

**Cherokee County**, located in the extreme southeastern part of the state, was created by the first territorial legislature and named McGee, but as Mabillon W. McGee, for whom it was named, was a pro-slavery man, the free-state legislature of 1860 changed the name to Cherokee in honor of the Cherokee Indians. At the present time the county is bounded on the north by Crawford county; on the east by the State of Missouri; on the south by the State of Oklahoma, and on the west by Labette county. It has an area of 589 square miles.

The general surface of the country is undulating prairie, considerably cut up by shallow draws. A water-shed extends through the county from north to south dividing it into two nearly equal parts. The eastern half is drained by Spring river and its tributaries, the most important of which are Cow, Shawnee and Brush creeks, and the western portion is drained by the Neosho river and its tributaries, the largest of which are Lightning, Cherry, Fly and Four Mile creeks.

The county is divided into the following townships: Cherokee, Crawford, Garden, Lola, Lowell, Lyon, Mineral, Neosho, Pleasant View, Ross, Salamanca, Shawnee, Sheridan and Spring Valley. The valleys of the streams vary from a half-mile to a mile in width and in the aggregate comprise about a quarter of the area. The soil is of a dark vegetable mould underlaid by a reddish brown clay subsoil and is very fertile. Corn, winter wheat and oats are the principal crops, but the county ranks high in horticulture, having about 300,000 fruit trees of bearing age, more than 250,000 of which are apple. Limestone is plentiful and is found in nearly all of the ravines. Sandstone is found west of Spring river near the tops of the high ridges, and both kinds of stone are extensively quarried for local use. An abundance of potter's clay is found in many parts of the county, which is used in the manufacture of brick and retorts of zinc smelters. Coal of an excellent quality underlies a large portion of the county, is extensively mined both for local demand, and

immense quantities are exported to different parts of the state. Cherokee is the second largest coal producing county in Kansas. The southeastern part of the county lies practically in the heart of one of the richest and most productive lead and zinc regions in the United States and the output of this district amounts to several million dollars a year.

Previous to 1825 the land now embraced within the boundaries of Cherokee county belonged to the Osage Indians. By a treaty made that year they ceded their lands in Arkansas, Missouri and those lying between Texas and the Kansas river, except a strip 50 miles wide, and running as far west as the Osages had formerly claimed, and between this strip and the state of Missouri a tract where neither Indians nor white settlers were allowed to remain. In 1835 a treaty was concluded between the government by which the Cherokees were granted this neutral land and the strip subsequently became known as the "Neutral Lands" (q. v.), which were opened to settlement under the provisions of the treaty of 1868.

As early as 1820 a Presbyterian mission was established on the Marais des Cygnes river and another a few miles south on the Neosho, the missionaries being the first whites in the locality. The first settlers came to Cherokee county from Georgia in 1835. They were quarter-breeds and members of the Cherokee tribe. David M. Harlan, Richard Fields, George Fields, John Rogers and Dennis Wolf, who had trouble with the tribal officers in the Indian Territory and withdrew from the tribe, came to the strip to settle. John Rogers located where Lowell now stands; the Field brothers and Wolf, farther north, in what is now Garden township. A Baxter, for whom the town of Baxter Springs was named, had a claim there about 1858. Another man, named Commons, located about 3 miles northeast of Baxter. A fight occurred between the two men over Commons' claim and Baxter and his son-in-law were killed. Their families moved away and were not heard of again. In 1858 a few whites moved in, but the next year, by solicitation of the Indians, President Buchanan ordered them off and they were forced to leave by United States troops under Capt. Sturgis, and their houses burned.

In the summer of 1868, the first school house was erected at Wirtonia. It was built by subscription by the settlers but later became the property of district number 32. The first white child was born in Cherokee county as early as 1840, in what is now Garden township, and was a member of the Harlan family who lived there for a time. The first marriage license in the county was issued to Clark Johnson and Vienna Young, who were married on Nov. 6, 1867, but the first marriage occurred on Dec. 5, 1866, when John N. Burton married Mary Wilson. On Oct. 20, 1869, the first session of the Cherokee county teachers' institute was held, and on Nov. 20, 1869, the Cherokee county agricultural and horticultural society was organized at Brush Creek school house, Spring Valley township, which shows the attention paid to agricultural pursuits at this early day. C. W. Willey was elected president; H. C. Vetch, vice-president; J. Wallace, secretary; and B. L. Devore, treas-

urer, and the first fair was held the next year. This association has become one of the well recognized institutions of the county.

Religious services were held in the county at an early day, as the settlers gathered at some convenient cabin for the purpose in different townships. The Methodists had several circuit riders in the county as early as 1867, and the first church was organized by C. C. McDowell at his house in Shawnee township the same year. Other denominations followed and churches were erected at Baxter and Columbus, where the Baptist church was organized in 1870. The following year the Presbyterians perfected an organization, since which time nearly every denomination has established a church.

Immigration into the county was rapid during the decade from 1865 to 1875 and it was estimated that by the latter year the county had a population of nearly 13,000, most of the settlers having come from Illinois and Indiana, with a few from New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio. Before the war there were but two settlements—one at the crossing of the military road over Shawnee creek, and the other on the "mound" on the west side of Spring river. Both were trading posts but were demolished during the war. Baxter Springs (q. v.) claims the honor of being the oldest permanent settlement in the county. John Appleby located at Columbus in 1868, and was probably the first actual settler in the town. He was followed by Judge Fry, who built a house and opened a hotel.

