The last Indian land tract opened to public settlement in Oklahoma was the Big Pasture. Set aside at the opening of the Kiowa-Comanche-Apache lands August 6, 1901, the Big Pasture was one of several grazing reserves in the leased district so designated and chosen by the Secretary of The Interior. In area, it comprised 488,000 acres covering parts of present Comanche, Cotton and Tillman counties in Oklahoma. In all, the pasture reserves were of 505,000 acres.¹

Physically, the Big Pasture had varied topography, but was predominantly an area of plains with some wooded draws along the two Cache creeks. Captain Randolph B. Marcy, in his search for the source of Red River, in 1852, noted that timbered regions along Cache creek were the last of any size until the foothills of the Rocky mountains were reached.²

The Big Pasture, at its extremes, was 29 miles in depth on a north-south line and 36 miles wide along a line just south and west of present Temple, in Cotton County, Oklahoma. Starting at the north bank of the Red river 9½ miles south and 3 east of Temple, the boundary line proceeded 7½ miles due north; west 6 miles; north 18 miles to a point 6 miles south of Lawton; west 9 miles; south 3 miles; east 1¾ miles; south ¼ mile; east ¼ mile; south 2¾ miles; west 23 miles and south 16 miles to the north bank of the Red river again.

The Plains Indians were probably inhabitants of the area prior to the development of the country and evidences have been found that indicate Coronado, in his search for Quivera passed approximately through the middle of the Big Pasture and left at least one of his cohorts near Eschiti townsite.³

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³ The Temple Tribune, August 22, 1907: “Eschiti, Oklahoma.—While excavating on a right-of-way near here a party of scraper drivers unearthed a historic tombstone that appears to have been set in a graveyard that once existed here. The stone is carved into a diamond shape and consists of a granite base to which is cemented a triangular marble with the vortex pointing upward. The base is about ten inches high, six inches wide and three feet long, and the marble about two feet square, the diamond outline of the entire piece being perfected by a triangular composition of cement and adamantine substance attached to the bottom of the granite and holding the entire piece in its upright position.
The Big Pasture

From 1901 until final approval date of March 20, 1906, three separate legislative attempts to open the pasture lands to settlement were made. Representative B. R. Stephens, of the 16th Texas Congressional District, Vernon, Texas, was author of the bills.4

Interest in the opening of the new lands to settlement was high. Most of the land was rich and fertile and would eventually provide homes for 2,337 families less than a year after the opening.6 Citizens in the new country—with towns only four years old—felt the opening of the Big Pasture would mean more to the area than statehood.6

Twice, bills for the opening of pasture and wood reserves had passed the house under Stephens’ sponsorship only to fail in the senate. Opposition of Secretary of the Interior A. E. Hitchcock and Indian Commissioner F. E. Leupp was blamed for the Senate’s lack of action.7

The third bill introduced by Stephens, House Bill 431 (34 Statutes, 80), was passed by the Senate as received from the the House. However, it also met opposition of Leupp, Hitchcock and, in turn, President Theodore Roosevelt. The bill was finally recalled from the president, where it faced certain veto,8 amended, re-passed and signed into law June 5, 1906.9

Opposition to House Bill 431 unamended was due to lack of provisions for Indian allotments and a minimum price of $1.50 per acre. Roosevelt, on his famous wolf hunt of 1905, had been in parts of the Big Pasture and was given credit for being familiar

“On the front of the marble slab is an inscription printed in undiscernable Spanish, above the inscription being the name ‘Don Juan Valerez El Padre, Madrid Senor de la Bonito Senorita.’ Beneath the inscription is the date, ‘1542.’

“The tombstone was discovered about ten feet beneath the surface and has been taken to Fort Worth for safe keeping by the railroad company. It is known in history that the Spaniards were in this part of the country in the year recorded on this piece of imperishable monument.”

Apparently the “safe keeping” was permanent, for I (C. M. Cooper) have been unable to find anyone who knows anything of the monument. I have contacted two different railroads, one of them the successor to the LWF, and NW and have drawn complete blanks.

