

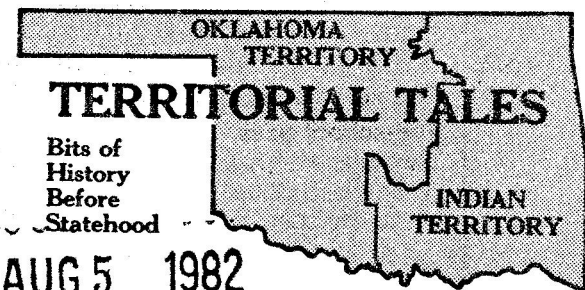
Choctaw Indian Territory Trespassers Driven Out — But Only With a Fight

Eugene T. Johnson was engaged as collector of revenues for several tribes in Indian Territory for seven years. One of his responsibilities was to locate and eject illegal timber-cutters from the Choctaw Nation, according to "History of Oklahoma," by J.B. Thoburn.

When government men went in to eject trespassers, Johnson recalled, they were subjected to threats and, at times, open warfare seemed imminent. Some of those ejected would simply re-enter the reservation from another direction and resume business. Johnson said 102 illegal sawmills — some rather large — were located and removed.

The ejection of a sturdy mountaineer from a mountain-top home 35 miles south of Talihina was described by Johnson. This man cultivated a small tract of land and killed bear, deer, turkey and other wild game. Furs and hides were a profitable source of income but this man was a trespasser. He paid no rent or taxes to the Choctaw Nation.

When Johnson went to



eject him he took a party of men to help. They found his cabin to be a veritable fortification. They removed his rifles, pistols and ammunition, along with other properties in what proved to be a valuable lesson to trespassers.

Illegal mining of coal was another problem for Indians. Some 2,500 farms on Choctaw coal lands had been occupied

by white men without permission or payment of rent. There also were instances, especially in western Oklahoma, where cattlemen would lease one section of land from Indians and then fence up to 15 sections for use.

Merchants also had to be checked to be sure they were paying the proper amount of taxes into tribal funds.