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James R. Carselowey,
Interviewer,
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"THE DAWES COMMISSION"

Back in 1893 President Grover Cleveland appointed the first commission to the Five Civilized Tribes, commonly known as the Dawes Commission. When first appointed, its members were composed of former Senator Henry L. Dawes, of Massachusetts, Meredith H. Kidd, Indiana, and Archibald S. McKennon, of Arkansas. Its work was to persuade the citizens of each of the Five Civilized Tribes to give up their tribal government, and to take individual allotments of land. Their task was a difficult one, as there was much opposition to allotment of lands among all of the tribes, but in 1897 all of the Five Civilized Tribes finally signed agreements with the Government, and in 1898 the Curtis Act, a bill providing for the allotment of land to the Five Civilized Tribes, passed Congress.

ALLOTMENT OF LANDS

The Curtis Act made many changes in the governments of the Indian Territory. Among its important provisions were: the abolition of tribal courts, a roll of Indian citizens to be prepared by the Dawes Commission, and each

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individual given an allotment of land; tribal governments to be continued for eight years longer and placing of all Indian schools of the Indian Territory under the control of a Federal superintendent.

At this time the personnel of the Dawes Commission had been changed, and was composed of the following members: Henry L. Dawes, Tams Bixby, A. S. McKennon, and T. B. Needles.

The first official act of the Dawes Commission, to carry out the provisions of the Curtis Act, was to prepare a final roll of all Indian Citizens, and they caused the following notice to be published giving their schedule for the Cherokee Nation.

CHEROKEE ENROLLMENT
Final Census By Dawes Commission
begins May 14, 1900.

The Commission to the five civilized tribes will be at the places on the date named below, during the year 1900, for the purpose of taking the census of Cherokee Citizens.

Heads of families may enroll the members of their families, and minor children who make their homes with them. Guardians may enroll their wards.

Bennett: From Monday, May 14, to Friday, May 18, inclusive. Illinois: From Monday, May 21, to Friday, May

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25, inclusive. Tahlequah: From Monday, May 28, to Friday, June 8, inclusive. Rose: From Monday, June 11, to Friday, June 15, inclusive. Spavinaw: From Monday, June 18, to Friday, June 22, inclusive. Grove: Monday, June 25, to Friday, June 29, inclusive. Fairland: From Monday, July 9, to Friday, July 13, inclusive. Westville: From Monday, July 16, to Friday, July 20, inclusive. Stillwell: From Monday, July 23, to Friday, July 27, inclusive. Bunch: From Monday, July 30, to Friday, August 3, inclusive. Sallisaw: From Monday, August 6, to Friday, August 10, inclusive. Muldrow: From Monday, August 13, to Friday, August 17, inclusive. Fort Gibson: From Monday, August 20, to Friday, August 31, inclusive. Pryor Creek: From Monday, September 10, to Friday, September 14, inclusive. Vinita: From Monday, September 17, to Friday, September 28, inclusive. Welch: From Monday, October 1, to Friday, October 5, inclusive. Bartlesville: From Monday, October 8, to Friday, October 12, inclusive. Nowata: From Monday, October 15, to Friday, October 19, inclusive. Oologah: From Monday, October 22, to Friday, October 26, inclusive. Claremore: From Monday, October 29, to Friday, November 9, inclusive. Catoosa: From Monday, November 12, to Friday, November 16, inclusive.

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Chelsea: From Monday, November 19, to Friday, November 23, inclusive.

This work is done preparatory to making final rolls of the Cherokee citizens, under provisions of the act of Congress, approved June 29, 1898, viz: That in making rolls of citizenship of the several tribes, as required by law, the commission to the Five Civilized Tribes is authorized and directed to take the roll of Cherokee citizens of eighteen hundred and eighty, (not including freedmen) as the only roll to be confirmed by this and preceding acts of Congress, and to enroll all persons now living, whose names are found on said roll, and all descendants born, since the date on said roll, to persons whose names are found thereon; and all persons who have been enrolled by the tribal authorities, who have heretofore made permanent settlement in the Cherokee Nation, whose parents by reason of their Cherokee blood have been lawfully admitted to citizenship, by the tribal authorities, and who were minors when their parents were admitted; and they shall investigate the rights of all other persons whose names are found on any other rolls; and omit all such as may have been placed thereon by fraud, or without authority of law, enrolling only

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such as may have lawful right thereto, and their descendants who were born since such rolls were made, with such intermarried white persons as may be entitled to citizenship, under Cherokee Laws.

