

Oklahoma and Washington

WHEN George Washington was born February 22, 1732, that country now known as Oklahoma was the western end of the Osage empire. Along the Arkansas river were the Toucaras and the Wichitas while along the Red river, on the eastern side of the present state, were the Caddo groups; in the west and central part of the now state were the Apaches, then called the Faraones, living principally along the South Canadian river. In southern Kansas and northern Oklahoma lived a group known as the Jumanos.

There were no settlements except along the river bottoms. Those of the Wichitas were grass huts, while the Apache settlements in the west were apparently tipis. An interesting feature of these Apache groups was their use of large circles of stone. The use of these is not clear. Some of these circles still exist, such as those near Guymon, Oklahoma.

At the time of Washington's birth Oklahoma was purely an international land, owing allegiance to no one. French traders were finding their way among the Indian tribes and these frequently found rivalry with the Spanish outposts in Texas to the south. There was never any effective occupation of Oklahoma by any nation. Spanish expeditions frequently pursued Pueblo Indians into the plains of western Oklahoma, where the Pueblos mixed with the Apaches.

The Spaniards referred to what we now know as Oklahoma by the term "out where the buffalos run." Another description they gave our land was "out where there was less and less water and more and more sun."¹

There was considerable rivalry between the French traders and the Spanish. The former supplied the Indians with guns and the Indians so armed made expeditions against the Spanish stationed in San Antonio. The Spaniards were handicapped by the fact that they would not put guns in the hands of their Indian allies.

Thus early did Oklahoma assume an international aspect. Oklahoma, though claimed by Spain along with the rest of

America, was never effectively occupied by Spain.

When Washington participated in the French and Indian wars in 1763 he set his face towards Oklahoma but came only as far west as the Ohio valley. It was at this time that Oklahoma became definitely Spanish territory, through the transfer of Louisiana by France to Spain as the result of the Treaty of 1763.

During the Revolutionary war the Indian situation in Oklahoma altered. In the east the Osages raided from Missouri through Arkansas and Oklahoma into Texas. To protect themselves, the Spaniards in Texas had utilized French traders (now Spanish citizens) to make alliances in north Texas and southern Oklahoma against the Osages. As a result, Spanish expeditions from San Antonio reached the Red river. On the west the Apaches had been driven out almost completely by the Comanches who, since the early Eighteenth century had been moving south from Wyoming across Colorado, Oklahoma and west Texas. By 1783 the Spaniards in New Mexico had defeated the Comanches and were making peace with them.

When Washington was president, in 1789, eastern Oklahoma had been subjected to a new influence, that of the American traders. These, like the French traders, began to compete with the Spanish for the possession of Oklahoma, then a part of Louisiana.

One year after Washington's death, Oklahoma was on its way to becoming a part of the American empire. In 1801 Oklahoma became French under the rule of the Emperor Napoleon. Two years later President Jefferson purchased Louisiana territory but Oklahoma continued to maintain its international character. Spain was unwilling to concede that the territory was within Louisiana while the Americans pretended that it was. However, by 1819 the western boundary of the Louisiana purchase ran along the Red river, up the hundredth meridian, thus definitely making Oklahoma American.

On the occasion of the bicentenary of Washington's birth it seems fitting that Americans gain a new perspective of their history. For years our elementary school textbooks have taught nothing but

the history of the Thirteen Colonies. There have been no American heroes but the Pilgrim Fathers, the Revolutionary leaders, the Anglo-Saxons.

It does not diminish Washington's greatness in the least to review the history of America in the light of the merging of several empires. It gives greater significance to our national history if we realize that the United States itself was founded only as late as 1912, when Arizona, the last of the Spanish settlements in the zone of influence of the United States, became a state of the now completed Union.

Washington, as far as Oklahoma and the Spanish southwest is concerned, possesses a universal greatness; he is not a Father for our region in the sense that he is to the New England States. But the Union he was helping build in his own way while our own region went its separate way is now the Union of the various races that make our own United States. And it is to Washington's credit that his glory is not that of any narrow, native provincialism.



MINUTE TAPIOCA PRESIDENT

THE SOONER MAGAZINE finds occasion now and then to boast a bit about our noted alumni—men and women who have made rapid or sure progress in their profession. This time the man is Eben E. Gridley, '04, who is president of the Minute Tapioca company of Orange, Massachusetts, with branches in Porto Rico and South America.

Mr Gridley is a member of the Boston chamber of commerce; the University club of Boston; the Union and Berwind country clubs of Porto Rico.

In the early days of the university, Mr Gridley was a quiet, unassuming student of chemistry and pharmacy. Now he is an executive of several successful business corporations. He is treasurer of the Gridley-Stone company, printers, of Orange, Massachusetts; president of the Orange Co-operative Bank and a trustee of the Orange Savings bank, and is vice-president of the Orange National bank. He is treasurer of the Del Rio plantations of Bayamon, Porto Rico, and is a director of the Sprague, Grout and Lowe, Inc., and is connected with the Orange-Athol airport.

Mr Gridley did special work in analytical chemistry during his college days at the University of Oklahoma and at Chicago university where he obtained his Ph. D. degree in 1905.

¹First mentioned in doctoral thesis of Dr Alfred Barnaby Thomas of the University of Oklahoma history department. To Doctor Thomas and Dr Edward Everett Dale our thanks are due for the information in this article.