

RESOURCE PROTECTION PLANNING PROJECT
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE THREE COUNTIES
OF THE OKLAHOMA PANHANDLE TO 1930

REGION ONE

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Industrialization In Oklahoma

Even though Oklahoma is not an industrial state, industrial production has had a significant and continuing impact on the quality of life and the economic well-being of Oklahomans. For purposes of this historic context, industry is defined as value-added manufacturing, thus encompassing a range of sites from small waterpowered gristmills to huge lead and zinc smelters. Excluded are most energy-related sites, which are the subject of a different historic context. This study covers the period from the early nineteenth century, when white settlement began in Oklahoma, to the late 1920s, when changing markets and the Great Depression significantly altered the state's industrial infrastructure.

Several generalizations have emerged from the research on industrialization in Oklahoma. First, industry has been overwhelmingly extractive and agricultural. Thus, most of the identified sites include gristmills, salt works, cotton gins and cottonseed oil plants, smelters, lumber mills, milk and cheese companies, and flour mills. Second, industrial development has often proceeded in cycles of boom and bust, as seen in coal, lumber, broomcorn, cotton, oil, and lead and zinc. Finally, the number of industrial properties identified during the research for this project is quite small, particularly when compared with the Oklahoma listings on the National Register of Historic Places and the Oklahoma Landmarks Inventory. The majority of these

sites are located in regions three (twenty-four) and seven (twenty-two), while work in 1984/85 identified sixteen industrial sites in region six. These figures reflect not only the relative historical distribution of industrial development in the state but also the lack of attention given to industry in previous surveys.

During most of the nineteenth century, when much of Oklahoma was Indian Territory, limited available energy, poor transportation, restricted markets, and sparse population circumscribed industrial development. As was the case in the rest of premodern America, nearly all manufacturing in Indian Territory was small-scale, existed primarily to serve local needs, and was usually subsistence-oriented. Most manufacturing took place at the family level, where individuals produced a wide variety of home manufacturers by hand, usually for family use or barter, and sometimes for cash sale. Examples include spinning, processing food, churning butter, making soap, and butchering.

Above the family level, artisans and craftsmen, small salt works, and local mills produced what people did not make at home. Artisans and craftsmen, such as carpenters, cabinetmakers, saddlers, and blacksmiths, usually made to order and oftentimes bartered their wares rather than sell them for cash. Only a few sites of this type have been identified, such as the partially excavated ruins of the Mathewson house and blacksmith shed operated from about 1869-74 in Comanche county (region 7). Salt, which was evaporated from the waters of saline springs,

formed a crucial part of the diet of the residents of Indian Territory. The remains of several salt works tentatively identified in the state attest to the significance of salt. Local mills, powered by either water or horses, manufactured products such as flour, cornmeal, and lumber with less labor and of better quality than those made at home. Again, the number of surviving local mills, such as the Hildebrand Mill in Delaware county (region 3), indicate the importance of these establishments in Indian Territory.

The Civil War in Oklahoma contributed to the breakdown of tribal sovereignty and accelerated changes that in the long run stimulated industrial development. During the Civil War, the Choctaws and Chickasaws aligned themselves with the Confederacy, while the Cherokees, Creeks, and Seminoles divided their allegiance between the North and South. At war's end, the Union compelled the tribes to sign Reconstruction treaties. One key provision of these treaties required the tribes to grant railroad rights-of-way for chartered companies to construct north-south and east-west lines.

Beginning shortly after the Civil War and continuing into the early twentieth century, changes in transportation, population, and energy combined to transform industry in Oklahoma. By the early twentieth century, railroads crisscrossed Oklahoma. Railroads spurred economic growth and industrial development by increasing the speed, efficiency, and reliability of transportation; by making it possible to move a significantly

larger volume of goods; and by linking Oklahoma to a national market. With the expansion of the rail network, Oklahoma witnessed an upsurge in ranching, farming, mining, and lumbering. Concomitantly, railroads broke down the sheltered markets that most local industries had formerly enjoyed and placed them at a competitive disadvantage with products mass-produced outside of Oklahoma.

