

Oklahoma Historical Society's
Encyclopedia
of OKLAHOMA HISTORY & CULTURE

ADAIR COUNTY

Located in northeastern Oklahoma, Adair County is bounded on the east by the state of Arkansas. Cherokee County borders Adair to the west, to the north is Delaware County, and to the south is Sequoyah County. The county's major highways are U.S. Highway 62, an east-west route, and U.S. Highway 59, a north-south road. Other east-west routes include State Highways 51 and 100. Adair County has 577.03 square miles of land and water. The region is part of the Ozark plateau uplift, which are the tree-covered foothills of the Boston Mountains. The north and central portions of Adair County are drained by the Illinois River and Barren Fork, Evansville, and Caney creeks. Near Stilwell are Sallisaw and Little Lee creeks.

Prehistoric Adair County was inhabited by Archaic and Woodland peoples. Later the Caddoan and Osage peoples lived in the present county. The first whites to arrive in the region were Creole trapper-traders, and after 1812 white pioneers pushed into the area. In 1825 the Osage sold the land that is now Adair County to the United States. As early as 1828 the Western Cherokee arrived from Arkansas. In the 1830s the Eastern Cherokee appeared, this time from Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina. By the turn of the twentieth century whites outnumbered Cherokees in their nation, and by 1910 whites doubled American Indians in the county. Demographics changed even more over time, and in 2000 there were 8,938 American Indians, 10,207 whites, 38 African Americans, and 20 Asians.

At the Oklahoma Constitutional Convention in 1906 Adair County was created from the Goingsnake and Flint districts of the Cherokee Nation. The county received its name from the influential mixed-blood Cherokee Adair family. In 1901, anticipating Oklahoma's upcoming statehood, the battle for the county seat began when the Stilwell Standard stated that its town would be the seat. Westville also declared its intent to host the government offices. The state's constitutional convention delegates selected Westville. In 1908 the battle began again. In an election on June 2, 1908, Stilwell won by 101 votes, but the Westville newspaper protested. A referee, Judge De Ross Baily, reported Westville as the permanent location. The Oklahoma Supreme Court rejected his report. In the second election Stilwell won again. Then in the third election in 1910, Stilwell won by a mere thirty votes. Westville protested again. The second referee, **O. J. Hubbel**, found no fault with the election, and Gov. Charles Nathaniel Haskell made the decision that Stilwell would remain the seat of government.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: *History of Adair County: Including Flint and Goingsnake Districts* (Cane Hill, Ark.: ARC Press, 1991). Lucy Jane Makoske, *Adair County, History, and Legend* (Stilwell, Okla.: Stilwell Chamber of Commerce, 1969). Westville, I.T.: *The Gate City to Indian Territory, Valuable Information About a New Town in a New Country* ([1903]; reprint, N.p.: Goingsnake District Heritage Association, 1988).

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