5 A petition prepared during the financial panic of 1907 seeking a moratorium on the first annual payment listed 2,337 families as Big Pasture residents.
6 The Temple Tribune, May 31, 1906: “When the news reached this place Saturday that the Senate had passed the Pasture bill without a dissenting vote, the news spread among the people like wild fire The citizens of Comanche county have been looking forward to its passage with great eagerness, and in fact have felt as though the opening of the pasture meant more to this country than statehood would.”
7 Ibid., March 15, 1906.
8 Ibid., March 22, 1906.
9 Ibid., June 14, 1906.
enough with land values to discern a discrepancy in prices. Stephens' amended bill rectified these omissions, providing that each child of Indian parentage of the Kiowa, Comanche and Apache tribes should receive an allotment of 160 acres and also set a minimum price of $5 per acre for the land.10

*House Bill 431* was activated by presidential proclamation September 19, 1906, with the document calling for the Secretary of the Interior to open the lands to settlement within six months. Included in the opening were four pasture reserves; the Big Pasture; a reserve in Kiowa county; one north of Fletcher in Comanche-Caddo counties and one in eastern Comanche county.11

Allotments were made to Kiowa, Comanche and Apache children born since June 6, 1900.12 In all, 3,445 allotments were made on this reserve between the years 1900 to 1910.13 Most of the Fletcher reserve was taken up with Indian allotments of 160 acres each. In many instances, when left to their own choice. Indians chose quarter sections with wood and water located thereon, although agents in charge of allotments, John P. Blackmon and Sub-agent W. I. Silcot, advised the Indians to choose level lands.14 In the first part of the opening, 128 Indians chose land for the most part in the richly wooded bottomlands of West and East Cache creeks.15

Even before the earliest opening of the Kiowa-Comanche reservation in 1901, the Big Pasture had been leased to Texas ranchers. A primal reason the 1901 opening was delayed was due to the ranchers' objections.16 Grazing leases were of six miles width in the Big Pasture and ran the full length. According to a Suggs wrangler, the Wagoner range was the west side of the pasture; the Burnett grazing rights were for the middle, while the Suggs cattle grazed the east portion.

Other activity in the Big Pasture prior to official opening was leasing for agriculture purposes quarter-sections in the area. Fourteen families left Temple in February, 1906, for the area around what is now Randlett. This action was taken by the Interior

10 Ibid., March 29, 1906.
11 Ibid., March 1, 1906.
12 Ibid., April 5, 1906.
13 Bureau of Indian Affairs Realty Requirements June 3, 1957, pp. 258-50. An excerpt from the report of the Secretary of the Interior for 1907 (House Docs., 60th Cong. 1st Sess., XXVI [5295], pp. 21, 49), shows that in that year there were 1,235 Kiowas, 1,440 Comanche and 159 Apaches, for a total of 2,834. In view of this report, the number of allotments, even for a 10-year period, at first seems excessive. However, studies of the life of the Indians around the turn of the century shows that extremely high mortality and birth rates prevailed.
14 The Temple Tribune, May 17, 1906.
15 Map here published.
16 Wright, op. cit., p. 264.
Department following failure of the Senate to approve opening legislation.17

Quarters were leased for a five-year term at the rate of 25¢ per acre, or $40 per year. Other lease stipulations were that at least 120 acres had to be “broken out” in the life of the lease and quarter sections to be fenced with a four-wire fence.18

Following President Roosevelt’s proclamation of September 19, machinery was rapidly put into operation for the opening of the Big Pasture. Rules and regulations governing the opening were formulated and announced by Secretary Hitchcock a month later on October 19, 1906. Regulations stated lands would be sold by sealed bids with a minimum price previously stated. A sum equal to one-fifth of the total bid was to be enclosed with each bid as a deposit. The balance was to be paid in four equal annual payments. Only qualified entrymen, i.e., a citizen of the United States, 21 or older, not owner of more than 160 acres of land who had not previously filed upon any lands subject to homestead entry, or those who were a head of a family, were permitted to bid. Second entrymen were also qualified. All bidders had to furnish affidavits of entrymen qualifications with bids.19

Original date of receipt of bids had been scheduled for December 3, 1906, at the Lawton Land office. Receipt of bids, however, was postponed one week and bids were first received Monday, December 10, 1906. Bids poured in between the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. daily until Saturday, December 15. During that period, 7621 bids were received representing an estimated $2,286,300 and some 13,000 bids under original estimates of more optimistic citizens.20

Prior to the announcement of rules and regulations governing the sale, a difference of opinion developed over the best method—sealed bids or public auction—of land disposal.

