
- The Oklahoma Land Rush of 1889 (Stan Hoig)
- A Gazetteer of Indian Territory (Henry A. Gannett)
- Birth of Guthrie: Oklahoma's Run of 1889 and Life in Guthrie in 1889 and the 1890s (Lloyd H. McGuire)
- Oklahoma Place Names (George H. Shirk)
- Smith's First Directory of Oklahoma Territory For the Year Commencing August 1, 1890 (James W. Smith, publisher)
- The Cherokee Strip: Its History & Grand Opening (D. Earl Newsom)
- "Voices from the Land Run of 1889," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 67 (Brad Agnew)
- Black Heritage of Oklahoma (Gene Aldrich)
- "Registers, Receivers, and Entrymen: U.S. Land Office Administration in Oklahoma Territory, 1889–1907," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* (Gordon Moore)
- It Happened in Oklahoma (Robert L. Dorman)
- David L. Payne: The Oklahoma Boomer (Stan Hoig)
- Land Hunger: David L. Payne and the Oklahoma Boomers (Carl Coka Rister)
- Boom Town: The Fantastical Saga of Oklahoma City, its Chaotic Founding... (Sam Anderson)
- Indomitable Oklahoma Women (Opal Hartsell Brown)
- Journey Toward Hope: A History of Blacks in Oklahoma (Jimmie Lewis Franklin)
- Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries (Arrell M. Gibson)
- Contested Territory: Whites, Native Americans, and African Americans in Oklahoma (Murray R. Wickett)
- The Cherokee Strip: A Tale of an Oklahoma Boyhood (James Marquis)
- Oklahoma City, from Public Land to Private Property (Berlin B. Chapman)
- The Formation of the State of Oklahoma, 1803–1906 (Roy Gittinger)

Additional Oklahoma resources can be found on my website at
<https://talkingboxgenealogy.com/resources-and-reading/>