

Uprising in Pickens County: Economic Development in a New Land

About this lesson

Grade Level: Upper
Elementary/Middle
School/High School

Author: Charlsie Allen,
Ardmore Middle School,
Ardmore, OK

Time: One to two class
periods

Posted: November 2007

Abstract/Introduction After their removal to Oklahoma, the Chickasaw nation allowed skilled white workers and professionals, such as teachers, into their land through a permit system. As news of the economic possibilities in the Chickasaw land became widespread, white squatters began to move into the Chickasaw Nation without permission from the Chickasaw Nation or the United States government. These illegal squatters became known as Intruders.

Over the years through struggle, conflict, innovation, cooperation, and accommodation, citizens of the Chickasaw Nation and these intruders worked out a more stable economic system whereby both groups could work together. In the process both Chickasaws and the Intruders contributed greatly to the economic development of Southern Indian Territory by running farms, raising cattle, opening businesses, providing professional services, and incorporating cities.

Background Read Handout 2.

Goals/Objectives

Students will:

- Explain why scarcity of skilled labor led to the Permit System.
- Examine why the Indian Nations invited only certain peoples into their boundaries.
- Use cause/effect reasoning to explain how the Permit System led to increased the number of intruders.

PASS Standards

This lesson could be taught from fourth to twelfth grade. It meets PASS standards in:

Social Studies

Grade 4: Standards 4 and 5

Grade 5: Standard 7

Geography

Grade 7: Standards 2, 5, and 6

U.S. History 8th Grade

Standards 8 and 9

Oklahoma History

Standards 4, 6, and 8

High School Economics
Standards 4.1, 6, and 7.1.

Materials

Graphic organizer: Uprising in Pickens County (attached)

Procedure

Address each of the following economic principles in terms of the White Intruders into the Chickasaw Nation. Complete the graphic organizer in small groups, individually, or as a class based on the discussion.

1. Resources are scarce; therefore people must choose. What resources were scarce in the Chickasaw Nation? *[Skilled workers; professionals such as teachers, lawyers, doctors, brick layers]*
2. What choices did the Chickasaw (and other tribes) make regarding the scarcity of skilled labor? *[They invited skilled workers to come into tribal lands to furnish specialized service for the Indian Nations.]*
3. What was the cost of the Indian decision to allow whites and blacks to enter the Chickasaw Nation on the Permit System? *[Invited and permitted guests wrote home about the wonderful land and others followed. New people entering the Nations did not always obtain a permit.]*
4. People's choices influence environmental quality. How was this economic principle illustrated by the Intruders? *[The virgin plains became fenced pastures and fields and the forests were used for firewood and building supplies.]*
5. People's choices are influenced by incentives. *[Intruders believed the Indian lands would someday be opened to homestead. They wanted to be in place when the land became available. Until then, the farmers were willing to tenant farm and professionals were willing to lease town lots in order to build their businesses.]*
6. People create rules that influence choices and incentives. *[Indian leaders established the Permit System. When Intruders ignored the Permit System, Chickasaw governors Overton and Guy raised a militia to force the removal of illegal settlers. Intruders who were escorted out of the Chickasaw Nation waited in Texas for a few days then returned to their farms in tribal lands. Intruders petitioned the United States government to allow cities to incorporate under federal law; their petition was granted and cities began to incorporate in the late 1880s.]*

Bibliography

McReynolds, Edwin C., **Oklahoma: A History of the Sooner State**, 1964.

Frame, Paul N., **A History of Ardmore, Oklahoma From the Earliest Beginnings to 1907**, 1995.

Hill, Luther B., **A History of the State of Oklahoma Vol. I**, 1909.

Extension

Have students search the archives of *The Oklahoman* for additional information on this history of the Chickasaw Nation and other tribes in Oklahoma.

Uprising in Pickens County: Economic Development in a New Land

Handout 1

During the discussion of the Uprising in Pickens County, record specific information in the table.