Interior Department officials had announced their decision that the sealed bid method would be used until Delegate Bird McGuire made an emphatic protest and at the same time made a heated request for sale of lands at public auction.21

Delegate McGuire made his protest directly to President Roosevelt. However, Commissioner Leupp, a close personal friend of Roosevelt, finally prevailed in his sealed bid proposal. The President backed Leupp even over objections of General Commissioner W. A. Richards’ official subordinates who actively championed the public

17 Personal recollection of P. H. Page, Temple, one of original lessees.
18 Ibid.
19 Rules and Regulations, a Secretary of State Document, October 19, 1906.
20 The Lawton State Democrat, December 16, 1906.
21 The Temple Tribune, September 13, 1906.
auction disposal method. Chief Quanah Parker, who had earned the respect and admiration of white men and Indians alike, was said to have favored the public auction method, which, in his opinion, would have raised more money for the Indian tribes. Prior to that, however, Parker was said to have opposed the opening.

Opening of bids at the Lawton office began the following Monday, December 17, and continued daily, Sundays and holidays excluded, according to the rules. Final results showed that slightly over $4 million was gained from the bid plan representing sale of 396,000 acres. Sale money was deposited in the U. S. Treasury to the credit of members of the three tribes, Kiowa, Comanche and Prairie Apache. Money so deposited, according to rules and regulations, was to bear 4% per annum.

Bids ranged from the $800 minimum per quarter section to the high of $7,376 bid by T. B. Best for NW 3/4 Sec. 26, T 4 S., R 12 W. M. S. Trope bid $6,333 for the same quarter, which was near the projected Randlett townsite.

Following the bid openings, successful bidders were notified and for weeks newspapers carried names, by towns, of successful bidders. Dates were given for successful bidders to file for entrymen permits at the Lawton office beginning March 15, 1907. Entry could be made any time after filing with the office but must be completed within six months, the rules stated.

Miss Olive Jones qualified as the first entryman, filing as soon as the office opened for business on March 15. The first married woman qualifying under the "or head of the house" provision of entrymen rules, was Mrs. Mary A. Ashurat, San Jose, Calif., for the NW 3/4 Sec. 24, T 2 S., R 14 W.

A number of multiple bids were made. Mrs. Adele French, of McAlester, bid on 1,820 separate tracts of land in the Big Pasture according to a current newspaper report. Homestead provisions had to be followed and only one quarter could be purchased by any one person. Several reports were current, however, that persons put up the money for the purchase, having a figurehead owner for the record. At a later date, the lands were then assigned back to the financier.

For the opening and bidding, field notes, plats, maps and other descriptive literature were at Anadarko, Hobart, Frederick and

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23 Ibid.
24 The Lawton Constitution, December 20, 1906.
26 The Lawton Constitution, December 20, 1906.
27 Ibid., March 21, 1907.
28 Ibid.
Lawton, with representatives of the Interior Department stationed at the latter two towns. Prior to the opening, the Department had appointed a commission to survey five government townsites in the Big Pasture.

The commission was organized at Anadarko and was comprised of Agent W. L. Miller as president and Professor J. H. Haddon, of the Comanche Indian school, as secretary. George W. Hooper was chief surveyor for townsites and allotments. Actual selection of location was made secretly, leaked out once and apparently were changed by Agent J. P. Blackmon and Supervisor Dickson. Final townsite approval for location and names was gained from Judge Thomas Ryan, acting Secretary of the Interior, on September 12, 1906.\(^2\) Blackmon and Dickson selected the sites and Commissioner Leupp selected the names.

