



JUL 22 1982

Indians Rejected 1st Constitution

A bill was introduced in the U.S. Senate before the end of the Civil War to consolidate the many tribes of the Indian Territory into a single territorial government but it did not pass.

In the 41st Congress another bill was introduced for the organization of Indian Territory, mentioning that it should be called "Oklahoma," as provided in the Choctaw-Chickasha Treaty of 1866. This specified that the proposed intertribal commonwealth be called "The Territory of Oklahoma."

At the council in Okmulgee in 1870, a committee was named to draft a constitution for Indian Territory. What they came up with was called "a model of brevity and conciseness," consisting of a preamble and 46 sections grouped into six articles.

The committee reported that "the organization of the people here represented, and such as may hereafter unite with them, should be a government of their own choice. It should be republican in form, with its powers clearly defined, and full guarantees given for all the powers, rights and privileges respectfully now reserved to them by their treaties."

The Okmulgee constitution was acted upon first by the Chickasha Nation, where it was almost unanimously rejected, professedly because it did not provide for equal representation on part of all the tribes.

This put a damper on popular interest in the Okmulgee constitution, although it remained a topic of lively discussion for several years.