By improving transportation and contributing to economic growth, railroads attracted large numbers of white settlers to Oklahoma. Between 1890 and 1910, Oklahoma's population increased from 258,657 to over 1.6 million, a growth rate of 518 percent. Pressure from the railroads and the growing number of white inhabitants persuaded the federal government to open sections of Indian Territory to white settlement. In April 1889, Congress opened the Unassigned Lands in central Oklahoma, and shortly thereafter about fifty thousand homeseekers participated in a run for two million acres. Overnight, Guthrie, Edmond, Oklahoma City, and Norman appeared along the Santa Fe tracks. The next year, in May 1890, Congress passed the Oklahoma Organic Act, which created Oklahoma Territory from the Unassigned Lands and the Panhandle. Between 1892 and 1901, a series of openings of Indian land increased the size of Oklahoma Territory and attracted tens-of-thousands of settlers.

Cotton provides an illustration of the combined impact of railroads and population growth on manufacturing in Indian Territory. Prior to the Civil War, the Chickasaws, Choctaws,

Creeks, and Cherokees engaged in cotton culture. Although some members of the tribes did raise cotton commercially, Indian farms were generally small, and most cotton was used for the domestic manufacture of cloth. The Civil War brought a hiatus to cotton production, but by the 1870s, the arrival of the railroads precipitated a cotton boom that with some reversals continued until the 1930s.

Along with the boom came significant changes in the Indians' cotton culture. Most Indians now bought ready-to-wear clothing shipped in by rail and sold their cotton to be transported out by the railroad. By 1900, 301 gins in Indian Territory processed over 288,000 bales of cotton, and 6 cottonseed processing plants produced oil, cake and meal, hulls, and linters (the short fibers that adhere to the seeds after ginning). But, by 1900, whites who were attracted to Oklahoma largely by the opportunities created by the railroads worked 80 percent of the farms producing cotton on Indian land.

Among the range of potential opportunities that drew white settlers to Oklahoma, the exploitation of coal and petroleum had a significant impact on industrial development. Commercial-scale mining of coal began in 1872, when J.J. McCalester opened a mine in Pittsburg county (region 3) near a town that later bore his name. Thereafter, coal mining expanded rapidly; by statehood in 1907, fifty companies extracted about three million tons of coal from southeastern Oklahoma. Oilmen drilled Oklahoma's first commercial oil well in 1897 near Bartlesville. After a slow

start, the oil industry experienced phenomenal growth. By 1915, Oklahoma's annual yield of 123 million barrels constituted one-third of the world's oil output. In the early years of the oil industry, much natural gas was wasted. During the 1910s, however, production began to climb until by 1925 Oklahoma wells accounted for just over one-fifth of the natural gas marketed in the United States.

Coal, and later petroleum, provided high quality energy for transportation and manufacturing in heretofore unprecedented amounts. One of the most important stimuli for J.J. McCalester's first coal mining venture was the arrival of the MKT railroad, which supplied both a market and transportation. Railroads continued to be major consumers and carriers of coal. Abundant, cheap coal and natural gas furnished the high heat necessary for manufacturing enterprises such as lead and zinc smelters in northeastern Oklahoma and brick kilns scattered all over the state. Like the railroads, energy development attracted people and money to the state, enlarging the pool of risk capital available for industrial expansion, increasing the demand for manufactured goods, and expanding the labor pool.

In Oklahoma, the railroad, fossil fuel, and population contributed to significant industrial growth, the patterns of which will interest individuals attempting to place industrial properties in historical context. Beginning in the 1890s, first the number and then the variety of manufacturing establishments expanded rapidly. Despite these increases in quantity and

diversity, small-scale manufacturers gave way to larger producers. Between 1909 and 1919, the number of operations reporting a value of products of less than \$5,000 plummeted from 1,182 to 710, while those reporting a value of products of \$1 million or more increased from 4 to 72. In 1919, these \$1 million firms made up only 3 percent of the state's total; yet, they accounted for 44 percent of the wage earners, 69 percent of the value of products, and 49 percent of the value added. Beginning in the 1910s, industry began to concentrate in cities with a population of 10,000 or more, while during the 1920s, manufacturing became more energy intensive and less labor intensive. Those local industries that survived did so by adapting to new market conditions.

