Rentiesville, named for Creek Freedman William Rentie, was established in 1903. The town is the birthplace of historian and Pulitzer prize finalist John Hope Franklin. Franklin was an acclaimed scholar of African American history, and the recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom. He is best known for his book From Slavery to Freedom, which is perhaps the most popular text of African American history. His father, Buck Franklin, was a lawyer and influential early citizen of Rentiesville. Faced with economic hardships during the Great Depression and searching for better opportunities, many citizens left the town and settled in urban centers.

Rentieville has experienced a revival. The town’s population was 107 in the 2000 census, and by 2010, it increased to 121. The town remains extremely relevant today. Named blues artist D.C. Minner and his wife Sissy called Rentiesville home and played at the Down Home Blues Club. They also hosted the town’s annual Duck Kill Creek Blues Festival, which attracts famous blues artists and fans from around the country. Historically, the town site of Rentiesville was a place where D.C. Minner and John Hope Franklin, Rentiesville carries a distinguished cultural tradition.

LIMA

Located in Seminole County, the land that encircles present-day Lima has a long history predating the town’s existence. Although Lima was founded in 1904, according to the Works Progress Administration, Seminole Freedmen, better known as Black Seminoles, inhabited the area at least fifteen years earlier.

Lima opened its post office in 1907 and was incorporated in 1913. The town name comes from the limestone quarries in the area. In 1921 Lima became the site for the first African American county union in the United States.

Lima experienced prosperity after the Seminole Oil Field was discovered in 1926. However, with newly discovered fortunes also came many white settlers, who arrived and established their own separate village, New Lima. “They came in and got greedy,” said James Brooks, an old Lima resident. “They stole everything they could get away with.” When the oil boom declined, the town’s population dropped. After peaking at 25, the population was at 99 by 1950. African Americans once again became the majority of the population at 53, with only 38 Black residents. Even with the population decline and demographic changes, Lima has a vital place in African American history.

TAFT

Taft was first known as Twine, Indian Territory. Located a few miles from Muskogee and established on allotted land bought from a Creek Freedman, Twine was named after William H. Twine, an early activist and founder of the Muskogee Cimeter, an important early African American newspaper.

The town was formed in 1903, officially changed its name to Taft in 1904, and finally became incorporated in 1907. Although rooted in the land allotted to Creek Freedmen, African Americans migrated from the South to live in Taft.

Taft residents elected Lelia Foley-Davis as its mayor in 1973. She was the first elected African American woman mayor in US history. Foley-Davis stepped down in 1999 but was reelected in 1999 and still serves as the town’s mayor today. Taft’s devotion to Foley-Davis and her service to the town both embody the courage, determination, and passion that helped its residents to overcome racial and gender barriers.