



Tribal Histories

Jena Band of Choctaw
Research Report

December 2021

Introduction

The TxDOT Tribal Histories Project involves creating a set of geographic historical narratives of tribal presence in Texas through collaboration with participating Tribes. Taking a statewide approach, these histories will serve as resources to inform future statewide transportation planning, project development, tribal consultation activities, and public engagement by TxDOT.

The following research report focuses on the physical locations and specific time periods during which the Choctaw Nation was present in Texas. This history reflects the Choctaw Nation's perspectives because the historical and archeological data sources used to construct it were recommended and approved by Johnna Flynn the Jena Band of Choctaw's Tribal Historic Preservation Officer. Ms. Flynn also provided comments on the draft report that are addressed here in the final report.

Ethnographic archival and documentary research for this broad overview focuses on providing background context and setting for Choctaw peoples, tribes, and cultures associated with the region encompassing Texas. The following research report is organized chronologically and was compiled in consultation with the Jena Band of Choctaw's Tribal Historic Preservation Office from both historic works and contemporary sources. Works consulted include ethnohistories, linguistic studies, tribal history compendiums, oral history, and folklore from both twentieth-century and contemporary contexts.

This research report was designed to facilitate the extraction of geographic data, along with calendar and event information, to populate a GIS dataset for use by transportation planners and the Tribe (Appendix). Information from the narrative and GIS dataset (to the extent permissible by the Jena Band of Choctaw) is also intended to be readily adapted for use in archeology reports and for educational outreach materials.

Choctaw Land Use in Texas

Pre-European Contact

The Choctaw people, who call themselves *Chahta Okla*, developed from the complex and diverse societies that occupied the southeastern United States for more than 10,000 years. Near present-day Philadelphia, Mississippi is a mound called Nvnih Waiya, the leaning mound, where the Choctaw people originated (Carson 1999:8). Choctaw oral histories provide two different Tribal origins. According to some oral traditions, the Choctaw people emerged from under the earth at Nvnih Waiya Chiluk (Leaning Mound Cave) and became a distinct people while living at Nvnih Waiya village (Thompson 2021). Other oral traditions say the Choctaw journeyed from the west with the Chickasaw. It is possible that each describes the genesis of different ancestral segments of the Tribe. Most likely, the Choctaw have ancestors in several pre-contact archaeological cultures, including the Plaquemine (Hvshi Aiokatula Hattak Chashpo) cultures of the present-day southern Mississippi River valley (**Figure 1**) (Thompson 2021).



Figure 1. Choctaw homeland (adapted from Carson 1999:12).

According to *Chahta Chashpo Anoli* (Ancient Choctaw Stories), specific events happened after the Choctaw emerged at Nvnihi Waiya, including the extinction of megafauna, which archaeology tells us happened about 14,000 years before present (B.P.). Other events recorded by Choctaw oral tradition include the introduction of ceramic technology (3000 to 2500 B.P.), corn cultivation (A.D. 1000), (Figures 2 through 4) and the bow and arrow (A.D. 650) (Thompson 2021).

The Choctaw people are a Muskogean-speaking tribe whose language, along with Chickasaw and Houma, constitute the Western branch of the Muskogean language family. When Europeans encountered them in the present-day southeastern United States, the Choctaw population was second in size only to the Cherokee (Swanton 1946:121). Their territory covered the flank of the Louisiana colony and the mouth of the Mississippi, so relations

between them and the Spaniards, French, and Americans in succession were constant and intimate (Swanton 1931:1).

Like many other tribes of the southeast, the Choctaw are the successors to the Late Mississippian culture of prehistory (Galloway 1995:28). Mississippian cultural development began around A.D. 800–900 when Woodland horticulturists significantly intensified their maize agriculture. “Mississippian” is defined as those prehistoric human populations existing in the eastern deciduous woodlands during A.D. 800-1500, who had a ranked form of social organization, and who had developed a specific complex adaptation to linear floodplain habitat zones (Galloway 1995:31). Mississippian people lived in dispersed farmsteads surrounding a local center and organized themselves socially and politically in complex ways.

Spanish Provinces of Texas and Nuevo Santander

The earliest record of the Choctaw Indians is believed to be about 1540, in the area of southern Mississippi (Jena Band of Choctaw Indians 2021). Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto in A.D. 1541 was the first European to visit present-day Mississippi and Alabama (Martin 1977:xvii). De Soto came to a river called Apafalaya and a province recorded as Pafallaya, which are both forms of the Choctaw name, Pa’sfalaya, meaning, “Long Hair.” The name referred to the men’s custom of letting their hair grow long. The Choctaw were an amalgam of remnant Mississippian groups like the prehistoric Burial Urn people who are known archeologically for underground burials in urns or with a bowl capping the head of the deceased. They emerged from the remains of the Bottle Creek chiefdom of the Mobile delta and of the Moundville chiefdom that collapsed about A.D. 1350 (see Figure 1) (Carson 1999:11). Twenty-eight mounds were built at Moundville by the Choctaw ancestral community that lived in the Black Warrior River Valley from A.D. 1075 to 1600 (Thompson 2019:iv). Burial Urn pottery revealed strong continuities in composition, color, and design with earlier Mississippian traditions.

