



The Sooner State

Established 1907
46th State

EXTREMES

Hottest: The state's highest temperature was 120°F (49°C) in Tipton on 27 June 1994.

Coldest: The lowest temperature was -27°F (-33°C) in Watts on 18 January 1930.



Did You Know?

- During the 1889 Land Run, some settlers sneaked into Oklahoma before the starting signal was given. Because they went too soon, Oklahomans were nicknamed "Sooners."
- An operating oil well stands on the grounds of the state capital.
- The word *Oklahoma* is Choctaw for "red people."
- Annual Native American celebrations include the Cherokee Nation's Homecoming in Tahlequah and the Red Earth Festival in Oklahoma City.
- Oklahoma's flag shows an Osage battle shield with two symbols of peace: an olive branch and a peace pipe.
- The World Championship Hog Calling Contest takes place in Weatherford each February.
- In 1953, Oklahoma changed its official state song to the theme from the famous *Oklahoma!* Broadway musical.
- Parking meters and shopping carts were first invented in Oklahoma.

The Place

Climate

Two air masses meet in Oklahoma, occasionally producing some wild weather. Warm, wet air moves up from the Gulf of Mexico, and cold, dry air descends from the north. These air collisions cause fast changes in temperature, high winds, heavy thunderstorms, and dangerous tornadoes. These tornadoes can rip apart buildings with twisting winds that travel hundreds of miles per hour. However, most of the time Oklahoma's climate is pleasant, with an average annual temperature of 60°F (16°C). Summers are long and hot, while winters are short and mild.

Geography

Many beautiful landscapes can be found in Oklahoma. Trees like oak, hickory, and pine cover the rolling hills of the east. The southern section has mountain ranges, as well as swampy lowlands along the Red and Arkansas Rivers. Much of the state is made up of high, flat, and treeless plains that are good for farming and ranching. Red canyons and tall sand dunes also dot the western part of the state. Oklahoma is shaped like a big frying pan, and the skinny part of western Oklahoma is called the Panhandle. Oklahoma's 69,903 square miles (181,048 sq km) make it the 20th largest state.

Resources and Economy



Since the early years of Oklahoma's statehood, oil has been the most important resource. Other products like natural gas and coal also come out of Oklahoma's rich ground. These resources help fuel people's cars and heat their homes. Oklahoma has also developed other industries so that sudden drops in oil prices don't badly damage the state's economy. For example, Oklahomans manufacture cars and military airplanes. Oklahoma City has become a center for banking and insurance. The state's forests produce timber, which is used to build furniture and homes. Agriculture has always played a big role in the economy. Cattle ranchers first drove their herds through Oklahoma more than a hundred years ago, and cattle still brings a lot of money to the state. Crops are grown throughout Oklahoma. Wheat is grown mostly in the west, peanuts in the southwest, and corn and peaches in the east.

History

Time Line

A.D. 800

A.D. 800 The Spiro people begin to develop their society along the Arkansas River

1500

1541 Francisco Vásquez de Coronado crosses Oklahoma in his search for cities of gold



1800

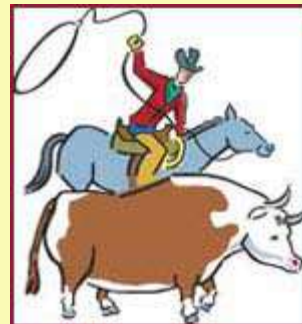
1803 The United States buys the Louisiana Territory, including Oklahoma, from France

1820s and '30s Native Americans are forced into Indian Territory

1861 The Five Civilized Tribes make an alliance with the Confederate states during the Civil War





1866 The U.S. government takes land away from Indian Territory

1867 Cattle drives begin to run through Oklahoma from Texas into Kansas



1889 Thousands of settlers pour into Oklahoma during the first of several land runs

1890 The Indian Territory is divided into Oklahoma Territory and Indian Territory

1897	Oklahoma's first commercial oil well is drilled in Bartlesville	
1900		
1907	Indian Territory and Oklahoma Territory join to become the state of Oklahoma	
1928	Oklahoma City's oil field is discovered	
1930s	Okies head west after a devastating drought strikes the state	
1970s	The demand for oil skyrockets	
1980s	As oil prices fall, hundreds of wells are closed down	
1995	Oklahoma City's Murrah Federal Building is bombed; 168 people die	
PRESENT		

