

Indigenous Lands, Past and Present

UNIT 1

Key Vocabulary

Cooper Bison Kill Site

Three Sisters Planting Method

Spiro Mounds

Sovereign

Sedentary

Matrilineal

Diaspora

Black Mesa

Arkansas River

Red River

Learning Outcomes:

The learner will be able to...

- Summarize the accomplishments of the Spiro Mound Builders in early Oklahoma.
- Compare and contrast the lifestyles of Caddo, Wichita, Apache, and Comanche tribes in early Oklahoma.
- Identify and describe the major waterways, ecological regions and natural resources of Oklahoma.
- Describe how the environment and natural resources shape Oklahoma today.

Compelling Questions:

- How does the land shape who we are?
- How do people shape the lands on which we live?

Chapter Overview

Oklahoma history is Native history. Wichitas, Caddos, and other Indigenous tribes resided in the area long before Oklahoma became a state, and their cultures continue today. Oklahoma has ten geographical regions and abundant natural resources.



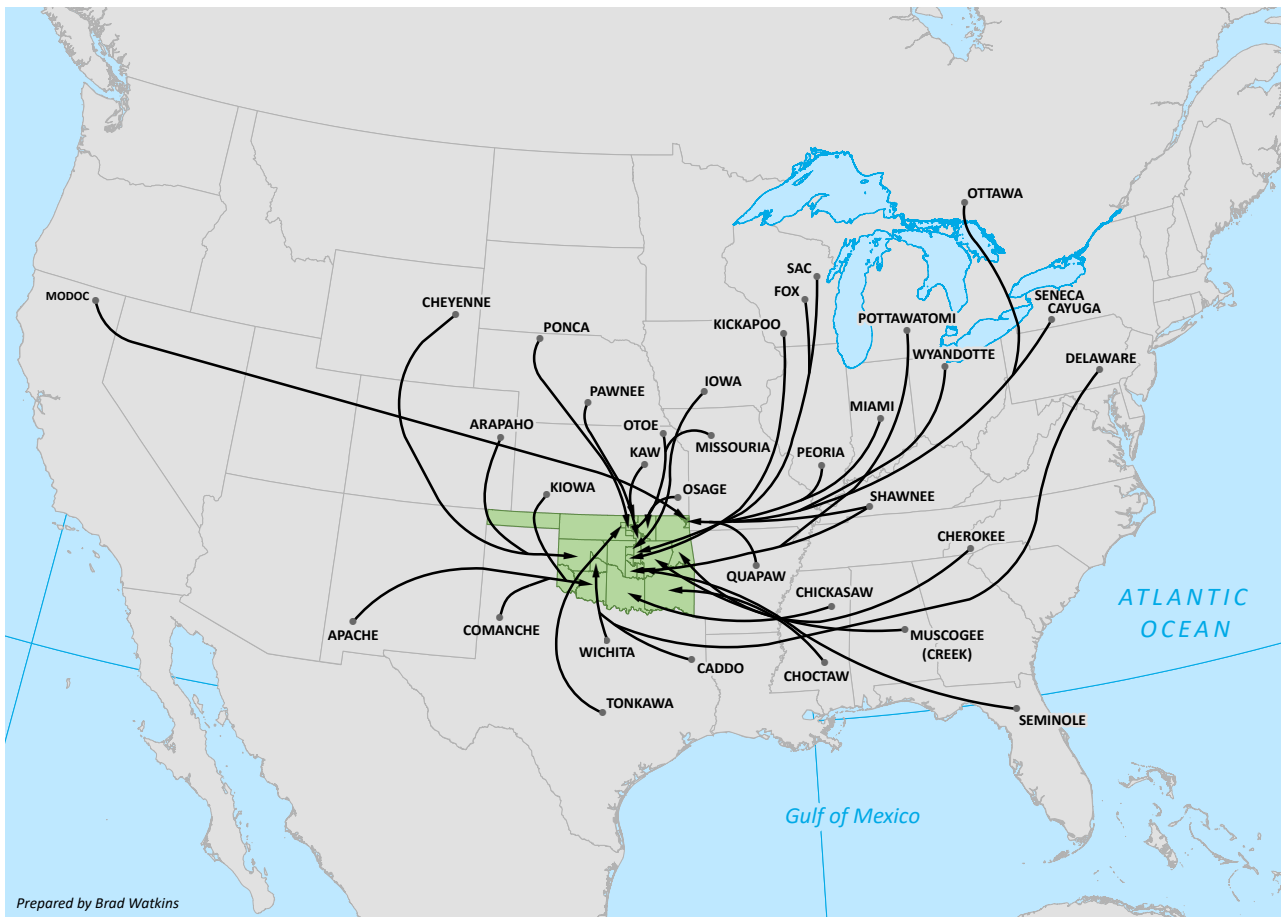
Redcorn, a Caddo and Potawatomi potter, has studied pottery made by Caddoans before Europeans arrived, and she has worked to revive the Caddo traditions. She grew up on her grandmother's Caddo land allotment near Colony, south of Weatherford, Oklahoma. An educator, she studied math and earned a master's degree in educational administration from Penn State University. In June 1991, she saw pottery made by her Caddo ancestors in an exhibit at the Museum of the Red River in Idabel. Inspired by what she saw, she began working with clay, reading archaeology books, and visiting other museums. The defining characteristics of Caddo pottery include a thin, highly polished body with a design of swirling scrolls, tick marks, and bands. Redcorn's work—and the way it links past and present—is a reminder of the importance of understanding the relationship of the present to the past in the making of what became the state of Oklahoma.

Fig. 1.1: *Three Sisters of the Supreme Court* by Jeri Redcorn (Caddo/Potawatomi) is dedicated to the women justices of the Oklahoma Supreme Court: Justice Alma Wilson, Justice Yvonne Kauger, and Justice Noma Gurich. The three pots are inspired by engraved pieces found at the Spiro Mounds site, and each pot has a dancing figure on it representing corn, beans, and squash, known as the "three sisters" in Indigenous agriculture. The seeds Caddo women carried allowed Spiro and other sites to become centers of commerce and society for Caddos and other tribes.