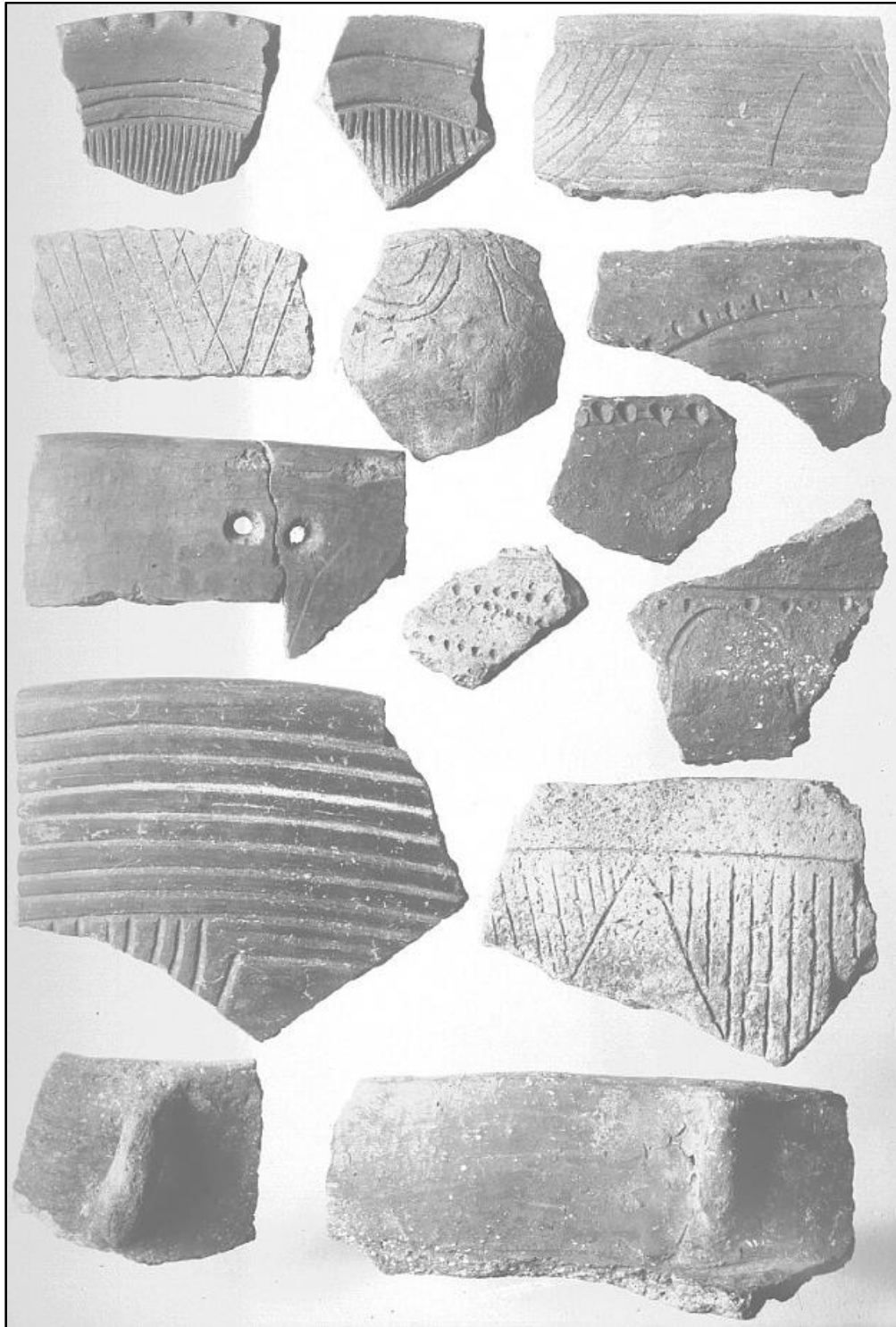


Figure 2. Pottery sherds from Chinchuba Creek, Louisiana (Negative 1102 B 4, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution).



Figure 3. A Choctaw woman using a wooden mortar and pestle to pound corn in 1909 (BAE GN 01102B09 06225900, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution).



Figure 4. A Choctaw woman named Haylaema using a tump line across her shoulders to carry a large basket on her back in 1909 (BAE GN 01102B22 06227100, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution).

The Burial Urn people probably fled westward to escape the epidemics that followed DeSoto's route, and they formed the core population of the Concha and Chickasawhay towns of the Southern division of the Choctaw and of the Inholahtha, the Eastern division (Carson 1999:11). As the Burial Urn people crossed into present-day Mississippi, they encountered prairie people who were associated with Nvnih Waiya, and the remnants of the Plaquemine people. Together these three groups formed the Choctaw Confederacy whose members shared a common baseline of Mississippian culture, consisting of four organizing structures: chiefly political organization, matrilineal kinship, a gendered division of labor, and a complex cosmological system (Carson 1999:11-12).

Within each division of the tribe, a grand chief presided over both peace and war chiefs, each with their own set of junior officials. Choctaw kinship was matrilineal, and it affected everything from descent to land distribution and use (Carson 1999:14-15). People had to marry outside of their clan, an affiliation which came from one's mother. After marriage, men moved in with the wives' families. They also had to marry outside of their *iksa*, or large grouping of individual clans called moieties. The Choctaw divide themselves into two *iksas*. For example, war chiefs came from the red *iksa*, while civil chiefs came from the white one (Carson 1999:15).

The Choctaw people are rooted in diverse native ethnic groups that moved into what is now east-central Mississippi during the seventeenth century (Galloway 1995) (see **Figure 1**). This area had long been shared as winter hunting ground by various groups and contained no established settlements along the head waters of the Pearl River. These people became known as the Western Division of the Choctaw. Refugees from the great Moundville chiefdom and from the smaller Bottle Creek chiefdom in the upper Mobile delta settled west of the Tombigbee River. Another group from the Mobile delta migrated into the Chickasawhay River valley in the early 1600s to escape the English slave raids. Finally, some Natchezan people abandoned the large Pearl Mounds chiefdom, and moved into the upper Leaf and western Pascagoula valleys during the mid-1600s (Galloway 1995).

These diverse groups, who had once been separated by considerable distances, realized their commonalities, including an historical trading relationship, related languages (besides the Natchezan), and similar ways of acquiring food and building shelters (Galloway 1995). These commonalities became cemented through intergroup marriages and diplomacy. The Choctaw became a powerful tribe that could fend off challenges from Native enemies and the European colonies (Galloway 1995).

In 1675 Bishop Calderón noted that there were 107 villages throughout the Choctaw (Chacta) territory (Swanton 1946:121). By the end of the 1600's, in response to increased European (Spanish, later British and French) incursions and diseases, the native population of the southeastern United States was one-tenth what it had been. As a result, changes in native social and political organizations occurred. Former individual townships and chiefdoms merged for greater strength in numbers and formed new groups including, what were later called, the Muscogee (Creek) and Choctaw (May 2001:32).

In 1699 the French began to settle Louisiana and allied with the Choctaw against the English and their allies the Creek and Chickasaw Indians (Swanton 1946:122). Choctaw settlements were noted in the early 1700s near present-day Mobile, Alabama; Biloxi, Mississippi; and New Orleans, Louisiana. Inland from these settlements there was a large tribe of Muskogean speaking people occupying about 60 towns on the streams that formed the headwaters of the Pascagoula and Pearl Rivers (Jena Band of Choctaw Indians 2021). Choctaw people arrived in Louisiana in greater numbers during the 1770s, mainly searching for better hunting grounds (Ellis 2021). Despite repeated attempts by the United States to force them from their land, the Jena Band of Choctaw Indians is one of four federally recognized Louisiana tribes, and they continue to inhabit parts of Catahoula and LaSalle Parishes in the east-central part of the state (Ellis 2021).

Peace in Louisiana would not come until 1763 when France ceded all territories east of the Mississippi River to England. The Choctaw tribe was never at war with the United States. A few individuals joined the Creeks during their uprising, but most were held back by Chief Pushmataha who resisted Tecumseh's call to battle (Swanton 1946:122).

