

### Chapter 3: The Land Run of 1889

Long forgotten were the promises of President Andrew Jackson that the lands given to the Indians would be theirs for "as long as the grass grows or the water runs, in peace and plenty." Just three weeks after taking office, President Benjamin Harrison issued a proclamation proclaiming that the lands located in the heart of Indian Territory, the so-called "Oklahoma Country", would be opened to white settlement by means of a land rush. The land long coveted by the white man would now be his. And, so it was that our land would be settled by means of a run, --a chaotic, dramatic, somewhat bizarre, but arguably picturesque phenomenon the likes of which had never been seen before in our history.

The Land Run, or "Harrison's Hoss Race" as it was sometimes quaintly referred to in the vernacular, took place on a balmy, bright spring day. The alluring, lush, green Oklahoma countryside rolled sedately beneath an azure sky as if to beckon to those in search of a new life. The splendor of the day seemed to joyfully usher in the dawn of a new era. Yet ironically, it also seemed to poignantly portend the end of the Old West in Oklahoma.

As the time grew near, thousands upon thousands of land-starved pioneers seethed along the borders of the Unassigned Lands waiting impatiently for the signal that would send them on their historic quest. Some over-ambitious settlers could not wait for the official opening and sought to stake their claim early by illegally slipping across the border at night. Some of these "Moonlighters", as they were first called, succeeded in avoiding the army patrols that had been commissioned to keep them out. These unscrupulous settlers would later be called "Sooners" for managing, albeit in an illegitimate way, to stake their claims sooner than everyone else.

Finally, the cannons roared and the bugles sounded. The long awaited run had finally begun. Tens of thousands of people scrambled furiously to stake their claim by means of every conveyance imaginable. They came on foot, by horseback, in buggies, on buckboard wagons, on trains, and even on bicycles. One account of doubtful authenticity even told of a balloonist making the dash in a hot air balloon. Whatever the mode of transportation, when a homesteader found a parcel of land to his fancy, he simply drove a stake as proof of ownership. Defending the claim against other claimants was no easy proposition and claim jumping was all too common of an occurrence. With the rapid influx of humanity, towns literally sprung up overnight.

The closest town to what is now The Village sprang up to our east and was called Britton. Britton, which owes its name to a Washington D.C. railroad attorney, Alexander Britton, existed as a town up until 1950 when town officials agreed to allow the town to be swallowed up by Oklahoma City.

The real estate that is now part of The Village today was settled by eleven hardy pioneers and their families each of whom gainfully made their way to this area to stake out their 160-acre homesteads. Staking their claims were: Nathaniel R. Davis, William H. Hobson, Bernhard Alberts, Lewis Hasley, Frank M. Light, Henry Hasley, John S. Speaker, Lawrence Riley, William Edmonds, James V. Bonner and Ulysses Kennedy. Yet, from these humble beginnings, many decades would pass before the Town of The Village would be founded.

Approximately nine miles southeast of these first local settlers was a seemingly inconspicuous rail depot situated on the north bank of the North Canadian River. Established in 1889 by the Southern Kansas Railway Company, a subsidiary of the Santa Fe, Oklahoma Station, as it was called, was nothing more than an isolated watering stop on the morning of the land run. Yet, by day's end, Oklahoma Station had grown to become a tent city of over 10,000 people. Unbeknownst to these tent-city dwellers, their ramshackle and unassuming community would eventually grow into what is today the major metropolitan area we know as Oklahoma City, --a city whose tremendous growth would in due time spawn numerous suburban communities including our own.