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A Guide to the Indian Tribes of Oklahoma

Muriel H. Wright

FOREWORD BY ARRELL MORGAN GIBSON



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*Dedicated to
the Indian leaders who guided their people
in the formation of Oklahoma
18071907*

Foreword

Arrell Morgan Gibson

A Guide to the Indian Tribes of Oklahoma, first issued in 1951 as Volume 33 of the eminent Civilization of the American Indian Series, has passed through eight printings, a ringing confirmation of its inherent value as a scholarly reference. Its republication is timely. The *Guide* will appear on the threshold of the centennial of the passage of the General Allotment Act. Adopted in 1887 by the United States Congress and popularly known as the Dawes Act after its author, Senator Henry L. Dawes of Massachusetts, this statute drastically altered the cultures and life-styles of all the Indian tribes in Oklahoma. Its application by federal officials to each of the nations and reservations in Indian Territory, preparing American Indians for transition to the future state of Oklahoma, necessarily is a dominating theme of the *Guide*.

As the *Guide* appears in its ninth printing, its compelling essence must be the author's nonpareil credibility as spokesman for the sixty-seven tribes she profiles in the volume. Muriel Wright brought to the enterprise the advantage of her ethnic heritage, her exposure to learned mentors, her lifetime of productive research, and her literary experience as editor and author.

Muriel Wright descended from Choctaw tribal lineage. Her paternal grandfather, Allen Wright, served as principal chief of the Choctaw Nation in the period 1866 to 1870, a traumatic time for the Choctaws and other tribes of Indian Territory, the future Oklahoma, the aftermath of destructive involvement in the Civil War on the side of the Confederacy. His uncommon leadership ameliorated for the Choctaws the pain of war's defeat and Reconstruction and prepared them for the new order that federal officials prepared to inflict on all tribes in Indian Territory. Principal Chief Wright also proposed the name Oklahoma for the state eventually carved from Indian Territory. Muriel Wright brought to her research and writing the strength, pride, and creative tradition of this distinguished genealogy.

She was additionally blessed with the tutelage of the triumvirate of Oklahoma history Joseph Thoburn, Grant Foreman, and Edward Everett Dale who transformed the Sooner epic from simplistic tradition and lore to objective scholarship. With this trio the Choctaw woman served a demanding

apprenticeship in historical research, editing, and writing that yielded a prime bibliography of articles, essays, and books, the final major work being her *Guide to the Indian Tribes of Oklahoma*. She devoted her professional lifetime to the Oklahoma Historical Society, serving most of her tenure as editor of the *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, the state's historical quarterly. Her ethnic heritage and enlarging knowledge of the state's American Indian roots enhanced her qualifications for undertaking the monumental task of producing the *Guide*. Another strategic advantage, derived from her tribal heritage, that of an Indian viewpoint, she applied to this enterprise, infusing instinctive, properly placed sympathy into each tribal sketch.

The *Guide's* format follows the pattern of Frederick W. Hodge's *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico*; Hodge had introduced readers to many of the tribes included in Muriel Wright's *Guide*.

As she points out, however, the forty-one intervening years between publication of Hodge's *Handbook* (1910) and the appearance of her *Guide* (1951) had been a time of "great changes" for Indians and "the country in which they live." And each tribal sketch in Wright's *Guide* stresses the impact of these changes on American Indians residing in the old Indian Territory.

The sketches depicting Oklahoma's sixty-seven tribes are arranged in alphabetical order from Alabama to Yuchi providing ready reference. Each entry includes an explanation of the origin of the tribal name and linguistic affiliation, typical physical characteristics of members, and their location in Oklahoma and population in 1951. In addition the vignette for each Indian group contains a survey of tribal history, a description of ceremonials and public dances observed by members, and a statement of tribal organization and government. At the conclusion of each sketch is a useful listing of books and articles containing other detailed information about the tribe.

Several engaging themes permeate the tribal sketches and capture the reader's attention. One is the commonality of the removal experience. Much of the literature depicting the exile of tribes from their ancient homelands in all parts of the United States to the Indian Territory emphasizes the ordeal of the Five Civilized Tribes (Creeks, Seminoles, Cherokees, Choctaws, and Chickasaws). The *Guide* sketches make the salient point that virtually every tribe exiled to Indian Territory endured a Trail of Tears, suffering unnecessary travail and near-inhuman imposition in the merciless uprooting from each tribal homeland by federal officials and United States Army units and dreaded passage to the southwestern wilderness.