Courtesy of the Oklahoma Judicial Center, Oklahoma Supreme Court.

Oklahoma History Is Native History

To understand that Oklahoma history is Native history and what that means, you have to think like a historian and ask questions about the past. Doing so can be rewarding, as it has been for Jeri Redcorn, and can help us better connect the past to the present.



Map 1.1: Removal of Native nations to Oklahoma. Different forces made tribes move to Oklahoma at different times. As this map shows, most of the tribes that live in the state today came from somewhere else.

Courtesy of Brad Watkins, PhD.

This place was Indian Country long before it became the state of Oklahoma. Artifacts found at the **Cooper Bison Kill Site** in present-day Harper County provide clues into prehistoric Indigenous cultures. A spearpoint (also called a Folsom point) shows how prehistoric people hunted. The site also provides evidence of some of the food they ate, including seeds, nuts, and bison meat. Indigenous inhabitants such as the Wichitas, Caddos, and Tonkawas resided here for centuries. Other Indigenous peoples such as the Comanches, Apaches, Kiowas, Osages, and Quapaws converged here. Some were of this place and others including the Five Tribes or Five Nations—the Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Muscogees (Creek), and Seminoles—were forcibly removed here. Native nations have a much longer history than the United States, since the history of First Americans dates from time immemorial.

First Oklahomans

Several thousand years ago, various cultural groups lived in what is today Oklahoma. In western Oklahoma, bison-hunting groups lived in seasonal camps and used spear points to hunt. In contrast, the peoples in eastern Oklahoma in the Red and Arkansas River Valleys lived in villages while hunting game such as deer and elk and harvesting wild plants. Those villages that farmed grew corn, beans, and squash together in the **Three Sisters Planting Method**. Such companion planting led to a population increase. Technological innovations included the bow and arrow, ceramic production, and architectural innovations such as the ceremonial mound centers in eastern Oklahoma.

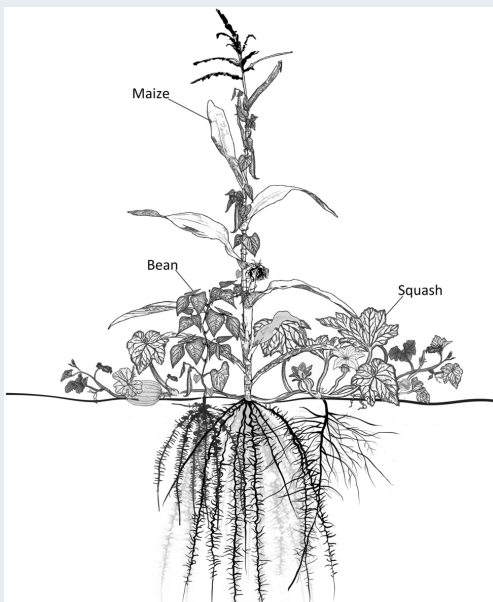


Fig. 1.2: Using the Three Sisters Planting Method, Indigenous farming communities plant corn, beans, and squash next to one another. The plants provide nutrients, shade, and protection. This sketch shows how the plants intertwine with one another.

Courtesy of the National Park Service.

Three Sisters Planting Method

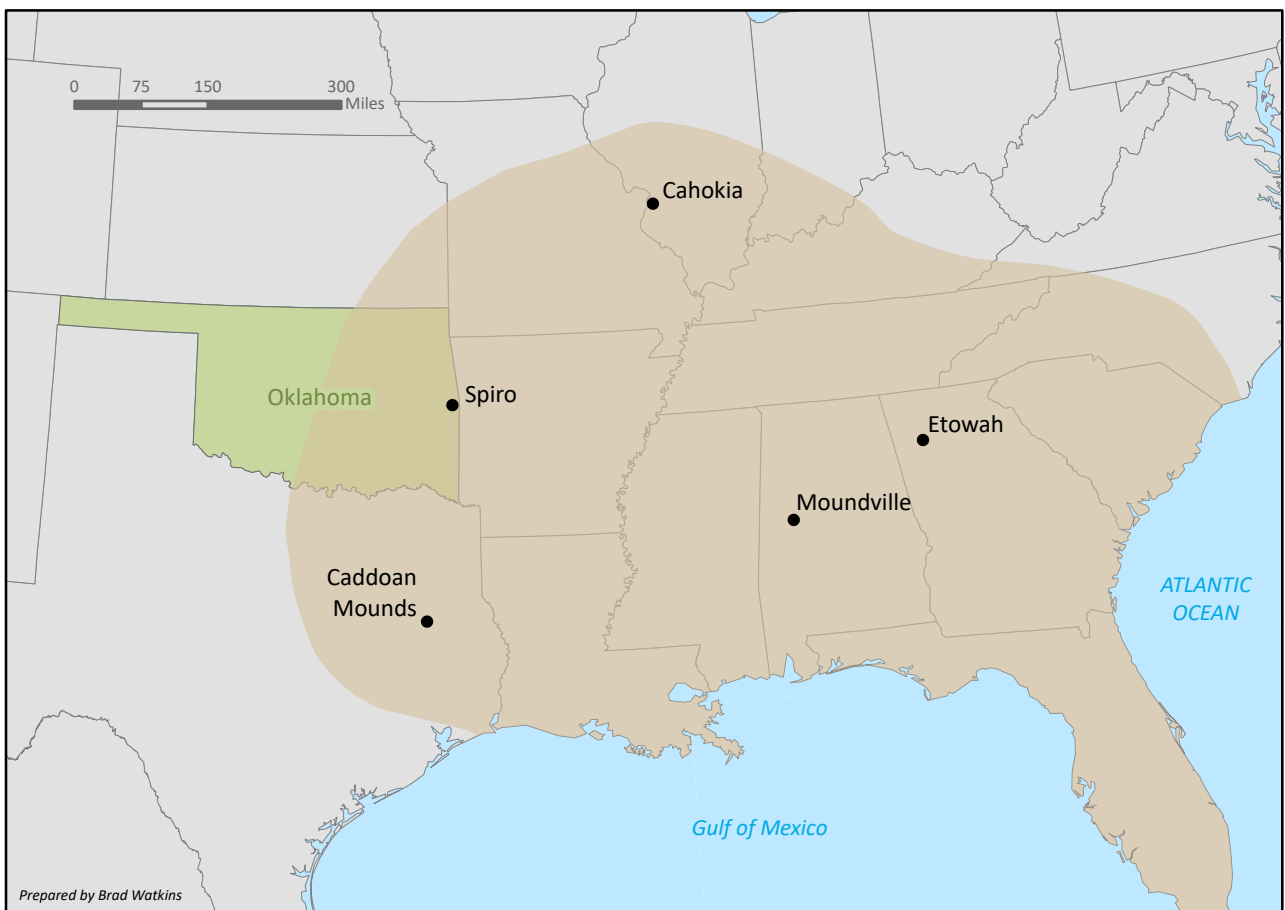
The Three Sisters are beans, corn, and squash. The Three Sisters have been staple foods in the diets of Indigenous people in the Americas for thousands of years. They grow well together, and they also taste great together in a variety of ways including healthy salads and hearty soups.