Location of townsites as finally surveyed and plated and the names were:

**Randett:** \( S \frac{1}{2} \) of Sec. 28 and \( E \frac{1}{2} \) of \( SE \frac{1}{2} \) of Sec. 29, T 4 S., R 12 W, 400 acres. Randlett was named after Colonel J. H. Randlett, for many years agent at the Indian Agency at Anadarko. Colonel Randlett was much revered by the Indians.

**Eschiti:** \( N \frac{1}{2} \) Sec. 3 T 4 S., R 14 W, 320 acres, named in honor of the second chief of the Comanches. Chief Eschiti is said to have belonged to an unprogressive division of the Comanches for many years, but he then was head of the van for progress and development.

**Quanah:** \( SW \frac{1}{4} \) and \( S \frac{1}{2} \) of \( NW \frac{1}{4} \) and \( W \frac{1}{2} \) of \( SE \frac{1}{4} \) Sec. 36, T 3 S., R 16 W, 320 acres. Quanah, of course, was named as a memorial to Quanah Parker, head chief of the Comanches.

**Isadore:** \( S \frac{1}{2} \) of \( NE \frac{1}{4} \) and \( S \frac{1}{2} \) of \( NW \frac{1}{4} \) and \( N \frac{1}{2} \) of \( SE \frac{1}{4} \) and \( N \frac{1}{2} \) of \( SW \frac{1}{4} \) of Sec. 24, T 2 S., R. 16 W., 320 acres. "Isadore" was named in honor of Father Isidore, of the St. Patrick Catholic Mission at Anadarko. A friend and counselor of the Indians, Father Isidore held the respect of all classes of citizens.

**Ahpeatone:** \( W \frac{1}{2} \) of Sec. 34, T. 2 S., R. 13 W, 320 acres, was named after the principal chief of the Kiowas. Ahpeatone was made chief, it was said, because he did not sign the "Jerome Treaty," thus

\(^2\) Department of Interior letter, September 12, 1906, which is given in the Appendix of this article. A photostat of this letter was received in a communication from D. G. Bruce, Acting Chief of Branch of Realty, Department of Interior, dated June 3, 1957, to the writer.
remaining in position to lead his people back to their old reservation. 29

In the small pasture number four southwest of Hobart, one other town was platted and surveyed, "Koonkazachey." It contained 160 acres and was named after the chief of the Apaches. He was better known as Apache John. He held the honored place in his tribe for many years while its members had dwindled down until they numbered little more than 100 (159 actually in 1907). Koonkazachey was located on S1/2 and S1/2 of N1/2 of NW1/4 and N1/2 of N1/2 of SW1/4 of Sec. 13, T 5 N., R 19 W. (160 acres). 30

Sale of town lots in the five government towns was made by public auction. Sale was set up, publicly announced and well advertised. Quanah was the first sale scheduled and Interior Department officials soon began to fear for the future of the townsite sales. Only about one-half of Quanah's lots were sold as was the case at the Isadore sale. In Isadore lots went from $1 for residential lots to $100 for the choicest of "business" lots. Eschiti's sale was held on Friday, May 24, 1907 with prices ranging from $150 to $360 for business lots and from $5 to $200 for home sites. 31 Ahpeatone's lot sale was held four weeks later to the day with the highest bid being $135 for a business lot. 32

The Randlett sale was apparently the most attractive to potential buyers with approximately 4,500 people present for the sale. Lack of interest at Isadore and Quanah brought their sales to a close.