Flour and grist milling offer a good example of Oklahoma's industrial cycle in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Milling operations increased from 66 in 1899 to 295 in 1909, when most flour mills manufactured their own brand name products and vigorously promoted them in their immediate area. By 1919, however, the number of milling establishments had fallen to 227. Significantly, the greatest decline was in operations with output valued at less than \$5000 (48), while the most dramatic increase was in facilities producing more than \$1,000,000 worth of product (12). The decrease continued until 1929, when Oklahoma could claim only 71 flour and grist mills. Businesses such as the Okeene Mill in Blaine county (region 7) that remained in operation through this period usually did so by

expanding their plant and boosting output. In 1976, the Okeene mill was placed on the National Register of Historic Places, largely because it represented a once important and nearly extinct industry in the state.

Region One

Region one is made up of three counties in Oklahoma's panhandle, which unlike the rest of the state was never a part of Indian Territory. In the late 1870s, the region's vast grass-covered plains began to attract cattlemen, who in subsequent years ran hundreds of thousands of head on the panhandle's grasslands. Severe blizzards in the mid-1880s devastated the cattle industry and left the region open to sodbusters. For the next several decades, settlement advanced and retreated in company with the cycle of wet and dry years that is so much a part of the climate of the southern plains. Above normal precipitation in late 1880s lured several thousand homesteaders to the panhandle, but a drought at the end of the decade forced most of them to give up and move on. By 1893, fewer than 2,500 settlers remained in the entire region. Population increased from about 3,000 in 1899 to just over 32,400 in 1909, held fairly steady through the 1920s, and declined sharply during the drought and dust bowl of the 1930s. Today region one remains one of the most sparsely settled sections of the state.

In addition to chronic aridity, the panhandle's uncertain political organization and its isolation severely retarded

settlement until the late nineteenth century. Before 1890, the panhandle was known as No Man's Land, because it belonged to no state or territory. The region's status as a political outcast freed it from any larger legal jurisdiction and made the area a haven for criminals and other unsavory characters. The Oklahoma Organic Act of 1890 eliminated this situation by attaching No Man's Land to Oklahoma Territory. Isolation also favored lawlessness and discouraged permanent settlement. During the nineteenth century, the panhandle's main links with outside markets remained the Santa Fe Trail and various cattle trails such as the Jones-Plummer.

As was the case in the rest of Oklahoma, the railroads broke down isolation by opening up new markets and bringing in settlers. In 1902, the Rock Island line finished laying track across the panhandle and stimulated the creation or expansion of several Texas county communities including Tyrone, Hooker, Optima, Guymon, Goodwell, and Texhoma. During the early 1900s, residents of Beaver county saw how the Rock Island helped towns in neighboring Texas county, and after at least one failure, laid track six miles north to Forgan. With the financial backing of Kansas businessmen, the six-mile roadbed became a one-hundred-mile stretch of rails that linked Beaver to Hooker and Keyes. In mid-1920s, the Santa Fe completed its line through Cimarron county and helped boost the population of Boise City from about 350 to nearly 1,256 by the end of the decade.

By opening up new markets, the railroad contributed to a region-wide boom in wheat. Many of the whites who crowded into Oklahoma after 1889 already had experience growing wheat. In the early 1890s, however, one of the droughts that periodically afflicts the southern plains retarded the spread of wheat culture. After 1896, the drought broke and wheat became an important cash crop in northcentral and northwestern Oklahoma. In 1914, the eruption of WWI in Europe drove up the price of U.S. wheat, and by 1917, the price paid for wheat at Oklahoma elevators had set a record that stood until 1947.