The Three Sisters Planting Method is an example of companion planting or intercropping. Planting all three crops together in mounds helps each to grow better than if they were planted apart. The corn stalks provide something for the bean vines to grow upward on to better reach the sunlight. Meanwhile, the beans put nitrogen into the soil, a mineral both corn and squash need to grow. The squash has large, spiny leaves. These protect the other plants from scavenging animals and provide shade around the roots to help maintain moisture. The leaves also prevent weeds from sprouting and soaking up precious nutrients.

Today thirty-nine Native nations in Oklahoma come from many different places and bring together a variety of Indigenous foods. The restaurant Thirty Nine at First Americans Museum, for example, offers modern Indigenous cuisine, including a Three Sisters sauté and a Three Sisters salad, both featuring beans, corn, and squash. Potawatomi gardens included the Three Sisters and other traditional crops. Many Citizen Potawatomi, including award-winning chef Loretta Barrett Oden at Thirty Nine, continue the companion planting method and use heirloom Potawatomi seeds. Also, the Pawnee Seed Preservation Society established a seed bank to care for and share ancestral seeds such as corn.

Spiro Mounds

The Mississippian people were the largest and most complex society to develop in the eastern half of North America between the years 800 and 1650. Living near rivers in the Midwest and Southeast and as far west as present-day eastern Oklahoma, the Mississippians created highly developed farming communities consisting of small villages and larger fortified ceremonial centers that contained large earthen mounds and broad plazas. The largest such center was Cahokia, located in Illinois across the Mississippi River from present-day St. Louis, Missouri. Others included Moundville, near Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and Etowah, northwest of Atlanta in Georgia.



Map 1.2: Locations of mounds constructed by Mississippian tribes. Just like the people living in Spiro, other Mississippian tribes built mounds. In addition to those at Spiro in Oklahoma, there are mounds in Texas, Alabama, Georgia, and Illinois.

Courtesy of Brad Watkins, PhD.

For about 350 years, **Spiro Mounds**, located in the heart of the Caddoan world, about five miles south of today's Interstate 40 along the Arkansas River in Le Flore County, Oklahoma, served as the center of religious and political activity on the western edge of the Mississippian culture. The twelve ancestral mounds at Spiro contained the largest amount of engraved, embossed, and carved objects of any presently known Mississippian site in North America. The objects included images of people, deities, and animals.

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Fig. 1.3: Removal of Native nations to Oklahoma. Different forces made tribes move to Oklahoma at different times. As this map shows, most of the tribes that live in the state today came from somewhere else.

Courtesy of Herb Roe.

To save what remained of the Spiro site, Oklahoma passed the state's first antiquities law in 1935. Excavations and research continue today in partnership with the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes, the Caddo Nation, the University of Oklahoma, and the University of Arkansas.

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Spiro seems to have been the center of an extensive trade and acquisition network extending along the Arkansas River and other waterways that brought objects to Spiro such as trade beads from California and conch shells from Florida.

Much of what we know of Spiro and its Mississippian culture today comes from artifacts, many of which were looted from the Spiro Mounds in the 1930s. Hoping to sell objects to private dealers and museums, a group of relic hunters leased the site and began excavating the largest mound.



Fig. 1.4: This Monolithic Axe, or P-i-ta-ni-wan'-ha—"To Have Power"—was created out of stone in 2019 by Wayne Earles, a member of the Caddo Nation. It is a modern-day recreation of similar artifacts found at Spiro dating from 1300 to 1400 AD. The monolithic axe was one of many symbolic and sacred weapons made by Mississippian people, who would likely have used them in ritual performances led by medicine leaders.

Courtesy of the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum.



Fig. 1.5: This Spiro-inspired etched conch shell, created in 2017 by Dan Townsend, an artist of Muscogee (Creek) and Cherokee descent, features a drawing of the supernatural character Birdman. Medicine cups like this one carried spiritual significance, and Birdman imagery is found across North and Central America. Birdman is spiritually representative of the day sky and above world in Mississippian culture. Townsend's cup is a modern-day recreation of similar artifacts found at the Spiro Mounds dating from 1100 to 1250 AD.

Courtesy of the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum.



Fig. 1.6: The mission of the Oklahoma Historical Society (OHS), a state agency, is to collect, preserve, and share the history and culture of the state of Oklahoma and its people. Many of the images that appear in this book are from the OHS Research Division. Visit “The Gateway to Oklahoma History,” an online repository, to learn more.

Courtesy of the Oklahoma Historical Society.