The Choctaw people were the largest tribe among the southern Muskogean. They mostly lived in Mississippi, but controlled territory eastward to the Tombigbee River in Alabama (**Figure 5**) (Martin 1977:98). The Tombigbee River was the boundary between the Choctaw and the tribes of the Creek Confederacy. An organization of dominant tribes known collectively as Muscogee (Creek) and located in the southeastern United States, the Creek Confederacy (Upper and Lower) was formed as a defensive alliance against British settler encroachment along the Atlantic Coast and against the Choctaw Indians whose territory included Mississippi, and parts of Alabama and Louisiana (Martin 1977:xvii). Like many southeastern Indians, the Choctaw formed alliances with Europeans for trade, protection, and help with their conflicts with other Indians (May 2001:31). During the eighteenth century, the Choctaw were engaged in nearly constant warfare with the Alabama and Coushatta Indians (Martin 1977:98).

Westward Migration

Subsequent to the French defeat by the British during the French and Indian War, the British took over Fort Toulouse (present-day Alabama) in 1763. As a result, the French influence in the region ebbed, and some Choctaw people chose to migrate westward with the French into Louisiana, which was held by Spain at the time. In addition to the Choctaw, several other tribes lived in the region including the Biloxi, Caddo, Taensa, Tunica, Ofo, and Pascagoula along the Sabine River about 80 miles south of Natchitoches (May 2001:36). This area of Louisiana provided abundant natural resources for growing crops and hunting local wildlife. Natchitoches had long been a French and Indian trading post, where Indians traded meat, fur hides, and bear oil with the French, and later the Americans, in exchange for provisions (Smither, ed. 1932:87).



Figure 5. Lands controlled by the Choctaw in 1800 and those disputed between the Choctaw and Muscogee (adapted from Thompson 2021).

In June 1784 at Mobile, the Choctaw leaders met with Louisiana’s Governor Estevan Miró, resulting in a treaty that placed them under Spanish protection, excluded white men without Spanish passports or trading licenses from Choctaw lands, and required the Choctaw to fight alongside the Spanish in defense of the province (John 1975:661). Similar agreements were made with the Alabama (Alibamon), Chickasaw, and Creek Indians.

In 1789 certain events with implications for the Choctaw in Texas were set in motion. That year a group of Delaware Indians received permission from Spanish officials to move into Missouri (Lipscomb 2021). They settled near Cape Girardeau, where they later became known as Absentee Delaware. The Cape Girardeau Delaware did not join the main body of Delaware people when they moved themselves to the White River in southwestern Missouri. Instead,

they had located among the Western Cherokee in both Indian and Arkansas territories by 1819 (Hale 1987:4). The Cape Girardeau Delaware lived close to a group of Cherokee Indians, who had moved themselves to southeast Missouri in 1794, living along the St. Francis River. The two Tribes united against the hostile Osage tribe who had attacked them. The St. Francis Cherokee then moved themselves by 1811 to between the Shoal and Petit Jean creeks, on the south side of the Arkansas River. After Cherokee Chief John Bowles learned during the survey of 1819 that they were situated outside of the area designated for them, he decided to move to Spanish Texas where the Cherokee were joined by other migrant Indian groups (Hale 1987:4-5).

Chief John Bowles and his band of Cherokee had originally come from Running Water Town, near present-day Mussel Shoals, Tennessee (Hale 1987). He and 60 families settled north of present-day Nacogdoches, Texas, where they were quickly joined by other Western Cherokee people and other refugees from the United States, including Choctaw, Shawnee, Delaware, Kickapoo, Quapaw, Biloxi, Iowa, Tohookatokie, Alabama, and Coushatta people (Hale 1987:6). The Cherokee village and its Choctaw neighbors were in present-day Rusk County, which was formerly Nacogdoches County, and situated along the Angelina, Neches, and Sabine rivers (Long 2021).

The Choctaw people by their association with the Cherokee would lay claim to their East Texas lands through both verbal and written agreements with the Spanish and Mexican governments. By 1822 there were only a handful of European settlers in Spanish Texas. The Choctaw people were among the few occupants between the Sabine and Angeline rivers where they had settled on the authority of the Spanish government (Hale 1987:9). Cherokee Chief Richard Fields made the first attempt to acquire legal title to the lands the Cherokee, Choctaw, and the other tribes occupied, signing an agreement with the Governor of the Province of Texas on November 8, 1822. The following year Chief Fields traveled to Mexico City to secure the title, but only received assurances that the treaty would be recognized as soon as a general colonization law passed (Hale 1987:10).

Mexican Province of Coahuila y Texas (1824-1835)

Between 1801 and 1830 the Choctaw signed a series of treaties with the United States, ceding almost all their Mississippi lands in exchange for territory in Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma). The remaining Choctaw lands were ceded with the signing of the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek in 1830. The Choctaw population before removal was recorded as 19,554. Of these, approximately 12,500 migrated west, 2,500 died, and 5,000 to 6,000 remained east of the Mississippi (Carlisle 2021). Of those migrating to Indian Territory, more than 700 diverted to Texas, which was then part of Mexico. Ten to 15 Choctaw families who had already migrated into Texas by 1830 greeted the new arrivals to the frontier (Carlisle 2021).

Among them was the family of Kendall Lewis, an early Titus County settler who was born in western Virginia and grew up with his family in Choctaw Indian country in Georgia (Russell 2021). He married a Choctaw woman and together they had six children. When the Choctaw people began moving west in the late 1820s, the Lewis family moved to the Caddo Lake area

of Texas. In the early 1830s they settled on Swauano (Swannano) Creek in present-day Titus County (**Figure 6**). They may have been the first permanent settlers of this region, as Lewis owned the first tract of land surveyed in Titus County in 1838, when he patented the league and labor of land to which he was entitled, which amounted to more than 5,175 acres in two square tracts (Russell 2021). He later purchased Isaac Pennington's Abstract 226 in Franklin County amounting to more than 1,500 acres in 1854 (Texas General Land Office Land Grant Database 2021). This tract was situated on the Sulphur River.

General Mier y Terán ordered on August 15, 1830 that the Cherokee Indians and their associated Tribes be awarded land at the headwaters of the Trinity River and along the Sabine River (Hale 1987:14). When no action had been taken a year later, General Mier y Terán commissioned Colonel José de las Piedras to put each Indian family in possession of the land they were cultivating. Colonel Piedras attempted to follow these orders, but was expelled from the Province of Texas by a group of Euro-American settlers.

The Coahuila y Texas legislature passed a decree on May 12, 1835, that authorized the selection of vacant lands to be awarded to, "the peaceable and civilized Indians which may have been introduced into Texas." The big drawback for the Tribes was that they would be located westward on the frontier, not on the lands they had improved and maintained for so many years (Hale 1987:15). Despite many assurances, the Mexican government never granted the Choctaw or Cherokee people legal title to any land (Lipscomb 2021).