Economic Principle	Needs in the Chickasaw Nation	Actions of the Chickasaw Nation	Resulting actions

Uprising in Pickens County: Economic Development in a New Land

Handout 2: Background Information

When the Chickasaw Nation established a government entity separate from the Choctaw Nation in 1856, there were only about 5,000 Indians living in the area bounded on the north by the Canadian River and on the south by the Red River. East to West the nation stretched from Tishomingo almost to Ringling. The land was mainly good for grazing cattle and horses, but the rolling hills and numerous stands of timber supported abundant wildlife. Because the Cross Timbers discouraged travel by wagons, white settlers followed the Texas Road south into Texas rather than turning westward across Indian Territory. Prior to the Civil War, most of the tribes in residence in Indian Territory had allowed and even encouraged certain white skilled workers and professionals such as teachers to come into their territories to establish businesses for the benefit of the tribal citizens and governments. These first white peoples were issued permits to reside and work within the tribal boundaries. However, the permitted whites soon spread the word about the fertile Red River Valley, and a tide of illegal white and black immigration into tribal lands began which would eventually outnumber the Indian population nearly ten to one.

When it became obvious that the Permit System was not working, the Chickasaw Nation twice tried to deal with the problem. The permit system had worked well in the beginning, but white settlers began coming without being sponsored by an Indian Citizen. These squatters became known as Intruders. They did not pay the permit tax and thus had no legitimate reason to be in Indian Territory. Tribal governments were not receiving monies from the Intruders who were building farms, stores, and other businesses on land they could not legally own. Therefore, Chickasaw Nation governors attempted to levy taxes on the Intruders.

Governor Overton increased the permit tax on humans. In 1888, Governor Guy increased the property tax on cattle. Since the early days of the Indian Territory, non-citizens – including the cattlemen – had paid a tax of 12 ½ cents per head per year for cattle held in the Chickasaw Nation. Even that meager amount was apparently unacceptable to Intruders who raised thousands of head of cattle and horses on the fertile plains of Indian Territory without paying the required tax. The Governor's tax plan had a number of exemptions because it was not designed to devastate the poor, but to raise money for the Chickasha Nation. For example, five "milch cows" were exempted for each non-citizen family along with a team of oxen or horses or mules.

Even still, settlers protested. When taxes were ignored and not paid, the government of the various Indian Tribes did not receive the taxes due them. Both governors had requested that the federal government remove illegal settlers, but the attempts were rather ineffective. This situation continued until the last reservation was opened to white settlement.

As American citizens, the Intruders reasoned that they should not be expected to pay taxes levied by a government in which they had no representation. As American citizens, they deemed these taxes oppressive and unjust. It was the battle cry of the Revolutionary days: No taxation without representation. But this situation was slightly different. This time, the disgruntled taxpayers were not arguing with their own government. Instead, they were illegal

residents defying the sovereign government of the Chickasaw Nation.

In a final attempt to enforce the tax laws, Governor Guy raised and trained a militia. Leading his army throughout the Chickasha Nation, the Governor began systemically visiting farms to determine the amount of tax due. After computing the amount owed, Governor Guy gave the Intruder the opportunity to pay cash. If no payment was made, the militia cut out enough livestock to cover the debt.

As Governor Guy traveled from farm to farm, his herd of animals held for taxes continued to grow. The animals were driven to Overbrook, north of Marietta, which was located in Pickens County, Chickasaw Nation. The White Intruders banded together, took up arms and went to Overbrook where they retook the confiscated cattle and returned home. Intruders continued to infiltrate Indian lands until tribal citizens took individual allotments so that the great unused tracts of land could be opened for homestead settlement; and the Intruders could finally own the land on which they settled and made improvements.

Bibliography

McReynolds, Edwin C., Oklahoma: A History of the Sooner State, 1964.

Frame, Paul N., A History of Ardmore, Oklahoma From the Earliest Beginnings to 1907, 1995.

Hill, Luther B., A History of the State of Oklahoma Vol. I, 1909.