Oklahoma Historical Society

The Oklahoma Historical Society (OHS) was founded in 1893 by the Territorial Press Association to preserve territorial newspapers. Today this state agency collects, preserves, and shares Oklahoma history through its museums and other sites, educational programming, and publications.

OHS has more than twenty museums and historic sites across the state. They include the Oklahoma Route 66 Museum in Clinton, the Pawnee Bill Museum and Ranch in Pawnee, OKPOP in Tulsa, Spiro Mounds Archaeological Center in Spiro, and the Oklahoma History Center in Oklahoma City. The Spiro Mounds Archaeological Center features nearly two miles of interpreted trails, including a one-half-mile nature trail. An archaeologist is on staff to answer questions and lead tours.

Within OHS, the State Historic Preservation Office handles the approval and oversight of historical districts, buildings, markers, and land. Properties of historical significance are nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

OHS values community outreach and historical education. The Gateway to Oklahoma History is a free online database of digitized historical records and collections available to the public—including students of all ages—for research. OHS also shares educational content about the state through A Very OK Podcast, which interviews state historians. Oklahoma National History Day hosts middle school and high school students who organize and create individual or team projects to compete in local, state, and national competitions. Scholars, researchers, and writers from across the state meet every spring for the Oklahoma History Symposium, and the state journal, *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, features articles about and documents revealing Oklahoma history.

Who are the descendants of the Mississippian people? They are members of the Caddo Nation, the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes, and the Osage Nation. They are members of the Cherokee Nation, Chickasaw Nation, Choctaw Nation, Seminole Nation, and the Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma.

Convergence of Empires and Nations

In the borderlands of the southern plains centuries ago, we can envision a meeting of empires (large areas controlled by one group) and nations in the place we call Oklahoma today. Beginning in the fifteenth century (the 1400s), this place was home to Native nations, including the Wichitas, Caddos, and Plains Apaches. An extensive trade network existed within the southern plains—today's Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arkansas, and Louisiana—and within areas as far away as the Great Lakes and Mexico.



Fig. 1.7: *Discovery and Exploration, 1541–1820*, by Charles Banks Wilson, is the first of four historical murals commissioned in the 1970s by the Oklahoma state legislature. The mural depicts Wichita communities with their distinctive grass houses and existing trade networks, the Antelope Hills on the Canadian River in western Oklahoma near the Texas Panhandle, bison, and the Spanish, French, and American expeditions over time in a place that will become Oklahoma.

Courtesy of the Oklahoma Historical Society.

These borderland Native nations were **sovereign**, meaning that they governed themselves and made their own decisions about resources and cultural practices. Interactions between Native nations and Europeans reflected a variety of strategies, including alliances, trade, violence, adaptation, and change. Over time, a series of nations, including Spain and France, then Mexico, Texas, and the United States, claimed the land and often tried to claim the people. The first documented Spanish visits into these borderlands were to Wichita and Caddo country. In 1541, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado traveled north from Mexico City to the borderlands, interacting with Wichita villages along the Arkansas River.

Almost one year later, Luis de Moscoso led the remnants of the Hernando de Soto expedition to the Red River where the Spanish encountered the Natchez and Caddos.

Caddos

Organized into three confederacies, the Caddos were **matrilineal**, meaning they traced kinship ties through women (in contrast to patrilineal tribes, which trace kinship ties through men). The women raised crops, including corn, beans, and squash. Men hunted deer, bear, and turkey. Mainly sedentary, or settled in one place, one Caddo group lived along the bend of the **Red River** near where the Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Texas borders come together today. After the Spanish introduced horses to the Americas, in the mid-1600s, the Caddos began to travel west to the plains each winter to hunt bison.



Map 1.3: Bison herds in 1500 and 1870. In 1500, bison roamed most of what is now the United States and parts of Canada and Mexico. By 1870, hunting had reduced the bison population to two herds in the Great Plains.

Courtesy of Brad Watkins, PhD.

By the 1720s the Spanish and French were well established in Texas and Louisiana, with the borders of the two empires converging near Caddo country. The Caddos established trade ties with the French after explorer Bernard de La Harpe entered their territory in 1719. They allowed the French to set up three trading posts along the Red River.

Wichitas

The Wichitas are related to the Caddos, and the two nations share many things in common. Like the Caddos, the Wichitas were matrilineal. Wichita people farmed in villages to the west of Caddo territory, on the eastern edge of the Great Plains in the Arkansas River Valley. Their houses were made of wood beams with grass-thatched roofs. Women raised corn, beans, and squash. Men went on annual bison hunts that lasted for several weeks.



Fig. 1.8: *Buffalo Hunt*, by Acee Blue Eagle. This painting depicts an Indigenous man hunting a bison. For many Native tribes, the annual buffalo hunt lasted for several weeks. Muscogee (Creek) and Pawnee artist Acee Blue Eagle attended boarding schools including Nuyaka Mission Boarding School near Bristow, and Chilocco Indian School in north-central Oklahoma near Newkirk, where he graduated in 1926. He studied art at Bacone College in Muskogee and at the University of Oklahoma. You can view his murals at the Seminole Post Office and Bacone College.

Courtesy of the Oklahoma Judicial Center, Oklahoma Supreme Court.

After the hunts, women would skin the bison, smoke the meat, and tan the hides. The southern plains were filled with bison, and the Wichitas had long specialized in making bison robes and other bison products, trading them with Pueblo people to the west and Caddo people to the east. Wichita dependence on bison increased with the arrival of horses.

By the 1740s, the Wichita villages had become important places for French traders traveling northwest up the Red River from Arkansas and Louisiana and continuing on to Santa Fe. The Wichitas traded bison robes with the French for guns, knives, and other metal goods. Eighteenth-century French maps show Wichita villages on either side of the Red River in today's Jefferson County, Oklahoma, and Montague County, Texas.

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Fig. 1.9: This photo was taken in Chickasha, Indian Territory, sometime before statehood in 1907. It depicts Wichita grass houses. In the spring, summer, and early fall months, the Wichita people would live in grass houses that provided cool relief from the warm weather. During the late fall and winter, Wichita people left their villages for extended buffalo hunts.

