

In November of 1886 Big Jim and his followers were forcibly removed from the Kickapoo Reservation where they had been living for ten years. Their houses were burned and their improvements were destroyed. The winter of 1886-87 was thus a hard winter, as these Shawnees had to live in make-shift houses and under conditions of hardship. The government had agreed to provide the Indians with canvas for making tents, but the canvas did not arrive until the following May.

The Dawes Severalty Act was passed in 1887 by Congress, as the first step in breaking up Indian Reservation life in Indian Territory. The Dawes Act provided that lands belonging to certain Indian tribes should be allotted in severalty. Another important congressional act passed this same year provided for the creation of a government commission to treat directly with the Indians for the purchase of their surplus lands. ~~This commission was known as the Cherokee Commission or~~ Jerome Commission. Soon the Cherokee Commission began negotiation with the Shawnee and Potawatomie tribes for purchase of their surplus tribal lands after individual members were given allotments.

During this time the two Absentee Shawnee groups, the Big Jim and the White Turkey bands, remained divided on the issue of allotment. Big Jim and Sam warrior were adamant against allotment. They did not want to break up the reservation or give up any portion of their traditional ways. They refused to give out the names of their people for the preparation of allotment rolls, and were uncooperative in every way possible. Between November of 1886 and 1889 the Big Jim band was living among the White Turkeys on the south side of the North Canadian. By 1889 they had built comfortable log houses and had small fields and growing orchards. But as allotment drew near, Big Jim moved with his people to the sand hills in the western part of the reservation. His idea was that the white people would not care for this land and that here, among the blackjacks and sand hills his people could live as they pleased.

However allotment proceeded anyway. The White Turkey group, or Progressives, accepted their allotments. Although Big Jim would not permit officials to come and prepare a list of allottees for his group, Thomas Wildcat Alford managed to get a list through a young woman who knew all the people in Big Jim's group. The allotments were thus made in spite of the opposition.

In this allotment each head of a family received 160 acres of agricultural land or double that of grazing land. Each child under 18 received 40 acres of agricultural land or 80 acres of grazing land. Married women did not receive allotments unless they demanded it. Then they got half or what would have gone to the husband as head of the family.

Big Jim and his followers reacted to the last. Thomas Wildcat Alford worked with the allotting crews as axman, flagman, and then chairman. Then he became a full surveyor. He reported that Big Jim and his people pulled up the corner stakes as fast as he put them down.

Changes were coming swiftly to this region of Indian Territory. In April of 1889 the Unassigned lands just west of the Shawnee and Potawatomie Reservation were opened to white settlement. This was the first of the Oklahoma land runs. On June 25 and 26 the Cherokee Commission got agreements from the Potawatomies and Shawnees for allotting land to each family and then ceding the tribal lands and open the surplus to white settlement. The Indians were paid money in per capita shares as the purchase price of these surplus lands. After all the Shawnees and Potawatomies were allotted there were 275,000 acres left. This was opened to white settlement by run on September 22, 1891. All this land became part of Oklahoma Territory.