

OKLAHOMA
TERRITORY

TERRITORIAL TALES

Bits of
History
Before
Statehood

INDIAN
TERRITORY

OCT 14 1982

First Legislature Lacked Quorum

The first Oklahoma territorial Legislature, convening in Guthrie on Aug. 17, 1890, remained in session for 10 days without any action because of lack of a quorum.

The delay was the result of the deaths of two House members within two days of their elections, necessitating another election to choose successors.

After this, Legislature members assembled, elected officers and remained in session for 120 legislative days. Slow transportation and poor roads meant that trips back home were very few.

According to a story in The Daily Oklahoman, political affiliation of the members was: Senate, 6 Republicans, 5 Democrats, 1 Farmers Alliance and 1 Independent; House, 14 Republicans, 8 Democrats and 4 Farmers Alliance, or People's Party.

The Legislature had been authorized by an act of Congress on May 2, 1890, for the purpose of creating a territorial form of government. The territory at that time consisted of five counties, Logan, Payne, Kingfisher, Canadian and Oklahoma. They included fewer than 15,000 farms, but the former "No-Man's Land" (renamed Beaver County) had been added and is now known as the Panhandle. At that time, it was used almost entirely for grazing cattle on rangeland.

Although the Farmers Alliance was a minority party, the group won top leadership posts in both houses of the Legislature.