Courtesy of the Oklahoma Historical Society.



Fig. 1.10: The Pawnee people engaged in seasonal agriculture in the spring and fall, and bison hunting in the summer and winter. This photo shows women processing bison hide at a Pawnee camp in 1886. Today the Pawnee Nation coordinates a Pawnee Seed Preservation Project, offering varieties of ancestral Pawnee corn to Pawnee citizens. Through this project, modern-day Pawnees experience connection with their ancestors, who traveled from Nebraska to Indian Territory in the mid-1870s.

Courtesy of the Oklahoma Historical Society.

In these villages, which also included Deer Creek to the north, the Wichitas farmed, hunted, and processed bison meat and hides.

They traded for goods from other Native groups and Europeans. Tools changed, weapons changed, and settlement locations and defense tactics changed as the Wichitas met and traded with or warred against other Native and European nations. For example, the Wichitas adapted to the arrival of Apaches.



Fig. 1.11: The mission of the Oklahoma Historical Society (OHS), a state agency, is to collect, preserve, and share the history and culture of the state of Oklahoma and its people. Many of the images that appear in this book are from the OHS Research Division. Visit "The Gateway to Oklahoma History," an online repository, to learn more.

Courtesy of the Oklahoma Historical Society.

Tallgrass Prairie Preserve

Once North America contained 170 million acres of tallgrass prairie. It stretched across fourteen states from Texas to Minnesota. Tallgrass lives up to its name: bluestem and switchgrass can reach six to eight feet high by the fall. Only 4 percent of that once-vast prairie remains. The Joseph H. Williams Tallgrass Prairie Preserve near Pawhuska, Oklahoma, created in 1989 by The Nature Conservancy, works to restore the ecosystem through controlled burning and free-ranging bison. The preserve hosts a variety of other animals including deer, coyote, prairie chickens, and eagles.

In the 1970s and 1980s, environmentalists pushed for a national preserve of tallgrass prairie, but the legislation failed in Congress. Instead, The Nature Conservancy, a nonprofit organization that owns and manages plots of threatened habitat all over the world, purchased the land to create a preserve. Visitors can enjoy the scenic drive through tallgrass prairie and observe bison

from a distance. Access to the south entrance of the preserve is north of Pawhuska on Kihekah Avenue. Ideal times to visit the preserve include bison calving season in the spring and the wildflower seasons in spring and late summer.

Apache Diaspora

The Apache **diaspora** continued for over four centuries. The term “diaspora” describes the dispersal of a people from their homeland. Called “Apaches” by others, these people called themselves Ndé, or the People. Like the Kiowas and other Athabascan peoples, their traditional homelands may have been in the Pacific Northwest and western Canada. By 1500 some Apaches followed the bison to the southern plains. There, in today’s New Mexico, Apaches interacted with Pueblo agricultural villages, sometimes peacefully through trade and exchange of services, and sometimes through raiding and conflict.

By the early 1700s, Apaches in the southern plains lived in today’s panhandles of Oklahoma and Texas, eastern Colorado, and western Kansas. They had developed trade relationships with the Pueblos of present-day New Mexico along the Rio Grande. They were a highly mobile people and moved according to the seasons. In the spring they lived in the river valleys and planted corn, beans, and squash. In early summer they left the river valleys to hunt bison in the southern plains. By fall they returned to harvest their crops. During the winter they lived near the mountains.

Apache homelands bordered competing nations and empires such as the Spanish, Comanche, and French. Along the Rio Grande in today’s New Mexico, the Ndé interacted with Pueblo agricultural villages, sometimes peacefully through trade of goods, services, and enslaved people and other times by raiding the pueblos.

By the 1600s and 1700s, the Spanish colonial government used the term “apache” to describe people as the enemy and enslaved many of them as forced laborers. By the late 1700s, displaced Apaches lived in bondage in New Mexico, New Spain, and New France by forging connections with other exploited people, including servants and enslaved people of African descent.

Comanches

Horse culture spread throughout the American West and provided many Native groups with greater mobility. The Comanches began expanding their seasonal movement from the northern plains to the southern plains in the eighteenth century. In this way, they accessed new technologies such as guns, gunpowder, and iron tools and knives and the mobility of Spanish horses. Comanche strength grew following the Pueblo Revolt against the Spanish in 1680. Comanches converged on Apache villages, and they became enemies. Comanches took captives to be exchanged in New Mexico and also sold captives in Native trading networks to the east in the southern plains and Arkansas River Valley. There the Comanches entered the well-established trade system where Plains hunters traded hides and meat for manufactured goods. By the early 1700s in French Louisiana, Comanches offered enslaved Apaches to Spanish and French buyers, receiving horses and guns that gave them additional advantages over their Apache competitors.