The Spiro People

Early Native Americans wandered across the Oklahoma plains hunting animals such as bison. Then in about A.D. 800, the Spiro people developed a



sophisticated culture by the Arkansas River. These people built large mounds that served as religious temples and burial places for important people. They filled the mounds with precious stones, baskets, and wooden masks. For five hundred years these mounds formed a political and religious center for a vast region. The Spiro people's culture eventually faded away, probably due to attacks from other tribes.

Coronado and the Europeans

In 1541, the Spanish explorer Francisco Vázquez de Coronado and his men were the first Europeans to arrive in Oklahoma. Coronado had heard stories of seven great cities filled with gold, and he came to the area hoping to become rich. However, the cities of gold did not exist, so Coronado left disappointed and empty-handed. Other explorers from Spain and France came later, followed by fur trappers who traded with the Native Americans. Both Spain and France claimed that they owned Oklahoma's land, and they fought each other for control of it. In 1803, France sold the territory to the United States as part of the Louisiana Purchase.

The Five Civilized Tribes



In the eastern United States lived the Five Civilized Tribes, so named because many of the people had taken on European customs. They included the Choctaw, Muscogee (or Creek), Chickasaw, Seminole, and Cherokee tribes. Because the U.S. government wanted these tribes' land in the East, it decided to move them away into a separate territory. It was called Indian Territory, and it included most of present-day Oklahoma. Many Native Americans did not want to leave their homes, but U.S. soldiers forced them out. Thousands of Native Americans died on their way to Indian Territory, so they called the journey the Trail of Tears.

The Land Run

The government told the Native



Americans that Indian Territory would always belong to them, but this changed after the Civil War. To protect themselves from other tribes, the Five Civilized Tribes had taken the side of the Confederate states. When the Confederacy lost the war, the United States took much of the Native Americans' land away. Settlers urged the government to open up this land for settlement. On 22 April 1889, the settlers were finally allowed in. Buglers from the 5th U.S. Cavalry signaled the beginning of the famous Oklahoma Land Run. Tens of thousands of settlers raced across the plains on horses and in wagons to get the best land. This area was called Oklahoma Territory. Over the next few years, more land runs opened up the rest of Indian Territory to white settlement. In 1907, Oklahoma Territory and Indian Territory were combined to form the new state of Oklahoma.