After 1830, one Choctaw band settled a sizable village near present-day Enterprise, Louisiana and other groups migrated to the pine covered hills of what was then Catahoula Parish in Louisiana (Jena Band of Choctaw Indians 2021). Eventually the Choctaw people who were located between present-day Monroe and Natchitoches, Louisiana, joined the group in Catahoula Parish. Principle settlements were established on Trout Creek in LaSalle Parish and Bear Creek in Grant Parish (Jena Band of Choctaw Indians 2021).

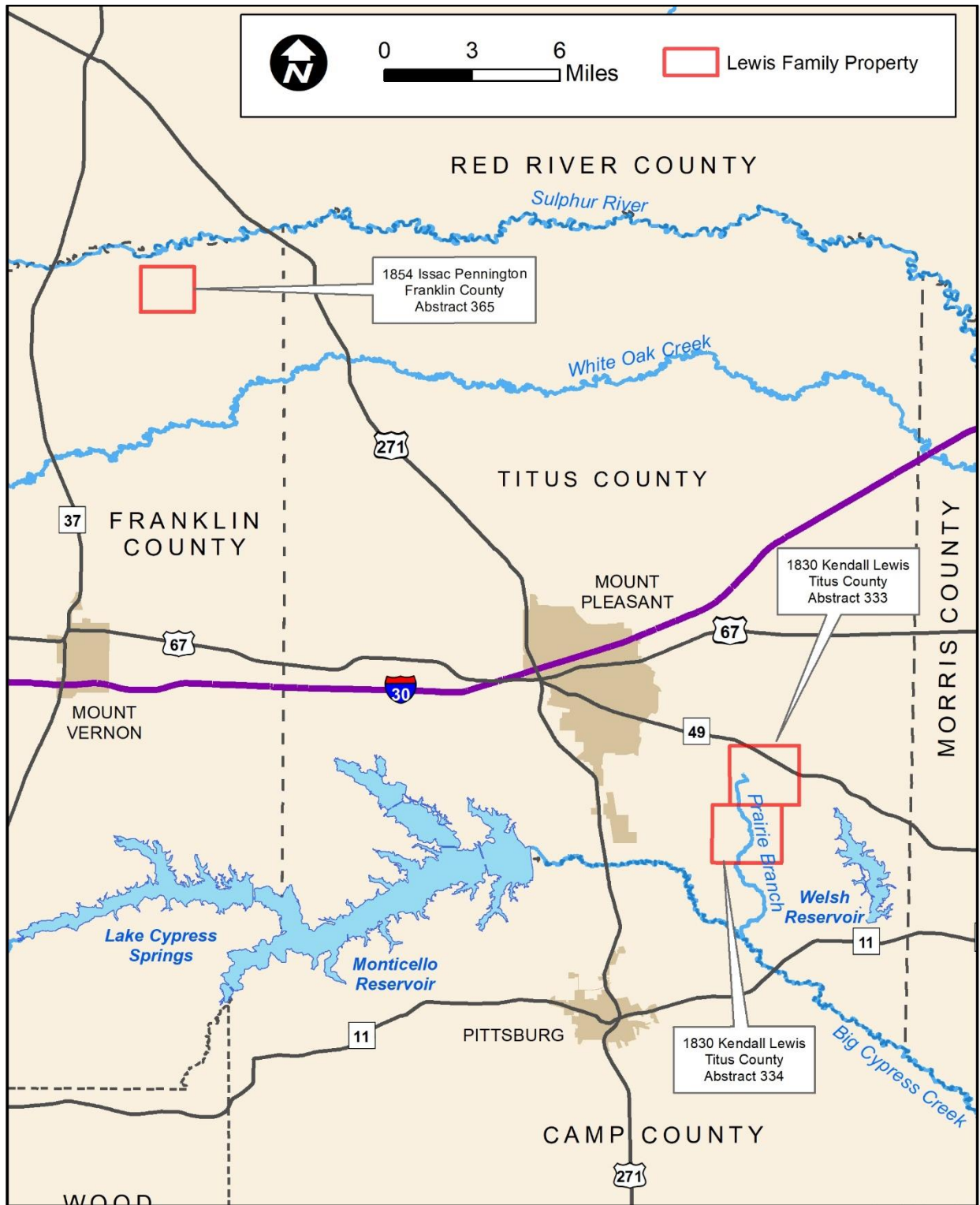


Figure 6. Kendall Lewis' land in Franklin and Titus counties near Mt. Pleasant, Texas.

Republic of Texas (1836-1845)

Sam Houston became the general of the provisional Texas government during the impending Texas Revolution and helped to negotiate a treaty in 1835 with several East Texas tribal representatives including the Choctaw. To ensure neutrality during the Texas Revolution, the treaty declared peace between both parties, promised to respect the land rights of the Indians within East Texas, and established clear boundaries with the tribes. These were the same rights that they had under the Spanish and Mexican governments. The land between the Angelina, Neches, and Sabine Rivers, and the Old San Antonio Road (part of the Camino Real de los Tejas) was to be reserved for Indian occupation and use, much smaller than the amount of land that the Indian tribes in East Texas had occupied. In accordance with the treaty, the Indians could live under their own laws, trade with the Texans, and expect justice from the new government. However, when delegates met at the Texas Congress Convention on March 2, 1836, they declared their independence from Mexico then refused to discuss, much less ratify, the treaty. This failure was viewed by the Tribes as a betrayal and the threat of war between Texas and the East Texas tribes continued (Winfrey and Day, ed 1966[1]:14; Texas State Library and Archives Commission 2019). When the Senate met again in December 1836, I. W. Burton reported on the East Texas Tribes. They lived in Nacogdoches County (present-day Cherokee, Smith, and adjoining counties) along the Angelina, Neches, and Sabine rivers where about 220 people farmed, hunted, and raised livestock (Hale 1987:21).

Seven months after the Texas Senate failed to ratify the treaty, Indian Agent Jeff Wright was assigned to work among the Choctaw, Cherokee, Shawnee, Delaware, Biloxi, Kickapoo, Ioni, and Caddo people. A new agency was established northwest of present-day Alto, Texas near Chief Bowles' village (Hale 1987:22). In June 1838, Agent Wright reported that Chief Bowles was willing to take the Caddo, Ioni, and Kichai people into his colony and be responsible for their conduct. However, the chief blamed the Waco, Tawehash, and Tawakoni for raiding. Chief Bowles offered to furnish 500 warriors to fight those Tribes alongside 500 Texans if Texas would make good on the Cherokee Treaty of 1836 (Hale 1987:23).