Each sketch evolves on a positive note, however, emphasizing the courageous, determined adjustment by the tribes to their new home in Indian Territory. And their heroic recovery is confirmed by their energetic transformation of the frontier into productive farms and ranches, the restoration of tribal governments, and the creation of villages, towns, and schools. The author makes the point that Indian immigrants were carriers of American civilization to this new land (schools, churches, constitutional government, law-and-order systems, and successful economic enterprises) in many respects just as surely as were their non-Indian neighbors in the peripheral states of Missouri, Arkansas, Kansas, and Texas.

A study of the sketches also provides the reader with a satisfying explanation, rarely found, of the exceedingly complex land-partitioning process carried out

under the aegis of the General Allotment Act, which transformed Indian tribal estates (nations and reservations), each communally owned, to individual allotments (fee simple ownership) of from an average of 160 acres to over 200 acres assigned to each Indian whose name appeared on the tribal roll or census. The complicated work of the Dawes Commission accomplished this revolutionary economic and cultural change for the tribes of the eastern half of Indian Territory. Another federal commission which prepared the surplus land after allotment assignment in the western half of Indian Territory for settlement by homeseekers under the Homestead Act through the anomalous procedures of land runs, lotteries, and auctions is described in satisfying detail.

Another feature of the *Guide* is an explanation of how members of each of the tribes resident in Oklahoma adjusted to the "great changes," including the shift from tribal citizenship to United States citizenship and participation in the collective life of the new state of Oklahoma, formed

from the partitioned nations and reservations and admitted to the Union in 1907. These include revelations of substantive cultural, economic, and social changes made by Indians adapting to the "new order." The author has singled out the Indians who provided leadership and direction as their people moved into Oklahoma society. The sketch for each tribe concludes with a persuasive presentation of the creative role that Indians from each of the sixty-seven resident tribes play in the educational, political, religious, and social life of modern Oklahoma.

Preface

Not since the publication of Frederick Webb Hodge's *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico*, issued in two volumes in 1910 and 1911, has there been printed a comprehensive guide to this important segment of our population. The intervening forty years have brought great changes to the Indians and to the country in which they live, and students of the American Indian everywhere have felt the need of a readily available single source which brings the facts up to date. With this need in mind, I have attempted to present in compact form authentic accounts of all the Indian tribes and parts of tribes living in Oklahoma, which is the home of one-third of the Indians of the United States.

The United States Indian offices and agencies still record twenty-nine tribes in Oklahoma, most of them located here under the auspices of the government during the last eighty years of the nineteenth century. Within these tribal groups are the remnants of tribes once powerful on the American frontier, whose names even have been all but forgotten, yet who are significant in any account of Oklahoma Indians. For example, there are the Anadarko, well known in Texas and Oklahoma history, who are called Caddo today, their name perpetuated only by the town of Anadarko. And, locally, only one Indian in the Anadarko Area region was pointed out to me as an Anadarko, although in a census in 1857 that tribe constituted about 47 per cent of the people commonly included as Caddo. Because of the importance of their early history and traditions, I have included tribes such as this under their original names, with cross-references to the inclusive group. Thus, all in all, sixty-seven tribes are listed and described in this volume.

To make the guide serviceable and easy to use, I have listed the tribes alphabetically, discussing each under these headings: Name, Present Location, Numbers, History, Government and Organization, Contemporary Life and Culture, Ceremonials and Public Dances, and Suggested Readings. The suggested readings, of course, do not include all that has been written about the tribe, but they are, in my opinion, the most important and the most interesting of the easily accessible books and articles.

The compilation of the population data for each tribe posed peculiar problems. Except in a very few instances, census figures for all Indian tribes

in America, from the first enumerations in Colonial days to the most recent census compiled by the United States Indian offices, have been at best only approximations. Federal census records are incomplete and fall far short of recording the actual Indian population in a given area at any one time, and the 1950 census does not provide enumeration by tribes. The reasons for the difficulties in obtaining an accurate count of the Indians are discussed fully in the introduction. The figures in this volume are also of necessity estimates, although every effort has been made to arrive at reasonably accurate numbers. Some figures are based on reports sent directly to me by the Indian leaders living in their tribal communities in the state. Others have been calculated on a percentage basis from the last separate enumerations of the tribes in their respective agency records. I believe that they represent, as accurately as is possible at this time, the approximate number of Indians in each Oklahoma tribe described.

In the preparation of this book, Hodge's *Handbook of American Indians* has, of course, been indispensable, just as it has

been for every student of the North American Indian since its first issuance. However, it has been used cautiously, with due attention to later research and more recent volumes in the fields of Indian history, anthropology, and archaeology.

