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Townsites--Indian Territory
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The Founding Of Weleetka,
Okfuskee County, Oklahoma
Story from
E. W. James, Weleetka, Oklahoma

The townsite of Weleetka, then Indian Territory was opened February 10, 1902. The idea of establishing a town here was originated with three newspaper men, George F. Clarke, manager of the Vinita Leader, O. W. Meacham, a printer employed by Mr. Clarke, and Lake Moore, who was publishing a paper at Fairland, Indian Territory.

They first surveyed and platted the present site of Henryetta, but they did not have any legal method of securing title to land for townsites and the three had a great deal of legal difficulty.

However, the three received information that the Fort Smith and Western would build from Fort Smith to Guthrie and the crossing of the Frisco would be made known to them.

The three decided to open a townsite at this point, and it was ascertained that the intersection was on the allotment of Martha Lowe, a full blood Creek Indian, now deceased, and also was farmed by Ira Starnes, now deceased. The three moved to Weleetka and boarded with Mr. and Mrs. Starnes. An agreement was made with Martha Lowe and her husband, Alex Lowe, to townsite occupancy rights, as this was the only way a shadow of title could be obtained. The agreement called

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for the payment of a considerable sum in cash. Clarke and Moore had the cash or credit sufficient so they were compelled to find a partner who could finance the arrangement. It was at this time that John Jacobs, a young Creek, in the hardware business in Holdenville, joined the deal.

Mr. Jacobs arranged matters with the First National Bank at Holdenville and the three signed a note and made the necessary payments to Martha Lowe.

The platting of the townsite was started at once, and C. M. Lawrence, a civil engineer did the work and agreed to take his pay from town lot sales.

About two miles south was the little town of Alabama, the nearest stop that the Frisco made. The principal store was owned and operated by A. C. D. Bullington and P. E. Standley, brothers-in-law, both of whom later became friends of the new town and moved their store to Eleetka.

The platting of the town was completed, the stakes set and the opening day announced. Clarke and Moore left Holdenville to come to their new townsite location. Their advertisement had brought homeseekers and investors from all over the country. They were expecting many lot sales and much cash.

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When they reached the townsite they found that two tents had been erected in a little cleared field about the center of the surveyed area. Around the tents were a group of armed men who had jumped their claim. These men warned Clarke and Moore off the property, their words being displayed by six-shooters and rifles. The leader was O. A. Morton, a mixed blood Creek Indian, who afterwards became a lawyer, practicing in Newokta and later in Tulsa.

U. S. Commissioner Fate issued the warrants for O. A. Morton and the others, after he heard the story of what had happened. A deputy went back with Clarke and Moore to make the arrests and warrants were read. Morton submitted to the arrest with the provision that he and his friends were to be free until the evening train to Goldenville. He wanted to get in touch with his attorney, N. A. Gibson of Muskogee and arrange to defend himself when the case came up at Newokta.

When all were assembled at the Alabama station, a mediator whose name is not known made arrangements whereby these would-be claim jumpers were set free. Morton was to receive some lots and cash to be paid out of the townsite

sale.

On February 10, 1902, a large crowd was present when the Rev. H. H. Cronk acted as the auctioneer. The opening was a success, the proceeds being enough to pay off Morton, Martha Lowe, the Goldenville bank note, and the incidental expenses.

The next morning the townsite was a scene of feverish excitement and activity. The First National Bank of Weleetka, now State National Bank, opened for business; Brother Cronk opened a restaurant; H. B. Catlett and George Clarkson opened another bank. Joe Northrip was at work building a telephone exchange.

Soon brick, stone and frame structures were being erected all over town. The title at first was the occupancy lease but in later years the allottees made deeds approved by the Secretary of the Interior to B. C. Sims as trustee for the lot owners, and through him warranty deeds were made.

When the townsite was laid out Miss Alice Robertson, one of Oklahoma's greatest women and who had worked among the Indians all her life, requested Mr. Moore to give the town an Indian name in order, as she expressed it, "to carry

on the Indian tradition in the great new state coming."

The credit of the name goes to John Jacobs, one of the partners in the townsite promotion. Mr. Moore asked Jacobs to suggest an Indian name, suitable for the new town. Jacobs wrote out several names and among the names was eleetka, which means "Running water." The name appealed to Mrs. Moore who was present and suggested its adoption.

The town grew rapidly and soon became one of the leading towns of this section of the territory.