Chief Bowles was still trying to compromise and consummate his people's land claim, while steps were being taken by the Texas Republic to survey a line between the Indian and white settlements. It was an attempt to preserve peace on the frontier, but by August 1838, it appeared that the Cherokee and their associated Tribes would be provoked into war (Hale 1987:23). Every movement by the Cherokee at that time was interpreted as preparation for war. When the Cherokee removed some of their women and children to the Red River, it was assumed that they were preparing for war (Hale 1987:23). At the same time, Thomas J. Rusk was reporting to President Houston that the Cherokee were seeking peace and that despite rumors of Chief Bowles meeting daily with the Mexicans, the latter had left without gaining any allies (Hale 1987:24).

Houston's successor in 1838, Mirabeau B. Lamar, considered the immigrant tribes to be unauthorized intruders who threatened public safety and illegally occupied Texas land (Lipscomb 2021). He adopted a program that included exterminating the hostile tribes and removing friendly tribes or moving them to reservations in Texas and Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma) (Martin 2010). Via use of Texas troops, and the murder of Cherokee Chief

Bowles, Lamar succeeded in removing the Cherokee from northeast Texas and into Indian Territory, and forced several other tribes including the Choctaw, Delaware, and Shawnee to the upper Brazos River where they built a small village, beyond the line of Texas settlements. There were a few isolated families of Indians, but by 1840 most of the immigrant tribes had been removed from Texas (La Vere 2004:175).

President Lamar had been the private secretary of Governor Troupe of Georgia at the time of the Cherokee removal from that state. He was not sympathetic toward the Tribes' cause. His ruthless policy toward the Indians culminated in the Cherokee War (1839), a conflict that involved all the immigrant bands (Anderson 1990:243). In July 1839, I.W. Burton was part of a commission that proposed to the Cherokee Indians that they leave Texas upon payment for their improvements by the Republic, but the Cherokee people declined the offer (Mayfield 2021). The resulting war forced most of the immigrant Indians in the Republic of Texas, including the Choctaw, north of the Red River and into Indian Territory (Lipscomb 2021).

The first outbreak of hostility occurred on October 15, 1838, when about 30 Anglo settlers along the Sabine were killed during the Killough massacre (Hale 1987:24-25). One couple and their infant survived. Thomas J. Rusk noted that a Cherokee Indian brought the survivors to safety, demonstrating that Tribe's innocence. The inevitable seemed to be happening though and the Cherokee continued to be blamed for any outbreak of violence, making war seem unavoidable (Hale 1987:24-25).

In May 1839, Manuel Flores, the Mexican Indian agent at Matamoros, traveled to Texas to meet Mexican military officer Vincente Cordova, who was among the Tribes seeking their alliance with Mexico (Hale 1987:20-21). Flores was intercepted along with documents indicating he was trying to overthrow the Texas Republic (Hale 1987:26). He also carried letters addressed to Cherokee Chief Bowles and Big Mush. This spark ignited the Texans' anger against the Cherokee and other friendly tribes. Later historians like Henderson Yoakum and Walter Prescott Webb agreed that the Mexicans had only slight acquaintances with Chief Bowles and Big Mush, and that there was not sufficient evidence that the Cherokee did more than listen to the Mexicans (Hale 1987:26).

Also in May 1839, Chief Bowles refused to allow a military station at Great Saline and expelled a white person from the Cherokee grounds by virtue of a treaty made with the late Provisional Government (Hale 1987:26). What transpired between June 1 and July 15, 1839 is somewhat obscured by a lack of primary sources. John H. Reagan's memoir has often been cited as quoting Chief Bowles saying that the Cherokee people would fight. Reagan was a young newcomer to Texas when he accompanied Agent Martin Lacy to Chief Bowles' home in June of 1839, casting doubt on the accuracy of his memoir (Hale 1987:26-27).

Regardless, based upon Reagan and Lacy's report, Lamar sent General Rusk's East Texas regiment who met 400 more men on the east bank of the Neches River by July 14, 1839. The entire force was placed under Brigadier General Douglas who sent some forces along the west side of the Neches River (Hale 1987:27). Beginning on July 11, Chief Bowles, Spybuck (Shawnee), a representative of the Delaware chief, and about 25 warriors met on Council

Creek near the Cherokee village with Texas commissioners who were using Sam Hill and Cordray as interpreters. General Albert Johnson relayed President Lamar's willingness to pay for the Cherokee and associated Tribes' improvements if they would leave the Republic of Texas. Chief Bowles said he would talk to his people and give their answer on July 12. Spybuck added, "I want peace and that all should be like brothers. It would be a great deal better if we all could agree and settle the business" (Hale 1987:27-28).

For the second day of talks, Chief Bowles, Spybuck, and 18 warriors attended. Bowles began by saying, "I will move my families and people from here and we will part from you in peace and friendship. I will return the road we came and go to my people again from whence we came" (Hale 1987:28). He requested three moons to complete their move. On July 13, the commissioners pushed to codify nine articles of agreement for the Tribes' removal. Article I used the terminology "Cherokees and Associated Bands" when referring to those agreeing to depart Texas in peace. Interestingly, the Texas Senate had denied the very existence of these same people just a few months prior (Hale 1987:28).

Article II provided for reimbursement for improvements left behind, while Articles IV and V stipulated that the Cherokee people would not be paid for loss of property under Article II until they were escorted to the Republic's boundary and crossed into the United States (Hale 1987:28). Article III required the Texas government to provide supplies to be used during removal, although Article VI agreed that the Cherokee people would not leave until all were ready. Article VII concerned sleeping arrangements along the removal route, separating the Cherokee people from their escorts overnight. Article VIII required the Cherokee warriors to disable every gun by removing its lock, a complex part essential to the functioning of the firearm. Finally, Article IX extended the same arrangements to the Choctaw people, as well as to other Tribes agreeing to leave Texas (Hale 1987:28-29).

Chief Bowles objected to being escorted like a prisoner to the Republic's border and to traveling without any gun locks, but he agreed to discuss the stipulations with the Cherokee people (Hale 1987:29). The next day, Chief Bowles requested another day to further discuss the agreement with the younger men of the Tribe, who were troubled by their fear that as soon as their gun locks were removed, the Cherokee people would be killed. Chief Bowles was still trying to convince them that it was better for them to leave Texas and to do so with an escort. He refused to sign the agreement until all the Tribes' leaders agreed. The Texans insisted he sign immediately and that the others could sign later. At this point, Chief Bowles requested a private meeting and left with some of the elders present. When they returned, Chief Bowles said he was still unwilling to sign until other leaders like Big Mush arrived and requested three days to allow for their arrival (Hale 1987:29).