In response to this economic incentive, farmers in the panhandle of Oklahoma planted more wheat. The wheat harvest in region one increased dramatically from 672,635 bushels in 1909 to 4.7 million in 1919, which made wheat the most important cereal crop in the region. During the 1920s, farmers responded to a glutted market and falling prices by planting more wheat. By 1929, the region-wide yield of 13.6 million bushels represented 27 percent of all of the wheat harvested in the state. Wheat farmers in the panhandle stripped the land of its protective cover of grass and mined the soil for profit. Along with their wheat they planted seeds that matured into the dust bowl of the 1930s. During the 1930s, drought, changing market conditions, overproduction, and the Agricultural Adjustment Act brought the wheat boom tumbling down.

Unlike the situation in the other wheat-producing regions of Oklahoma, there is very little indication that the boom generated

much industrial activity. In 1909, before the war-induced rise in wheat prices, region one had only two flour and feed mills, both of which were in Texas county. County data is thin at best, but it appears that by 1931 no flour mills of any size remained in the panhandle. Despite its huge wheat harvest, most of the milling took place outside of the region. In the early 1930s, region one apparently supported a few small mills in conjunction with elevators in Beaver, Gate, and Hooker, along with about twenty-five elevators that did not engage in milling.

Very few industries operated in region one during the period covered by this study. In 1909, the entire panhandle had only twenty-four industrial establishments. According to the Third Annual Report of the Oklahoma Department of Labor for 1909-10, the region's nineteen printing operations greatly outnumbered other types of industries followed by bakeries and feed and flour mills. Most of these facilities existed in the panhandle's few towns. This very low level of industrial production continued through the 1920s. By 1929, the U.S. manufacturing census did not report on Beaver or Cimarron counties and listed only four industrial establishments in Texas county that employed just ten workers.

PROPERTY-TYPE ANALYSIS FOR INDUSTRIAL SITES IN REGION ONE

There are no identified industrial properties in region one. Unlike the state's other regions, the design of earlier surveys does not offer a satisfactory explanation. Instead, the lack of population and the small size of the few towns significantly retarded industrial development. Surveyors will need to conduct careful archival research and oral interviews in order to identify properties that have industrial significance. It is possible that further research and survey work might locate the following types of industrial properties in the panhandle: 1) factory buildings, 2) warehouses, and 3) mill complexes. Surveyors will need to use the National Register criteria as a basis for evaluating all identified properties. The National Register criteria are as follows:

- A: Properties that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B: Properties that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C: Properties that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.
- D: Properties that have yielded, or that may be expected to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

1. Factory buildings: A few factories operated in region one during the period covered by this study. Most of these establishments produced on a modest scale and sold their products in local or regional markets. Included in this category would be bakeries, ice plants, creameries, printing offices, bottling works, and mattress factories. A few manufacturers may have produced on a larger scale and sold in a wider market, especially some processors of wheat and corn. Lack of sites makes it very difficult to write a generic description. Surveyors should look for rectangular, one- or two-story buildings constructed of brick, cement blocks, or interior wood frame covered with sheet metal. Beyond that, careful research, including the use of fire insurance maps, will be required to identify surviving factories.

2. Warehouses: Even though there are no identified, industrial warehouses in region one, the available evidence indicates that there may be surviving warehouses in towns and cities in the region. In general, existing warehouses would be either one- or two-story buildings with a flat roof. The most likely materials of construction would include brick, cement blocks, or an interior wooden frame covered with sheet metal. Most of these buildings have probably been adapted for other uses so that research will be required to establish their industrial significance.

3. Mill complexes: In the panhandle, mills processed corn and wheat. Flour and grist mills are usually tall, rect-

angular buildings of interior wooden frame construction covered with sheet metal. They may still contain their milling machinery and be found in conjunction with cement elevators and loading facilities for either rail cars or trucks.

