

OKLAHOMA
TERRITORY

TERRITORIAL TALES

Bits of
History
Before
Statehood

INDIAN
TERRITORY

SEP 9 1982

Paper Blasted Land Leases

Early-day cattlemen of Oklahoma Territory operated on a grand scale, leasing vast tracts of Indian Lands. The Oklahoma War Chief, one of the first newspapers of the territory, didn't think the big leases were a good idea.

One of its issues commented on a map issued by the Department of the Interior showing the following land leases:

- No. 1, E. Fenlon, 564,480 acres;
- No. 2, W.E. McLaley, 564,480 acres;
- No. 3, H.B. Denman, 575,000 acres;
- No. 4, J.S. Morrison, 138,240 acres;
- No. 5, L.M. Briggs, 318,720 acres;
- No. 6, A.G. Evans, 456,960 acres;
- No. 7, R.D. Hunter, 500,000 acres;
- TOTAL, 3,117,880 acres

"Spell that out — three million, one hundred and seventeen thousand, eight hundred and eighty acres!" the Oklahoma War Chief editor wrote. "Divide it up into 160 acres farms; just 19,586 farms with 120 acres left over for a soldier's home. On each farm a husband, wife and three children would be, say, in round numbers, a thriving population of 100,000 producers. And their vast domain leased to seven cattle kings!"

The editor said the rental was two cents per acre and the total rental \$62,357.60. He demanded, "What must be said about such a policy?" concluding, "Do not ask why Oklahoma has been opened up for homestead and pre-emption. Rather face Jerusalem and pray, "How long, oh Lord, how long?"

The Oklahoma War Chief became the official organ for Capt. David L. Payne's Oklahoma Colony.