

OKLAHOMA  
TERRITORY

## TERRITORIAL TALES

Bits of  
History  
Before  
Statehood

INDIAN  
TERRITORY

OCT 5 1982

# Presidential Hunt Saved Railroad Bill

Railroads were considered essential to growth and prosperity of frontier towns. Railroads had been built into or across Indian Territory before lands were opened up to settlement but the panic of 1893 and the following depression stopped development for awhile.

When talk was revived for extending the St. Louis and San Francisco (Frisco) from Red Fork, near Tulsa, the keen rivalry between Oklahoma City and Guthrie was renewed. As territorial capital, Guthrie was more prosperous than Oklahoma City, claiming also a considerable overland trade in the Cimarron River Valley.

Oklahoma City was referred to as "a crossroads town" because two railroad lines intersected within its limits, but its wagon trade was somewhat limited by local markets in surrounding areas.

Oklahoma City leaders, headed by Charles G. Jones, tried to secure the Frisco extension. A company known as the St. Louis and Oklahoma was chartered, with Oklahoma City businessmen holding most of the directorships. A bill was passed by Congress granting it right of way across the Creek country to the Oklahoma County line. But President Grover Cleveland vetoed it because he was not satisfied that the rights of the Creeks had been protected.

The bill was reintroduced the next session and it again passed both houses of Congress. Jones also lined up the support of Principal Chief Pleasant Porter of the Creek Nation and other Indian delegations in Washington. But he became somewhat anxious and decided to call upon the president's secretary at the White House. When told he was seeking information as to the fate of the bill granting right of way across the Creek Nation to the Oklahoma Territory line for the railroad he proposed to build, the secretary raised his hand to gesture for silence.

"Shhh! Don't say a word," the secretary told Jones. "His excellency is just preparing to leave for a duck hunt down on Chesapeake Bay. If you will keep quiet and not bother him before he starts, its limits will expire before his return and the bill will become a law without the president's signature."

With a feeling of achievement, Jones tip-toed out of the White House, wishing the president a run of good luck on his hunting trip. Thus the bill became law without executive approval, and the right of way was transferred to the Frisco, which built the line.