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Oklahoma Territory? Indian Territory? Aren't They The Same?

By Mae D. Cox

Over the years I've delighted in the knowledge that my grandmother was born in Indian Territory in 1892, though she actually grew up in Cleveland County. Once while telling ladies at the Cleveland County Genealogical Society all about her being born in Indian Territory, one of the ladies piped up with,

"Not if she was born in Cleveland County."

That stopped me dead in my tracks. She went on to explain that people born in CleYeland County during that era were actually born in *Oklahoma Territory*, not *Indian Territory*. Wait a minute! Back up the train! Wasn't everything in Oklahoma called Indian Territory way back then?

I've lived in Oklahoma most all my life and have believed our state was *Indian Territory* until it became the State of Oklahoma. Through the years, I've heard mention of *Oklahoma Territory* and *Indian Territory*, but thought they were synonymous.

That was the beginning of my learning *it tain't necessarily so!*

Returning home still puzzled, I turned to the Internet and learned there were two areas within the confines of what we now call Oklahoma: *Indian Territory* and *Oklahoma Territory*. Trying to clarify just where my grandmother was born and get a picture of how Oklahoma was divided at the time of her birth, I kept searching and found oodles of information. If you'd like to read on the subject, just do a search for *Oklahoma territories*, and you'll get a passel of sites to visit.

Originally, Oklahoma—without the panhandle, which was known as *No Man's Land*—was called *Indian Territory*. By 1889, it was divided into two territories as shown on the map. There also seems to be some confusion about just where these territories were located. Some folks might think their ancestors were born in *Indian Territory* when in fact they were born in *Oklahoma Territory*. Or vice versa.

I was relieved to find that my Grandmother was indeed born in *Indian Terrifory*. Something about that is just glamorous to me! Seems she was born in a dugout east of Wayne, Oklahoma—just south of the Canadian River, which is a dividing line for the Indian and Oklahoma territories.

She did, however, grow up in *Oklahoma Territory*. Her family moved north across the river into southeast Cleveland County when she was just a baby, around 1893.

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