It shall make a roll of Cherokee freedmen in strict compliance with the decree of the court of claims rendered the third day of February, eighteen hundred and ninety-six.

Said commission shall make such rolls descriptive of the persons thereon, so that they may be thereby identified, and it is authorized to take a census of said tribes, or to adopt any other means by them decreed necessary to enable them to make such rolls. They shall have access to all rolls and records of the several tribes, and the United States court in Indian Territory shall have jurisdiction to compel the officers of the tribal governments, and custodians of such rolls and records to deliver same to said commission, and on their refusal to do so, to punish them as for contempt; as also to require all citizens of said tribes and persons who should be enrolled, to appear before said commission for enrollment at such times and places as may be fixed by said commission, and to enforce obedience to all others concerned, so far as the same may be necessary, to enable said commission

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to make rolls as herein required, and to punish anyone, who may in any manner, or by any means, obstruct said work.

No person shall be enrolled who has not heretofore removed to and in good faith settled in the nation to which he claims citizenship.

The rolls so made, when approved by the Secretary of the Interior, shall be final, and the persons whose names are found thereon, with their descendants thereafter born to them, with such persons as may inter-marry, according to tribal laws, shall alone constitute the several tribes which they represent.

The members of said commission shall, in performing all the duties required of them by law, have authority to administer oaths, examine witnesses, and send for persons and papers; and any person who shall wilfully and knowingly make any false affidavit, or oath to any material fact, or matter before any member of said commission, or before any other officer authorized to administer oaths, to any affidavit or other paper, to be filed, or oath taken before said commission, shall be deemed guilty of perjury, and on conviction thereof shall be punished as for such offense.

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Henry L. Dawes

Tams Bixby

A. S. McKennon

T. B. Needles

Commissioners.

INTRUDERS

When the Dawes Commission set out to make a roll of the citizens of the Five Tribes they encountered something they were not looking for. Something like 200,000 intruders, from nearly every state in the union appeared before them claiming to be Indians, of one tribe or another. Citizenship lawyers bobbed up in all the different nations, and took the claims of the intruder for so much money. In all about 110,000 of these intruders were rejected, and 90,000 were admitted to citizenship. This required an enormous lot of work for the commission, and it lasted for a period of twelve years, during a part of which time as many as 500 clerks were employed.

In the Cherokee Nation the intruders were lined up under two leaders, each of whom had several thousand claimants under them. They were the Dawson bunch, under the leadership

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of Riley Dawson, of Afton, Indian Territory, and the Watts bunch, under the leadership of Thomas G. Watts, of Wagoner, formerly from Muldrow, Indian Territory.

Most of these claimants and the Freedmen, (ex-slaves of the Cherokees) were admitted to citizenship, and placed on the Cherokee rolls, and by the time the commission had finished the rolls, the Cherokees had so many citizens that they did not have land enough to give all 160 acres for each allotment, as had been planned, and they were given only 30 acres of average prairie land.

TIME EXTENDED

The governments of the Five Civilized Tribes were to cease on March 3, 1906, according to the Curtis Act, but, when that time arrived, there was so much unfinished business, pertaining to their affairs, that Congress continued the offices of chief and a few other tribal officials. Their principal duties were to sign allotment certificates to the land that was being allotted the different tribes.

ALLOTMENT FINISHED STATEHOOD COMES

The Dawes Commission finally finished the allotment of Indian land, and after a fifteen year struggle for Statehood for Oklahoma and the Indian Territory, a bill known as

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the Hamilton Bill passed both houses of Congress and was signed by President Theodore Roosevelt on June 14, 1906.

This bill provided an Enabling Act, in which the two territories could hold a constitutional convention, and form a state government. It provided for 112 delegates, of which 55 were to be from Old Oklahoma and 55 from the Indian Territory, and 2 from the Osage Nation.

After this had been complied with, and state officers elected, President Theodore Roosevelt issued a proclamation declaring Oklahoma a state, on November 16, 1907. On that date people from all over the state gathered at Guthrie to see the newly elected state officers sworn in.

The first state legislature met at Guthrie on December 2, 1907, and continued in session for six months. Their first official act was to elect Robert L. Owens, of Muskogee, and Thomas P. Gore, of Lawton, as United States Senators.

Charles N. Haskell, of Muskogee, was elected as the first Governor of the new state.

The United States turned over the reins of government to the state authorities at statehood, November 16, 1907.