Another factor entering into the picture was the proposed expansion of the Lawton, Wichita Falls and Northwestern railroad which had platted a railroad townsite called Emerson (NE1/4, Sec. 27, R 2 S., R 12 W) under provisions of another Stephen's sponsored bill which provided for opening of railroad townsites. The Emerson sale was held July 28, 1907 and lots went from $475 for a choice corner business lot down to $10 for remote residential areas. 33

29 Ahpeatone (or Apiatan) was a nephew of old Chief Lone Wolf of the Kiowa tribe, and had been sent forth to investigate the truth about the Indian messiah who was reported among some of the northwestern tribes, during the "Ghost Dance" religious craze in 1890-91. The old reservation mentioned here has reference to the lands assigned in Western Oklahoma and the Texas Panhandle, to the Kiowa and Comanche by the Treaty of the Little Arkansas on August 15, 1865. The "Jerome Treaty" was the treaty drawn up by the U. S. Cherokee Commission ("Jerome Commission") and signed by Kiowa and Comanche leaders on September 28, 1892. The Jerome Treaty was repudiated by the Indians who had signed the document, stating that they had not understood its terms. Congress did not ratify the treaty until June 26, 1901—Ed.

31 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
Randlett and Eschiti, actually, were the only government town-sites which thrived. Randlett soon was a growing community and at one time had a population around 1,800, two newspapers and two banks. Eschiti also enjoyed a brief spurt of activity until the railroad, (now MKT line) put through about a mile south of the townsite. The railroad set up another townsite called Kell, after president of the line, two miles to the west. For a time a bitter rivalry between the two towns was nourished. Eschiti was recognized by the government and held the post office; Kell citizens, not to be outdone, one night stole the small frame post office building from Eschiti and moved it to the Kell townsite. Troops from Fort Sill helped reclaim the post office for Eschiti but only briefly. The two towns soon combined to form the present Grandfield.

Another railroad town which sprang up was Devol to the east of the present Grandfield. Devol ("loved" spelled backwards), at one time, boasted around 3,000 people and was a strong railroad shipping center for the new country.

Of the towns, only Randlett and Devol retain any identity as towns, with the exception of Hollister and Loveland, both railroad towns in the western part of the pasture. Only schools remain at the other towns.

Appendix

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington.

The Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

September 12, 1906.

Sir:

I have considered your letter of the 10th instant, relative to the selection of town sites in the Kiowa, Comanche and Apache pasture lands, under the Act of Congress approved March 20, 1906, (34 Statutes, 80), and under instructions approved July 21, 1906.

You state that Agent Blackmon and Supervisor Dickson, who were designated to select said town sites, report that they have selected five sites for towns in the "Big Pasture" (Pasture No. 1) and one in Pasture No. 4, and that no selection was made in Pasture No. 2, as there are already towns conveniently located on three sides of said pasture. The selections made in Pasture No. 1 are as follows:

Town No. 1. South half of section 28, and East half of south east quarter of section 29, Township 4 South, Range 12 West; area 400 acres.

Town No. 2. North half of section 3, Township 4 South, Range 14 west; area 320 acres.

Town No. 3. Southwest quarter of section 36, south half of northwest quarter of section 36, West half of Southeast quarter of section 36, Township 3 south, Range 16 west; area 320 acres.

Town No. 4. South half of the northeast quarter and the South half of the northwest quarter; the north half of the southeast quarter; and the
North half of the Southwest quarter of Section 24, Township 2 south, Range 16 west. (area not stated).

Town No. 5. West half of section 34, Township 2 south, Range 13 west; area 320 acres.

The selection made for the townsites in Pasture No. 4 is as follows: South half, and South half of north half of the Northwest quarter, and the North half of the North half of the Southwest quarter of Section 13, Township 5 north, Range 19 west, containing 160 acres.

Messrs. Blackmon and Dickson make no recommendation as to names for these townsites, but you suggest that the following names be given them:

No. 1, Randlett,
No. 2, Eschiti,
No. 3, Quanah,
No. 4, Isadore
No. 5, Ahpeatone,
and Pasture No. 4, Koonkazachey.

In accordance with your recommendation, the selections made by Messrs. Blackmon and Dickson, as indicated above, are hereby approved, and the names selected by you for the townsites are also approved.

The enclosures of your letter are herewith returned.

Very respectfully,
Thomas Ryan,
Acting Secretary.

8914 Ind. Div. 1906.
4 enclosures.
JES