

## INDIAN TERRITORY GHOST TOWNS

By A. C. Townsend

A peculiar state of affairs existed late in the last century in the present state of Oklahoma. There was an officially created Oklahoma Territory, but it refused almost without exception to use "Terr." on its postmarks. The postmarks read "Oklahoma" with but just four known exceptions out of the hundreds of towns and cities. And there was no officially declared Indian Territory by the Post Office Department until 1889—but without any exceptions locally every town in the Indian Territory had been using postmarks reading "Indian Territory" in one form or another for a period of fifty years!<sup>1</sup>

By the Act of May 2, 1890, the official boundaries of both Oklahoma Territory and Indian Territory were defined, thus two territories were designated where only one had formerly been specifically designated.

Just to complete the record, the two territories were united and combined into the State of Oklahoma on November 16, 1907, and the old Indian Territory postmarks then became extinct. California and Nevada have no cause to brag of their "ghost towns," at least so far as numbers are concerned. We have a record now of 359 towns that used stamped postmarks, and of that number the *Postal Guide* shows that 132 of them are among the things that were. Over one third of them gone!

The first five Indian postmarks read:  
 Miller Court House, Choctaw Nation, 1824.  
 Cantonment Gibson, Cherokee Nation, 1827.  
 Nicksville, Cherokee Nation, 1828.  
 Fort Towson, Choctaw Nation, 1832.  
 Eagle Town, Choctaw Agency, 1834.<sup>2</sup>

All but Fort Towson and Eagle Town are ghost towns now and covers with these postmarks are exceedingly scarce. The remaining two are pretty small; Fort Towson has less than 500 inhabitants and Eagletown (as the postmark now reads) is but what we call "a wide spot in the road."

Consider some of the names of the dear departed: Bald Hill, Badland, Cary's Ferry, Coody's Bluff, Echo, Frogville, Erin Springs (sentiment there!), Legal, Lyceum, Owl, Panther, Quarz (not gold, just quartz), Starville. Some of them the names of settlers who came to see and to conquer the wilderness and build cities. And their dreams crumbled to dust and their houses and towns crumbled to dust, and in many instances there is not a trace left.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the *Stamp Review* (St. Joseph, Missouri), XV, No. 4, pp. 1, 12.

<sup>2</sup> See Grant Foreman, "Early Post Offices of Oklahoma," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* (Oklahoma City), VI, Nos. 1-4; VIII, No. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Charles N. Gould, *Oklahoma Place Names* (Norman, 1933).

Some of the army names naturally faded away, but what tales of Apache raids and other thrilling events could we shiver over if the old sites had a voice! Camp Supply, Cantonment, Fort Washita. And what became of the Irishmen who founded Erin Springs, MeKey, McLain, McKuskey, Reagan? They too are but ghost towns.

But it was not alone the white man whose dreams faded and whose homes disappeared. Look at the Indian towns: Catale, Choska, Cooyah, Econtuchka, Juanita, Lukfata, Monido, Oconee, Oowala, Sageeyah, Sawokla, Wauhilla.

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