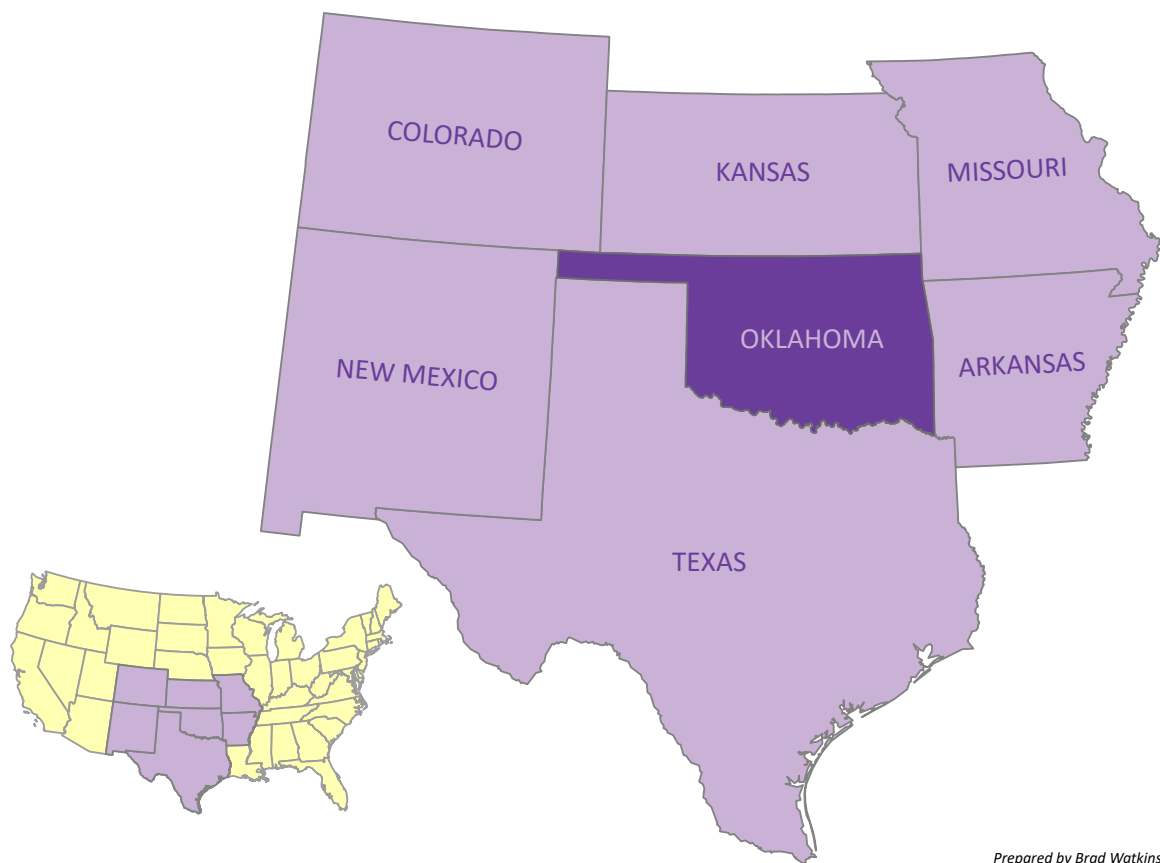
For about one hundred years, from 1750 to 1850, the Comanches were a force in the Southwest. The Comanches used trade networks, diplomacy, kinship ties, and violence with other Indigenous peoples and European communities to create an extensive empire in the region of today’s Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, and Kansas. The Comanches were positioned next to other Indigenous homelands and European settler colonial nations, including Spain and France and later the United States and Mexico.

Disease

Diseases arrived in the Americas with the first Europeans in the 1500s and attacked the Native populations in waves for the next three centuries. Although the introduction of disease over hundreds of years resulted in tremendous loss of life, Native communities adapted to the devastation and responded to changes in order to preserve their ways of life. For example, the Comanches were warring with the Wichitas while continuing to trade with them. In 1777–78 an epidemic, perhaps smallpox, spread throughout the concentrated Wichita villages, resulting in the death of one-third of the population. In contrast, the highly mobile Comanches did not seem to contract smallpox. However, in the early 1780s and continuing into the first half of the nineteenth century, smallpox and cholera introduced by new traders from new places spread throughout the Americas and caused enormous loss of life in the region of today’s Oklahoma, even among Comanche people.

Political Boundaries of Today's Oklahoma

For thousands of years, the borderlands just described embraced the sovereign territories of Native nations. But Europeans soon secured the power, at least on their maps, to name the region that embraces Oklahoma today—northern New Spain, New France, French Louisiana, Spanish Louisiana, and the United States. Political boundaries are often shaped by rivers or landforms but are also created through diplomacy and war.

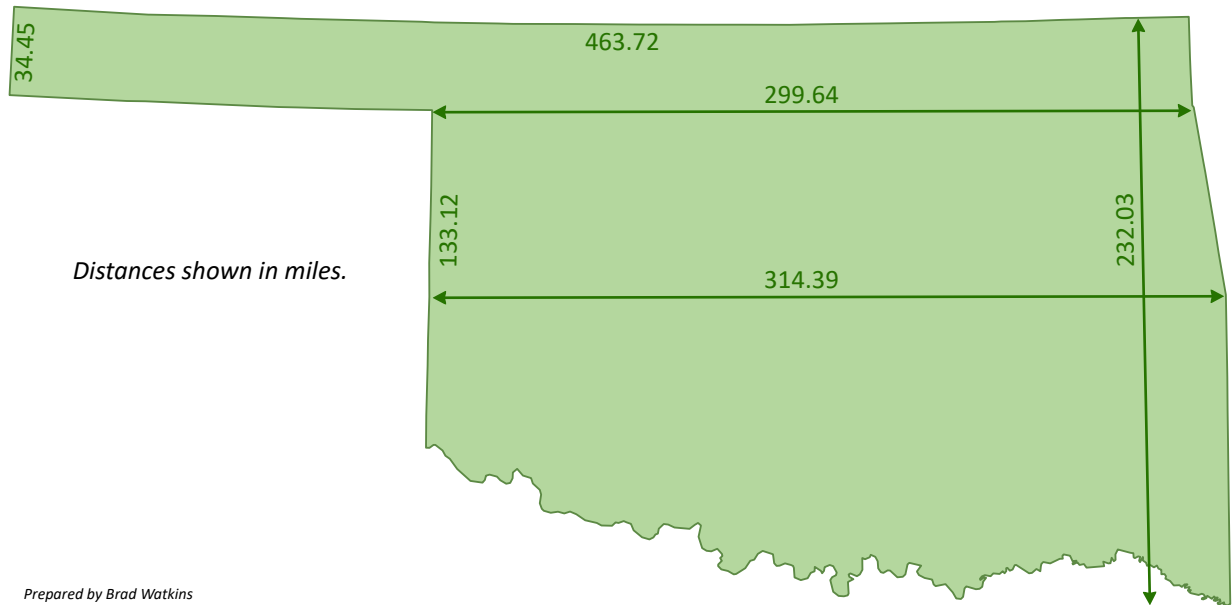


Prepared by Brad Watkins

Map 1.4: Location of Oklahoma. Oklahoma shares a partial border with six states. It sits at a crossroads between southern and western states, and combines the cultures of both regions.