INDUSTRIAL SITES IN OKLAHOMA

REGION TWO:

Ellis County:

1. Ingles Brothers Broomcorn Warehouse: 100 NW First Street, Shattuck, OK (OLI)

Kay County:

2. Brushyhead Quarry: NE 1/4, SW 1/4, SW 1/4, Sec. 19, T 29 N, R 4 E; Newkirk, OK

Woods County:

3. Alva (flour) Mills: NE 1/4, Sec. 23, T 27 N, R 14 W; North of Alva, OK (OLI)

Woodward County:

4. Phill's Ice Company: Santa Fe and Ninth Street, Woodward, OK (OLI)
5. Boyle Building: 1114-1122 Ninth Street, Woodward, OK

REGION THREE:

Adair County:

6. Golda's Mill: SW 1/4, Sec. 16, T 16 N, R 24 E; twelve miles NW of Stillwell, OK (N.R.)

Delaware County:

7. Grove Cheese Factory (American Legion Chapter 178): O'Daniel Parkway and Broadway, Grove, OK
8. Hildebrand's Mill (Becks Mill): SW 1/4, Sec. 24, T 20 N, R 24 E; ten miles west of Siloam Springs, Ark. (N.R.)

Mayes County:

9. Markam "Old Salt Lick" Site: Between Locus Grove and Pryor, OK

10. Col. A.P. Chouteau Residence: Near Salina, OK

McIntosh County:

11. Johnson Gin and Store: NW 1/4, Sec. 15, T 11 N, R 15 E; Pierce, OK (OLI)

12. Watson Gin: SW 1/4, SE 1/4, Sec. 36, T 9 N, R 13 E; Hanna, OK

13. Cochrane's Gin: Corner of Huts and Main, Hanna, OK (OLI)

14. Windston Gin: Sec. 36, T 9 N, R 13 E (OLI)

Muskogee County:

15. Southern Electric-Stout Roller Mill: 302 Commercial, Muskogee, OK (OLI)

16. Old Salt Springs: Dirty Creek, north and west of Ramsey

17. David Vann Salt Works: SW 1/4, Sec. 17, T 12 N, R 20 E

18. The Francis Vitrified Brick Company: Boynton, OK

Okmulgee County:

19. Russel Mill and Elevator: 201 South Third Street, Morris, OK

Pawnee County:

20. Corliss Steam Engine: Pawnee Fair Grounds, Pawnee, OK (N.R.)

21. Balmer Kiln: Archeological site in Pawnee county

Sequoyah County:

22. Mackey's Salt Works: Inundated in Sections 11 and 14, T 13 N, R 21 E; nine miles east of Gore, OK

23. Salt Springs (granted Sequoyah by treaty of 1828): About 1-1/2 miles west of the former town of Nicut, Sec. 19, T 13 N, R 26 E (about one hundred yards south of Salt Branch)

24. Bean's Salt Works: About five miles north of Gore on highway to Tenkiller lake (about one mile above where Salt Creek empties into the Illinois River); SE 1/4, Sec. 21, T 13 N, R 21 E

Tulsa County:

25. Tulsa Acme Brick Plant: 4103 Dawson Road, Tulsa, OK
26. Kerr Glass Company: South Main, Sand Springs, OK (OLI)
27. Brown's Mill/Plummer's Grain Elevator: Bixby, OK (OLI)
28. United States Zinc: 200 South Wilson, Sand Springs, OK (OLI)
29. Commander Mills: 726 Adams, Sand Springs, OK (OLI)

Washington County:

30. Carr-Bartles Mill Site: Bartlesville, OK (OLI)

REGION FOUR:

Bryan County:

31. Durant Milling Company: North of tracks and East of depot, Durant, OK
32. Commanche Chief Brands Peanut Co., Inc.: East of tracks, 1 block North of depot, Durant, OK

Choctaw County:

33. Folsom Salt Works: NW 1/4, Sec. 35, T 5 S, R 14 E; four miles northeast of Boswell, OK (OLI)
34. Water Mill: North of Kiamichi River Bridge, U.S. highway 70 (OLI)

LeFlore County:

35. Pine Valley Company Town and Lumber Mill: NE 1/4, NE 1/4, Sec. 10, T 2 N, R 24 E; approximately one mile south of Muse, OK