I have made full use of the original letters, records, laws, and other documents in the Indian archives and the library of the Oklahoma Historical Society. The rare documents in the Phillips Collection at the University of Oklahoma and in the Union Agency files in the office of the superintendent of the Five Civilized Tribes at Muskogee have also been fully utilized. Original Indian materials in my possession and notes from private collections of friends in Oklahoma have furnished valuable additional data. The bound volumes of the old Indian Territory newspapers in the files of the Oklahoma Historical Society have yielded interesting facts. Special field research provided information on present-day conditions and locations of the Indian tribal groups.

The Indian laws and treaties issued under United States government auspices have been basic texts used constantly in preparing the manuscript, and the compiled laws and session laws published under the authority of the governments of the Five Civilized Tribes have likewise been valuable.

I am indebted to many friends and colleagues who have contributed authentic data and allowed me to use documents and other source materials, and I am happy to acknowledge their aid, without which my book would have been sadly deficient. Professor Edward Everett Dale, research professor of history and director of the Frank Phillips Collection in the University of Oklahoma, pointed out special documents and source materials in the Phillips Collection; indeed, without his encouragement I would never have undertaken this volume. Mr. Grant Foreman of Muskogee kindly lent me some rare reports from the United States Indian Office. Mr. Dover P. Trent, acting district director of the former Oklahoma City Indian Office, was generous in supplying reports on Oklahoma Indian census figures and on the work relating to the Indian credit associations organized among some of the tribal groups. Indian Office officials and agents replied in full detail to my letters of inquiry relating to Indian matters. Among them are the late John T. Montgomery, superintendent of the former Western Oklahoma Consolidated Agency at Anadarko; Mr. W. O. Roberts, director of the Muskogee Area Office; Mr. William W. Head, director of the Anadarko Area Office; Mr.

Royal B. Hassrick, curator of the Southern Plains Indian Museum, Anadarko; Mr. T. B. Hall, superintendent of the Osage Agency; Mr. A. B. Caldwell, educationist, Five Civilized Tribes Agency, Muskogee; Mr. John L. Johnson, district agent, Pawnee Subagency; Mr. H. A. Andrews, agent, Quapaw Subagency, Miami; Miss Eva Lewers, principal, Eufaula Boarding School, Eufaula; and Mrs. Leila Black, principal, Wheelock Academy, Millerton.

Many Indian friends have been prompt and generous in response to requests for information and for materials. Special thanks are due former Chief Jeffie Brown and Rev. Wilsey Palmer of the Seminole Nation, Chief S. W. Brown and Mrs. Ella Burgess of the Yuchi, Mr. Joe Bartles of the Delaware, the late Chief Roly Canard and Dr. Fred S. Clinton of the Creek Nation, Mr. Andrew Dunlap of the Caddo, Rev. Robert P. Chaat of the Comanche, Mr. A. A. Exendine of the Delaware, Mr. McKinley Eagle of the Ponca, Mr. Robert Goombi of the Kiowa, Mr. John Haddon of the Kichai, Mr. Claude Hayman of the Modoc, the late Chief William Durant of the Choctaw Nation, Miss Lillian B. Mathews and Mr. George V. Labadie of the Osage Nation, Governor Floyd E. Maytubby of the Chickasaw Nation, the late Chief J. Bartley Milam and Rev. Eli Pumpkin of the Cherokee Nation, Mr. George H. Roberts of the Pawnee, Mr. Jesse Row-

lodge of the Cheyenne, Mr. Carl Sweezey of the Arapaho, the late Chief Don Whistler of the Sac (Sauk) and Fox, Mrs. Sallie Tyner and Mr. Dan Nadeau of the Potawatomi, and Hon. William G. Stigler of the Choctaw, member of Congress from the Second Congressional District.

Nearer home, I wish to thank the members of the staff of the Oklahoma Historical Society for their interest and assistance. Dr. Charles Evans, secretary, Mrs. Rella Looney, Mrs. Helen Gorman, Mrs. Grace Ward, Mrs. Louise Cook, Mrs. Dorothy Thurston, Miss Martha Mulholland, Mrs. Edith Mitchell, Mrs. Mary Jeanne Hansen, Mrs. Hazel Beatty Hale, and Mrs. Myrtle Jeanne Cook have all been generous with their help during my research and work in their departments.

A special word of appreciation goes to my sister, Mrs. Guy C. Reid of Oklahoma City, for her continued interest and her assistance in typing many pages of the manuscript.

The preparation of this volume has been made possible through a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation awarded by the Rockefeller Committee of the University of Oklahoma in 1947, and I want to express my deep gratitude to the Foundation, the committee, and the University for the opportunity to carry on the necessary field work and research.

MURIEL H. WRIGHT
OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA

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