General Rusk refused to grant three more days and adjourned the council. The primary documents do not reveal the exact moment war was declared, but the commissioners were not inclined to give the Cherokee leaders any more time to decide (Hale 1987:29). Based on the negotiations during the prior four days, war should not have been a topic at that point because the Cherokee and other Tribes like the Choctaw had already agreed to leave Texas.

There remained only two points of contention, the military escort and gun locks (Hale 1987:30).

The commissioners decided no friendly arrangement was possible and the Secretary of War issued an order to commence what would be known as the Battle of the Neches, one of the darkest spots in Texas history (Hale 1987:30; Newcomb 1961:348). The battle began the same day the commissioners last met with Chief Bowles (Hale 1987:31). The Texas troops found the Cherokee village deserted and followed their trail toward the Upper Delaware Village. The Tribes sought refuge with the Delaware, as they had done many times when all were in the eastern United States (Hale 1987:30). The Delaware people were still regarded as “peacemakers” and “grandfathers” by the other Tribes. The Texans may not have been aware of the Delaware Tribe’s status, although they, too, had relied on their diplomacy many times in the past. The Upper Delaware Village was situated 13.5 miles west of Tyler, Texas, in present-day Van Zandt County (Hale 1987:31).

The first day of fighting left 18 Cherokee warriors dead on present-day Battle Creek just west of Chandler, Texas. The Upper Delaware Village was the site of the second day of fighting. The Shawnee fought at first but left early, sending their gun locks as tokens of submission. They agreed to leave Texas in exchange for compensation for their lost livestock and crops (Hale 1987:30). General Rusk estimated that 500 to 600 Tribal warriors fought in the Battle of the Neches and that more than 100 had died, including Chief Bowles. The Upper Delaware Village was burned during the battle, sending the Delaware people fleeing again from a territory they had called home (Hale 1987:30). After Chief Bowles was brutally slain, the surviving Indians were relentlessly pursued for more than a week. Most of them sought refuge across the Red River with the Choctaw and Chickasaw nations (Hale 1987:69; Newcomb 1961:347) (Figure 7). Texas was adjacent to the southern edge of Choctaw territory.

By driving away friendly and peaceable Indians, Texas lost its buffer between Anglo settlements and the prairie tribes who were wont to raid them (Hale 1987:32). Without Delaware diplomacy, the Texas frontier was ravaged in 1840 by prairie tribes. Tensions grew worse after 30 Penateka Comanche leaders and warriors as well as five women and children of the tribe were killed as they were peacefully assembled at the Council House in San Antonio on March 19, 1840. During President Lamar’s administration from 1838 to 1842, Texas carried out an Indian policy of extermination (Hale 1987:35).

The policy’s affects were felt by the pioneering Lewis family. After Choctaw warriors were accused of murdering a Titus County family named Ripley in 1841, Anglo settlers became so hostile toward the Lewis family that they were forced in 1842 to move to the Choctaw Nation in Indian Territory (Russell 2021). Although Lewis filed a suit for debt in Titus County in 1859, the family apparently remained in the Choctaw Nation.

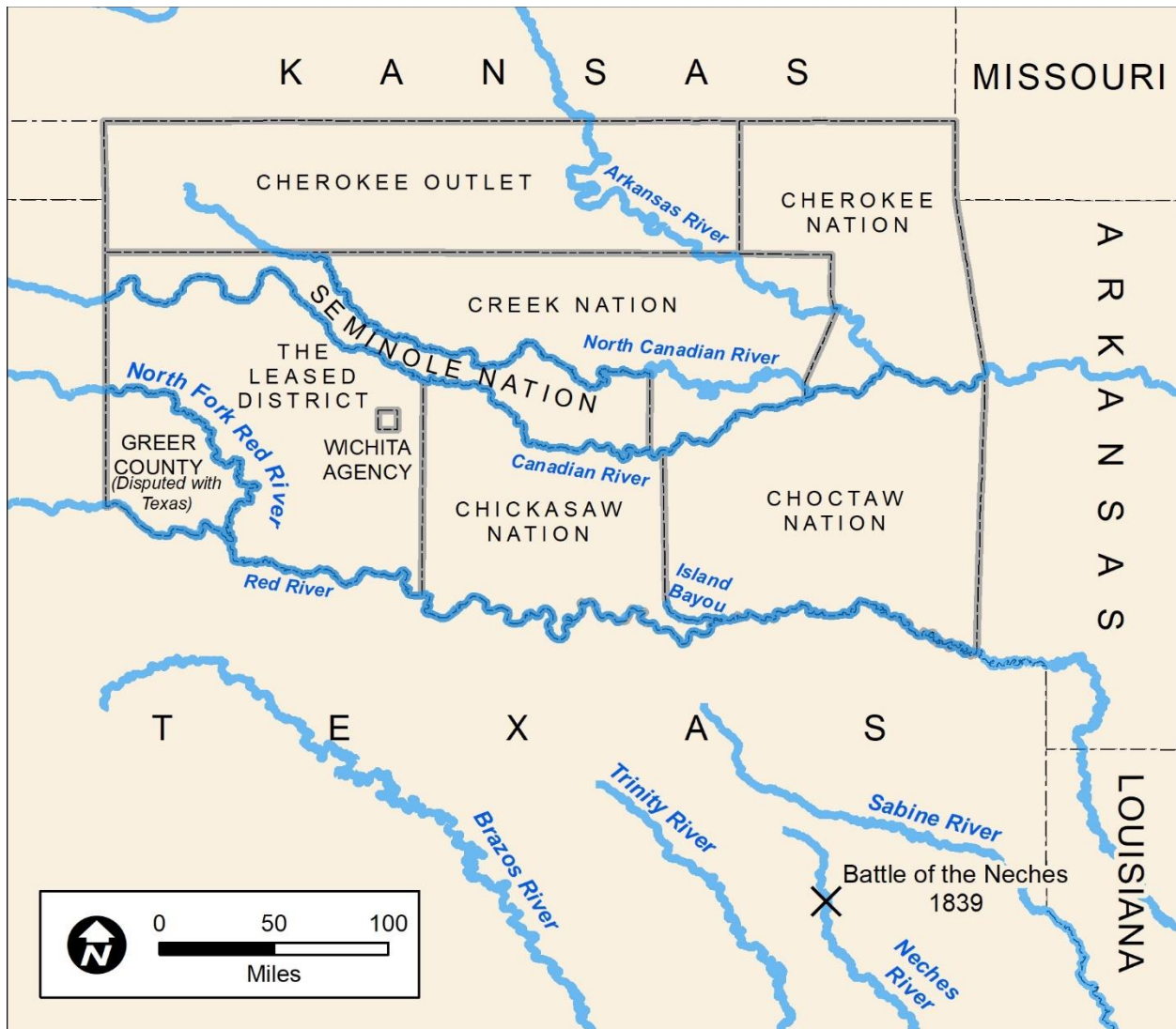


Figure 7. Choctaw territory.