Courtesy of Brad Watkins, PhD.

In the lands that would become Oklahoma, these borders pressed upon the western edges of the French and Spanish empires. Today Oklahoma borders Kansas and a portion of southeastern Colorado on the north, Arkansas and a portion of southwestern Missouri on the east, Texas on the south, and the Texas Panhandle and a portion of northeastern New Mexico on the west. The Red River is the state's southern border with Texas.



Map 1.5: The dimensions of Oklahoma, with distances shown in miles. In contrast to many states of the same size or larger, Oklahoma contains a variety of terrains and hosts an abundance of wildlife, plants, and trees.

Courtesy of Brad Watkins, PhD.

Geography

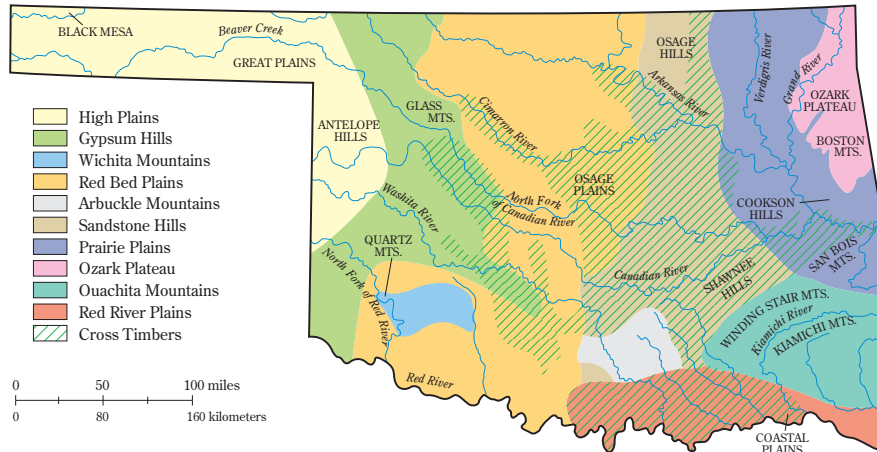
The highest point in Oklahoma is **Black Mesa** (4,973 feet above sea level) in the westernmost part of the Oklahoma Panhandle. The lowest point is the Little River (289 feet above sea level) in southeastern Oklahoma.

Oklahoma's rivers for the most part flow from the northwest to the southeast. Elevation accounts for this flow: the western part of the state is higher than the eastern part of the state. Oklahoma contains several natural salt plains and saline rivers in the west and six scenic rivers in the east. It also contains two main river systems, the Arkansas River and the Red River. The Arkansas River is the state's largest river system, and most Oklahoma streams are its tributaries. The Red River forms the southern boundary of the state. Others, such as the Washita River, are tributaries of the Red River, which carries Oklahoma water southeast through northeast Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana before emptying into the Mississippi River. Nations that inhabited the Red River Basin of the southern plains include the Wichitas, Comanches, Spanish, French, and the United States.

Section 3

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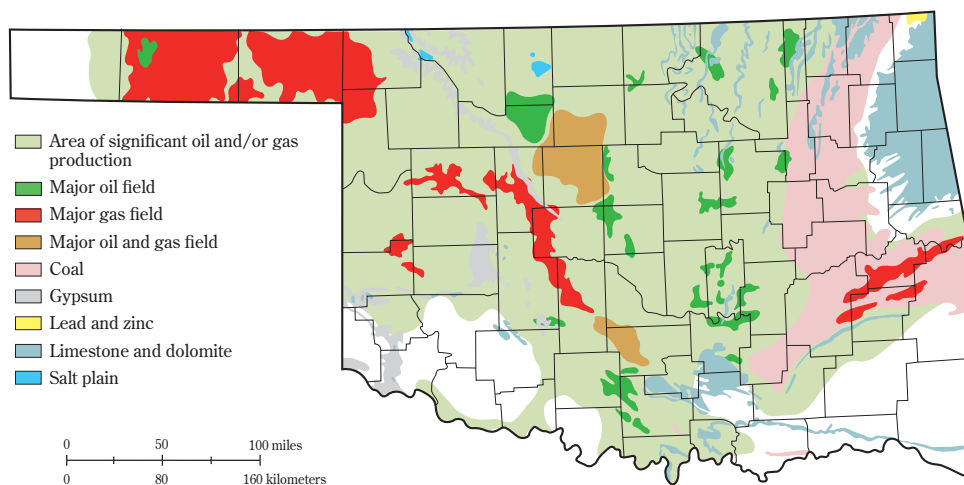
UNIT 1



Map 1.6: Geographical regions and their landforms in Oklahoma. Oklahoma has varied and distinctive landforms across its different regions, which include plains, mountains, hills, and forests. These regions hold an array of natural resources, plants, and animals.

Courtesy of Brad Watkins, PhD.

Waterways eased human access to the land. Environmental history describes the interactions between humans and the land. Humans shaped the landscape. And humans shared the landscape, the land and the water, with animals such as bison, bears, deer, coyotes, wolves, rabbits, turtles, snakes, birds, and fish.



Map 1.7: Mineral resources in Oklahoma. Oklahoma is rich in natural resources. The state has impressive deposits of oil and natural gas as well as coal, salt, gypsum, and other minerals. This map also shows oil and gas fields across Oklahoma.

Courtesy of Brad Watkins, PhD.

Oklahoma is part of the southern Great Plains. Environmental historians describe the western half of Oklahoma as grasslands, with mixed-grass prairie as a transitional zone between the tallgrass prairies to the north and east and the shortgrass high plains to the south and west. Mixed-grass prairies contain a variety of plant species, including the tallgrass varieties switchgrass and big bluestem and shortgrass such as buffalo grass. The grasslands of Oklahoma nourished grazing animals such as deer and bison and later horses and cattle.

