

OKLAHOMA  
TERRITORY

## TERRITORIAL TALES

Bits of  
History  
Before  
Statehood

INDIAN  
TERRITORY

NOV 2 1982

# *Institution Bill Stirred Rivalry*

The titles "Mound Builders" and "Cave Dwellers" do not necessarily refer to prehistoric settlers of Oklahoma.

Those names were given to rival factions in one of the state's most exciting legislative contests.

The battle came over a measure introduced in the Sixth Legislative Assembly in 1900 by R.E.P. Messall of Enid. Its purpose was to provide "for the location, erection, management and control of a Territorial penitentiary, a Territorial asylum for the insane, a Territorial asylum for the deaf, dumb and blind, a Territorial reform school for boys" and an industrial school for girls.

Common usage shortened the title to "The Public Building Bill" but local interests lengthened debate.

As in the capital location fight, party lines were ignored as localities assumed greater importance. Thus the name "Mound Builders" was given to the bill's supporters, while its opponents were called "Cave Dwellers."

Delegates' attitudes reflected local interests above all and these affected their positions concerning other issues, including the argument over whether O.T. and I.T. should be one state or two.

The Legislative Council passed the Public Building Bill by a vote of 10 to 3. The House of Representatives passed it by a vote of 18 to 8 on the 57th day of the 60-day session.

But the measure failed to receive approval of Gov. Cassius Barnes, so it did not become law in spite of all the furor, oratory and name calling.