State of Texas (1845-present)

The 1850s brought new influences into the Choctaw Nation, including railroad development, proceeds from the sale of Choctaw lands east of the Mississippi, and the final separation of the Choctaw and Chickasaw governments (Kidwell 2021). A treaty in 1855 granted the Chickasaw political independence, although the Choctaw and Chickasaw land base remained jointly owned. The two nations leased the land west of the 98th Meridian to the federal government for the settlement of western tribes.

The Choctaw Nation signed a treaty with the Confederate government in 1861. The Choctaw people were the most strongly committed of the Indian Territory’s nations to the Confederate cause because most of their leadership exploited the labor of slaves (Kidwell 2021). Kendall

Lewis is recorded in the 1860 U.S. Census for Creek Indian Lands in Arkansas with 17 Black and mulato slaves who lived together in five houses. The eight men and boys ranged in age from 5 to 80 years, while the women and girls were ages 9 months to 60 years.

After the war, the Choctaw were forced to cede territory, to accept the federal government's demands for expanded railroad rights-of-way across their lands, and to sell their western lands. While negotiating these treaties, Choctaw Chief Allen Wright suggested that the name "Oklahoma" be used for the former Indian Territory.

The late-nineteenth-century federal policy of Indian assimilation, embodied in the General Allotment Act (the Dawes Severalty Act) in 1887, was imposed upon the Choctaw Nation in the Curtis Act in 1898. This legislation was intended to hasten the demise of tribal governments, but it also codified the text of an agreement that the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations had signed in 1897 with the Dawes Commission at Atoka (Kidwell 2021). The Atoka Agreement implemented allotment, but it also set aside the coal and asphalt deposits in the northern part of the Choctaw Nation as communal assets for tribe members.

In 1906 Congress passed the final law dissolving the Choctaw government. A supplement in 1902 to the Atoka Agreement maintained the Choctaw's coal and asphalt holdings as communal property. These lands were supposed to be sold by the U.S. government to provide the tribe with income. Some Choctaw families were able to remain in Mississippi as late as 1925 (**Figure 8**), but most had to move to Indian Territory to claim their allotments.

In 1948 the U.S. government itself purchased most of the coal lands from the Choctaw Nation for \$8.5 million (Kidwell 2021). In the 1950s the U.S. government pursued a policy of terminating the special relationship between itself and the Indian tribes. Growing national Indian activism in the 1960s led to the repeal of the termination legislation. In 1971 the U.S. Congress restored the rights of the Five Tribes (Choctaw, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Muscogee (Creek), and Seminole) to hold popular elections for their chiefs. In June 1984 the Choctaw also adopted a new constitution with a balance of powers among executive, legislative, and judicial branches.

Today the Choctaw Nation derives income from gaming operations, manufacturing, and personnel management services for federal agencies. Total tribal enrollment is approximately 127,000 members, with the Choctaw Nation headquartered in Durant, Oklahoma (Kidwell 2021), although the Jena Band of Choctaw Indians reside in Jena, Louisiana. Currently, the Jena Band of Choctaw Indians reports 327 members (Jena Band of Choctaw Indians 2021). Cultural revitalization activities including Choctaw language classes offered via the Internet and an annual Choctaw Labor Day celebration in Durant, including both popular country music entertainers and religious services with the singing of Choctaw hymns. In these ways, the Choctaw Nation has achieved economic success while preserving its history and culture (Kidwell 2021).

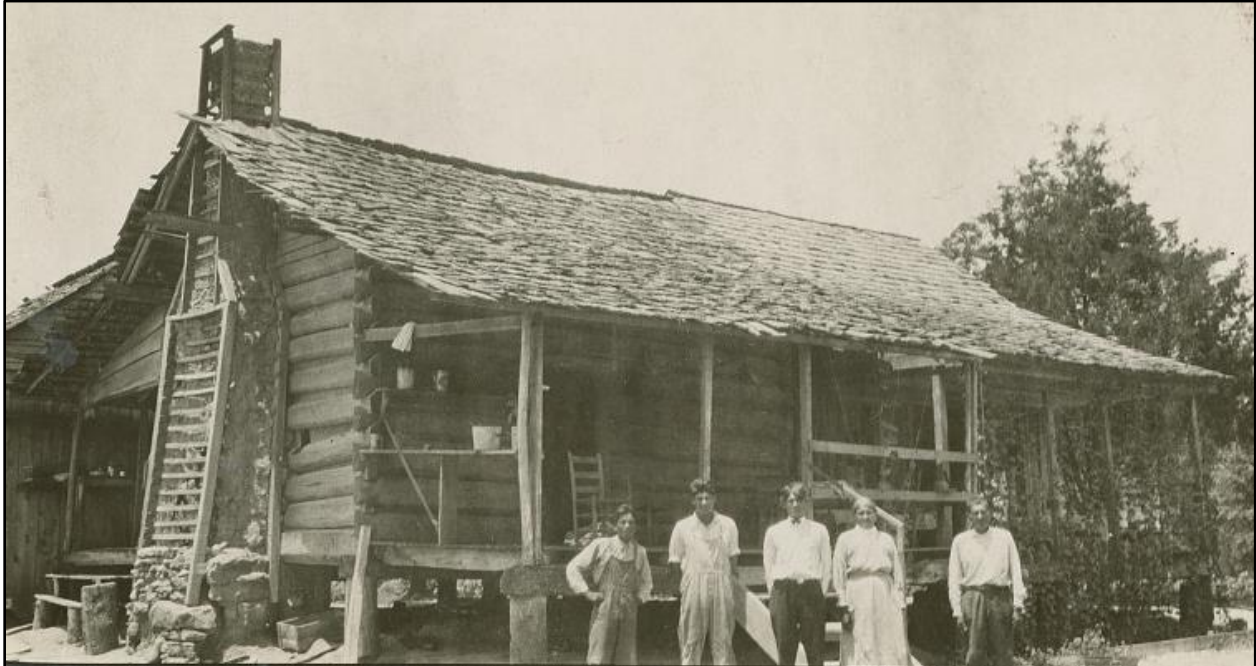


Figure 8. The Jim-Isaac Family (John, David D., Jackson, Martha, and Wilson) outside their Riley, Mississippi log cabin in 1925 (Photo Lot 24 SPC Se Choctaw NAA 4974 01778000, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution; 1920 U.S. Census of Riley, Neshoba, Mississippi).