The lands that would become Oklahoma are rich in mineral resources including petroleum (crude oil and natural gas), coal, and nonfuel minerals, including limestone, gypsum, salt, clays, iodine, sand and gravel, lead, zinc, and copper. Oklahoma has mineral wealth in all seventy-seven counties. Today petroleum production in Oklahoma represents more than 90 percent of Oklahoma's annual mineral output.



Fig. 1.12: Aerial view of DeNoya (also called Whizbang), which was located in the Burbank Field in the Osage oil fields, and developed in the 1920s by future governor E. W. Marland and Marland Oil Company. By 1930 more than three dozen Osage oil fields existed, including Avant and Skiatook. The Osage Nation retained collective ownership of subsurface mineral rights, and some have called their land resources an “underground reservation” that produced great wealth.

Courtesy of the Oklahoma Historical Society.

writer John Joseph Matthews had spearheaded the effort to establish the Osage Tribal Museum, the first tribally governed museum in the United States. The museum is open Tuesday through Saturday, and admission is free.

Starting as a blogger and a homeschool mom, Ree Drummond built a business empire through her popular cooking show *Pioneer Woman* on the Food Network. Ree and Ladd Drummond, a member of the Drummond ranching family, purchased the historic Osage Mercantile Building in the center of town and renovated it to become a restaurant, coffee shop and bakery, hotel, and store. Visitors can visit the Drummond ranch and tour the lodge where the TV program is filmed. On weekends fans of Ree Drummond come to Pawhuska, population just under 3,000, at a rate of 15,000 per day.

Pawhuska and Killers of the Flower Moon

Pawhuska has a complicated history. Its downtown held public auctions of oil leases under the Million Dollar Elm during the Osage oil boom of the 1910s and 1920s. In his book *Killers of the Flower Moon* (2017), David Grann describes the violence and trauma during the oil boom when dozens of Osage people who held headrights, their rightful share of the oil reserves their tribe owned under its reservation, began mysteriously dying. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) found, as Grann reveals, that white businessmen married into Osage families and established legal guardianship over Osages in order to take over their wealth. Some of the businessmen murdered their Osage wives and in-laws to inherit Osage headrights.

Recently, tourism has revitalized Pawhuska. Most people now visit Pawhuska for two main reasons: the book and movie *Killers of the Flower Moon* or the “Pioneer Woman” Ree Drummond. When he started research for his book, Grann visited the Osage Nation Museum. In 1938, Osage

Conclusion

What is now Oklahoma evolved from a confluence of cultures. Mississippians, Caddos, Wichitas, Spanish, English, French, and later Americans all collided in one land. Early Indigenous peoples were farmers and bison hunters with tribal organization and government. Spiro Mounds functioned as a political and religious center for the Mississippian people and also became an important trading center. In the 1700s, the Comanche empire dominated the southern plains region, including Oklahoma, using violence, diplomacy, trade, and extortion to take possession of lands and people. The coming of the Comanches displaced the Apache people who were living in Oklahoma.

Oklahoma comprises ten land regions that include plains, hills, mountains, and plateaus. Oklahoma is drained by the Red River and Arkansas River systems, which have provided for transportation and commerce over its long history. Natural resources discovered in Oklahoma included oil, zinc and lead. Oklahoma's environmental history demonstrates the ways Oklahoma's land and its people have influenced each other. Through the following chapters, you will learn how generations of Oklahomans have faced adversity of many kinds and have learned to work together to create a state that serves the needs of many.

Tribal Museums and Cultural Centers

The Osage Nation established the first tribal museum in the United States in Pawhuska, the nation's capital city, in 1938. The Chickasaw Cultural Center in Sulphur, a state-of-the-art museum, research center, and traditional village dedicated to Chickasaw history and culture, opened in 2010. In September 2021, the First Americans Museum on the Oklahoma (North Fork of the Canadian) River in Oklahoma City opened to the public. A team of Native museum studies professionals curates its exhibits and educational activities.



Fig. 1.13: Located in Oklahoma City at the crossroads of I-35 and I-40, First Americans Museum exists on the homeland of thirty-nine Native nations in what is today called Oklahoma.

Courtesy of First Americans Museum.

Indigenous Lands, Past and Present

UNIT 1

Lawrence Hart (Cheyenne), Peace Chief of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, closed the ground-blessing ceremony on the site of the future First Americans Museum in 2005 by reflecting on the meaning of the museum: “This marks a moment of many future ‘Teachable Moments’ for us to share with the world of who we are: Native Americans of Oklahoma.”

Senior curator at First Americans Museum Heather Ahtone says that we have a responsibility to study, learn, and question the history of Oklahoma: “The present state of Oklahoma encompasses the geographic base historically identified as Indian and Oklahoma Territories—the target site for the relocation of all the tribes that stood in the way of the imperialistic ambitions of the nascent United States. In 1830, President Andrew Jackson and the partisan divided Congress ratified the Indian Removal Act.” She goes on to explain that “Jackson used the military might of the nation to forcibly remove 67 tribes into the land mass represented by these two territories. By 1907, when the State of Oklahoma was established, only 39 tribes remained.”

Short Answer Questions

- 1 What archaeological evidence indicates that Spiro was an important ceremonial center?
- 2 In what ways was Oklahoma a borderland for different tribal groups? Provide an example to support your answer.
- 3 How did disease impact Tribal nations after 1500?
- 4 Identify the two main river systems in Oklahoma.
- 5 List the modern-day states that border Oklahoma.

Short Response Questions

- 1 How did tribal groups in Oklahoma differ in their lifestyles and cultures? How were they the same? In your response, be sure to include examples to support your argument.
- 2 If you traveled from the east side of the state to the west side of the state, how would the landscape change? Use evidence from the text and your own research to support your argument.