



Violence Marred Life on Frontier

While education and culture were not lacking in some quarters of Indian Territory and missionaries worked diligently to establish churches, social conditions were far from being ideal.

Illicit whiskey peddlers were incessantly active, in spite of laws prohibiting sale of liquor to Indians and the vigilance of federal and tribal officials.

Indian Territory was regarded as a mecca for renegades, outlaws and fugitives from justice in the states, who fled to the fastnesses of the hill country for refuge. They made quite a few recruits for their ranks from among the shiftless sons of settlers who were impressed by the boasts of adventure and easy money.

Under such circumstances it was customary for most men to go about armed. With individuals, as with nations, armed preparedness sometimes led to clashes and tragedies that might not otherwise have happened.

Newspapers of Indian Territory and Oklahoma Territory before statehood produced scarcely an issue without describing in more or less detail at least one murder. Reports of violence were readily available, although reliable descriptions might have been somewhat less so. This did not always handicap imaginative writers.

Many of the feuds were attributable to nothing more than whiskey-crazed men who had no other motives for killing than sheer blood-thirstiness. In others, personal hatred or the spirit of revenge was apparent. Murders for robbery were common.