Jena Band of Choctaw Indians

While the bulk of the Choctaw Nation was thrust from its homeland, some Choctaw people living in Louisiana avoided resettlement to a government-controlled reservation. The ancestors of the Jena Band of Choctaw Indians were among them (Ellis 2021). Many of these Choctaw people eventually settled in present-day Catahoula and LaSalle Parishes. According to the 1880 census, Choctaw families were already living at Jena in Catahoula Parish, where members of the tribe continue to reside today. The local store account books showed that the Indians paid for their goods by skinning and tanning hides as well as by working as day laborers and household help (Jena Band of Choctaw Indians 2021). The Choctaw community preserved their very distinct social institutions with activities that included marriages, burials, and the maintenance of a tribal cemetery (Jena Band of Choctaw Indians 2021). From 1880 until about 1950, members of this community had little contact with non-Indian people, which helped protect them from the racism and legal segregation they would have faced in broader Louisiana society. The Band's first school, Penick Indian School, opened in 1932. Children of the Jena Band were not permitted to attend Louisiana public schools until 1946, after their schooling had been interrupted during World War II (Jena Band of Choctaw Indians 2021; Ellis 2021).

As the Choctaw population in Catahoula and La Salle Parishes has grown, the families have developed a politically and culturally unified tribe (Ellis 2021). The last traditional Chief died

in 1968. The Jena Band of Choctaw held its first election in 1974 to select a new tribal chief (Jena Band of Choctaw Indians 2021). The next year, the tribe was officially recognized by the state of Louisiana, followed by federal recognition in 1995.

The Jena Choctaw Pines Casino opened in 2013 in Dry Prong, southwest of the town of Jena. Revenue from the casino is used by the tribe to fund programs dedicated to the education and welfare of its members. The tribal leadership and community have worked to maintain their identity and have promoted education in traditional Choctaw language and culture so that the Jena Band of Choctaw will remain a thriving people in contemporary Louisiana (Ellis 2021).

Geographic Terms

Beyond the places discussed in the preceding narrative, the presence of Choctaw people in Texas is acknowledged by the town of Choctaw that was seven miles east of Sherman in eastern Grayson County. Initially the settlement that developed in the 1830s was called Dugan's Chapel. When the Texas and Pacific Railway built through the area, company officials apparently changed the name of the town to Choctaw (Minor 2021). Finally, Choctaw Creek rises southwest of Sherman in central Grayson County, traveling northeast for 38 miles to its confluence with the Red River in western Fannin County (Anonymous 2021b) (**Figure 9**).



Figure 9. Choctaw Creek is 38 miles long and a tributary of the Red River.

Resources Identified as culturally sensitive for future planning

The locations in Texas associated with the Choctaw people include mounds, springs, waterways, farms, villages, hunting grounds, nutritional and medicinal plant gathering areas, battlefields and skirmish sites, and cemeteries that are considered culturally sensitive for future planning purposes.

Bibliography

Anderson, H. Allen

1990 The Delaware and Shawnee Indians and the Republic of Texas, 1820 – 1845. *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 94(3):231-260.

Anonymous

2021a Caney Creek (Henderson County), *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed November 28, 2021, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/caney-creek-henderson-county>. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

2021b Choctaw Creek, *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed April 21, 2021, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/choctaw-creek>. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

Carlisle, Jeffrey D.

2021 Choctaw Indians, *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed May 25, 2021, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/choctaw-indians>. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

Carson, James Taylor

1999 *Searching for the Bright Path: The Mississippi Choctaws from Prehistory to Removal*. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln.

Ellis, Elizabeth

2021 *Jena Band of the Choctaw Tribe*, accessed June 21, 2021, <https://64parishes.org/entry/jena-band-of-the-choctaw-tribe>

Galloway, Patricia K.

1995 *Choctaw Genesis: 1500-1700*. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln.

Hale, Duane Kendall

1987 *Peacemakers on the Frontier: A History of the Delaware Tribe of Western Oklahoma*. Delaware Tribe of Western Oklahoma Press, Anadarko.

Jena Band of Choctaw Indians

2021 *History*, accessed February 8, 2021, <http://www.jenachoctaw.org/content/history>

Kidwell, Clara Sue

2021 Choctaw tribe, *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, accessed at <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=CH047>. Published by the Oklahoma Historical Society.

La Vere, David

2004 *The Texas Indians*. Texas A&M University Press, College Station.

Lipscomb, Carol A.

2021 Delaware Indians, *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed June 21, 2021, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/delaware-indians>. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

Long, Christopher

- 2021 Cherokee Village, TX, *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed November 28, 2021, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/choerokee-village-tx>. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

Martin, Howard N.

- 1977 *Myths and Folktales of the Alabama-Coushatta Indians of Texas*. Encino Press, Austin.

- 2010 Alabama Trace, *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed May 25, 2021, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/exa01>. Uploaded on June 9, 2010. Modified on September 12, 2018. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

May, Stephanie Anna

- 2001 Performances of Identity: Alabama-Coushatta Tourism, Powwows, and Everyday Life. Unpublished Dissertation, Anthropology Department, University of Texas at Austin.

Mayfield, Albert Hunter

- 2021 James Shannon Mayfield, *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed July 08, 2021, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/mayfield-james-shannon>. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

Minor, David

- 2021 Choctaw, TX, *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed April 21, 2021, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/choctaw-tx>. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

Newcomb, W. W. Jr.

- 1961 *Indians of Texas: From Prehistoric to Modern Times*. University of Texas Press, Austin.

Russell, Traylor

- 2021 Lewis, Kendall, *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed April 21, 2021, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/lewis-kendall>. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

Smither, Harriet, (editor)

- 1932 The Alabama Indians of Texas. *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 36 (October 1932)

Swanton, John R.

- 1931 *Source Material for the Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaw Indians*. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.
- 1946 *The Indians of the Southeastern United States*. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.

Texas General Land Office Land Grant Database

- 2021 Original Grantee: Kendall Lewis, accessed April 21, 2021, <https://s3.glo.texas.gov/glo/history/archives/land-grants/index.cfm>

Texas State Library and Archives Commission

- 2019 Treaty Between Texas Commissioners and the Cherokee Indians, 1836.
<https://www.tsl.texas.gov/exhibits/texas175/choctaw.html>

Thompson, Ian

- 2019 *Choctaw Food: Remembering the Land, Rekindling Ancient Knowledge*. Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, Durant.
- 2021 Chahta Okla (The Choctaw People). <https://www.choctawnation.com/tribal-services/cultural-services/historic-preservation>. Accessed June 21, 2021.

Winfrey, Dorman H. and James M. Day, (editors)

- 1995 *The Indian Papers of Texas and the Southwest, 1825-1916*. Volumes 1-5. Texas State Historical Association, Austin.