36. Howe Coke Ovens: SE 1/4, SW 1/4, SW 1/4, Sec. 35, T 6 N, R 25 E
37. Milton Socialist Colony: SE 1/4, Sec. 15, T 18 N, R 23 E; Block 32, lots 13-23, original town, Milton; southwest of Bokoshe, OK

McCurtain County:

38. America: NE 1/4, SE 1/4, Sec. 35, T 10 S, R 26 E; intersection Forest Service Road 211 and 9175, southeast of Bokhoma, OK
39. Clear Creek Water Mill: SE 1/4, SE 1/4, Sec. 31, T 7 S, R 21 E; southwest of Valliant, OK

Pittsburg County:

40. McAlester Oil Mill Company: South of Washington and East of Fourteenth Streets, McAlester, OK
41. Southern Ice and Cold Storage Company: Corner of Fifth and Choctaw, McAlester, OK (N.R.)

REGION FIVE:

Johnston County:

42. Oolithic Stone Quarry: Vicinity of Bromide, OK (OLI)
43. Nida Gin: Nida, OK
44. Sawmill site: Archeological site

Marshall County:

45. Kingston Cotton Gin: Northeast corner of the intersection of Willis and U.S. highway 70 (5th Street), Kingston, OK

Murray County:

46. Big Canyon (Rock) Crusher: Sec. 30, T 2 S, R 3 E; Route 110, Dougherty, OK (OLI)

Pontotoc County:

47. Byrd's Mill: Twelve miles southeast of Ada, OK
(OLI)

REGION SEVEN:

Beckham County:

48. Whited Grist Mill: 306 East Seventh Street, Elk
City, OK (N.R.)

Blaine County:

49. Ruins of Old Ferguson: SE 1/4, NW 1/4, Sec. 28, T 18
N, R 11 W (OLI)
50. Okeene Flour Mill: Off State highway 51, Okeene,
OK (N.R.)
51. Old Plant Office Building: United States Gypsum
Company, Southard, OK (N.R.)
52. Old Salt Works: SW 1/4, NE 1/4, SW 1/4, Sec. 23, T
18 N, R 12 W; two and three-quarter miles south and
one and one-quarter miles east of Southard, OK
(N.R.)

Caddo County:

53. Apache Milling Company: 161 Evans, Apache, OK
54. Ice Plant: Red brick, now a frame shop, Anadarko, OK
55. Peanut Mill: South side of state highway 9 coming in
from Chickasha, just east of downtown, red roof,
Anadarko, OK

Comanche County:

56. Hazel Rock Quarry: Near Meers, OK
57. Pearson Smelter: On Blue Creek, Ketch Ranch, Fort
Sill, OK (OLI)
58. Albert Laux Blacksmith Shop: Main and B Street,
Sterling, OK (OLI)
59. LaSill Milk Company: 201 Dearborn, Lawton, OK (OLI)

60. Bonanza Smelter: Fawn Creek Wildlife (OLI)
61. Mathewson House and Shed (blacksmith): Archeological site

Custer County:

62. Owl Blacksmith Shop: 208 West Rainey, Weatherford, OK (N.R.)

Dewey County:

63. Seiling Milling Company: Fourth and Orange, Seiling, OK (N.R.)

Harmon County:

64. Kiser Salt Works: SE 1/4, SE 1/4, Sec. 4, T 6 N, R 26 W; eighteen miles north of Hollis, OK (OLI)
65. Cottonseed Oil Plant: Hollis, OK

Jackson County:

66. Leger-Bunge Flour Mill: Block 5, lots 1-5, 10-12, Wrights Addition, Altus, OK (OLI)

Jefferson County:

67. Addington Brick Company: Addington, OK

Kiowa County:

68. Chickasaw Cotton Oil Company Building: 46th and Eastern, Hobart, OK (OLI)

Stephens County:

69. Halliburton Oil Cementing Company: 1015 Bois D'Arc, Duncan, OK
70. Washita Valley Gin: Highway 29, on Main Street, two miles from Brooks Road, Bray, OK
71. Peoples' Ice Company: 602 West Main Street, Duncan, OK

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