By the act of creation in 1855 Cherokee county was attached to Bourbon county for all military and civil purposes. On Aug. 3, 1866, the governor appointed A. V. Peters, Reese Caldwell and J. W. Wallace, special commissioners and Julius C. Petit special clerk for the purpose of organizing the county, and designated Pleasant View as the temporary county seat. It was located about 10 miles northeast of the present city of Columbus. An election was held on Nov. 6, 1866, when the following officers were elected: Representative, D. C. Finn; county commissioners, J. W. Wallace, U. G. Ragsdell and B. F. Norton; county clerk, William Little; probate judge, D. C. Finn; clerk of the district court, F. M. Logan; sheriff, H. B. Brown; register of deeds, F. M. Logan; surveyor, C. W. Jewell; county attorney, J. A. Smith; treasurer, D. Callahan; county superintendent, Sidney S. Smith; coroner, J. Miller. At the general election on Nov. 5, 1867, the location of the county seat was submitted to a vote of the people. Columbus—then known as Cherokee Center—and Baxter Springs were the contestants. Baxter Springs received 136 votes and Cherokee Center 3. The commissioners held their last meeting at Pleasant View April 10, 1868, and the first at Baxter Springs on April 14. The new location of the seat of justice did not suit the people, and the commissioners were petitioned to call another election, which was ordered for May 12, 1868, when the vote resulted as follows: Baxter Springs, 600; geographical center of the county, 639; Cherokee Center, 1; the center, 95. As no place received a majority another election was held on May 26, when Baxter Springs

received 965; geographical center, 920. By this vote Baxter remained the county seat, but the people were still dissatisfied and on Feb. 17, 1869, another election was called to settle the matter. It was believed that if a fair election could be held the geographical center of the county would be chosen, for that location was supported by every precinct in the county. Eventually Columbus was chosen, but it was suspected that both the supporters of Baxter Springs and Columbus had practiced fraud with regard to the ballots. The county records were at once transferred to Columbus and established in a room of a house on the south side of the public square, where they remained until a temporary court-house was erected in the spring of 1871 on the northeast corner of the public square at a cost of \$1,500. The new court-house was finished in 1889 at a cost of \$70,000, and is one of the finest buildings of its kind in the state.

The first newspaper established in the county was the Baxter Springs Herald. It was owned and edited by B. R. and N. J. Evans, but they had only a meager support in their enterprise. The Cherokee Sentinel, the second paper in the county, appeared at Baxter Springs in Oct., 1868, edited by M. W. Coulter and D. E. Holbrook. The Columbus Independent was started on Sept. 1, 1870, by A. T. and W. J. Lea.

Cherokee county is the richest county in Kansas in mineral resources. The existence of lead and zinc ores was known to the Indians long before white settlement began. In 1872, zinc was discovered in what is now Garden township, and evidences of it were noted near Baxter Springs, but until 1876 it was not known that the ore existed in sufficient quantities to be of commercial value. In the spring of 1877 John Shoe and John McAllen, two miners from Joplin, Mo., made some examinations on Short creek and obtained permission from a man named Nicholls to sink a shaft on his land. At a depth of 15 feet they discovered a rich deposit of mineral. The land was bought by the West Joplin Zinc company for \$1,000 and the land near was laid out as Empire City. A German named Moll owned 160 acres of land where the town of Galena now stands. Lead was discovered there in the spring of 1877. Other rich deposits were located during the spring and summer, and people flocked to the locality so rapidly that on June 19, 1877, Galena was incorporated. The first coal shaft in the county was sunk at Scammon in 1877. It was owned and operated by the Scammon brothers and was the first coal shaft opened in Kansas south of the Leavenworth district. Since then various companies have entered the field and opened mines, so that today Cherokee county ranks second in production and value of coal.

Late in 1869 the Kansas City, Fort Scott & Gulf railroad was completed to Fort Scott, and from there it was pushed southward toward Columbus, being completed to that point on April 8, 1870. A branch of the same road was finished to Baxter Springs that year, and later it was extended to Galena. In 1872, the St. Louis & San Francisco railroad was extended through Cherokee county, and a narrow gauge road was built from Weir City in the northern part of the county to Messer, but

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it was later abandoned. In the fall of 1876, the St. Louis & San Francisco was completed to Columbus. In 1886-87 the Nevada & Minden railroad (later absorbed by the Missouri Pacific) was built through the county from the center of the northern boundary to the southwest corner, and in 1894, the Missouri, Kansas & Texas extended a branch from the main line at Parsons to Mineral City. In 1901 this branch was completed through Columbus and Galena to Joplin, Mo., so that today excellent transportation facilities are afforded by a perfect network of railroads composed of the main and branch lines of these systems.

The population of the county in 1910 was 38,162. Although the county is rich in mineral resources, agriculture is an important industry. The value of farm products for 1910 was \$2,397,988. The five principal crops, in the order of value, were: corn, \$720,709; wheat, \$498,381; hay, \$289,125; oats, 262,828; Irish potatoes, \$59,500. The value of animals slaughtered or sold for slaughter during the year was \$251,914, and the value of the dairy products was \$152,050.