Fields of Black Gold

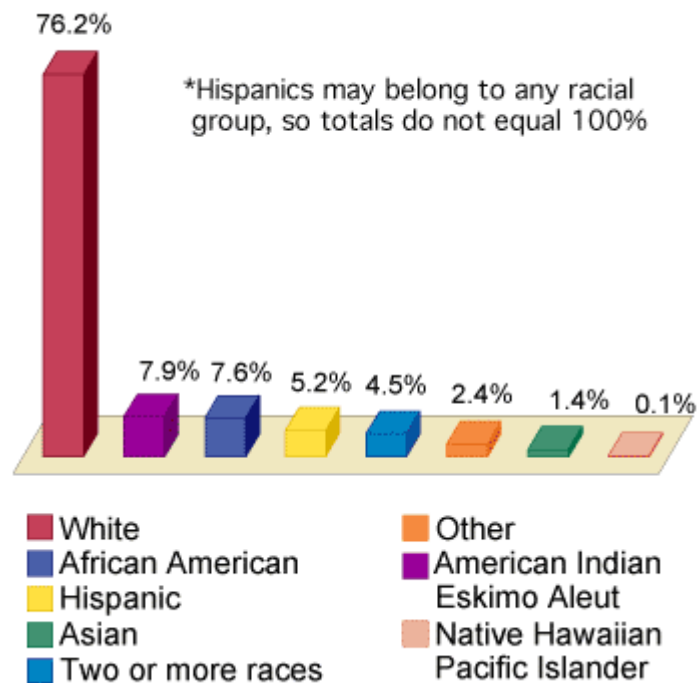


During the years of the land runs, people began finding Oklahoma's most precious resource—oil. Then in the early 1900s, giant underground oil deposits were discovered near Tulsa and Oklahoma City. Huge quantities of oil poured out of Oklahoma's new oil wells. In 1928, one Oklahoma City well produced 6,500 barrels of oil each day! Rapidly built oil towns filled with people hoping to strike it rich from the "black gold." Many became wealthy, including some Native Americans such as the Osage. Since then, oil has remained the backbone of the Oklahoma economy.

Population

Oklahoma prides itself on the diversity of its people. The state has one of the largest populations of Native Americans in the country, with about 270,000 people. Many of them are descendants from one of the nearly 70 tribes that lived in Indian Territory. African-Americans founded towns during the land runs. The first white settlers in Oklahoma included large numbers of immigrants from Europe. Oklahoma today is a mostly urban state, with two-thirds of its population living in cities.

Total Population: 3,511,532



Government

Capital: Oklahoma City

U.S. Senators: 2

U.S. Representatives: 5

Counties: 77

- Oklahoma's 48 state senators serve four-year terms, and its 101 state representatives serve two-year terms.
- Although the state constitution has been amended many times, Oklahoma still uses the original constitution drafted in 1907.

Famous People

- *Brad Pitt* — Movie star
- *Garth Brooks* — Country music star

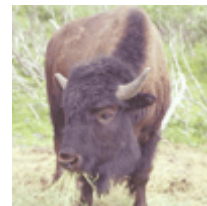
- *Jim Thorpe* — Football and baseball player and Olympic gold medalist
- *Leona Mitchell* — Opera singer
- *Maria Tallchief* — Ballerina
- *Mickey Mantle* — Baseball Hall of Famer
- *N. Scott Momaday* — Kiowa writer and Pulitzer Prize winner
- *Ralph Ellison* — Author of *The Invisible Man*
- *Reba McEntire* — Country singer
- *Will Rogers* — Humorist and actor
- *Woody Guthrie* — Folksinger

Fun Facts & Contacts

State Symbols

State Animal

Bison—Although Oklahoma's bison were hunted almost to extinction, there are hundreds in the state today.



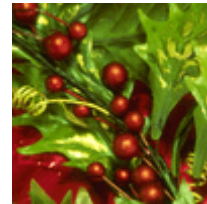
State Bird

Scissor-tailed flycatcher—This gray bird has a long forked tail that looks like a pair of scissors.



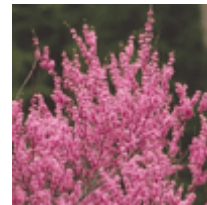
State Flower

Mistletoe—Oklahomans chose this popular Christmas decoration as their official flower more than a century ago.



State Tree

Redbud—This colorful tree inspired early settlers as they traveled to their new homes.



Cultural Note

In the late 1920s, five talented artists from the Kiowa tribe in western Oklahoma enrolled in the University of Oklahoma School of Art. Spencer Asah, James Auchiah, Jack Hokeah, Stephen Mopope, and Monroe Tsatoke developed their skills there and became famous painters known as the Kiowa Five. Their



paintings were very popular, and they showed them throughout America and Europe. The Kiowa Five's works have been an important influence on many Native American painters. Known today as Traditional Indian Painting, their style featured simple and beautiful images of Native American dances and daily life.

For More Information

See www.state.ok.us or contact Oklahoma Tourism, PO Box 52002, Oklahoma City, OK 73152; phone (800) 654-8240; web site www.travelok.com.

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ProQuest Information and Learning Company
333 South 520 West, Suite 360
Lindon, Utah 84042 USA
1.800.528.6279
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