

# How did people in Oklahoma experience World War I?

**How were German-Americans affected by World War I?** War had raged in Europe since 1914. Even though the U.S. did not participate until April 1917, the war had a *profound* effect on Americans, including German-Americans in north-central Oklahoma. Mostly farmers, many of this group spoke only German. As with other *ethnic* groups, they tended to live together in communities and to form their closest ties with one another. A number of them were Mennonites whose religious beliefs kept them from serving in the military.

Some Oklahoma Germans still had families in Germany and supported the German effort in conversation and in print. As far as most of these people were concerned, however, the war was a European conflict. They believed the United States should not be involved. Prior to 1917, German-Americans formed organizations supporting neutrality. As American sentiment rose against Germany and thus against German-Americans, they also worked to convince their fellow Americans of their loyalty to their adopted country. After President Woodrow Wilson's declaration of war, any further attempts to defend Germany publicly became treasonous.

As war sentiments grew, civil liberties for German-Americans shrunk. Many towns passed *sedition* (resistance against the government) laws so harsh that even chance remarks could result in a jail term. Reportedly, some local officials did not allow the Constitutions to slow them in their prosecution of violators.

Some city councils went as far as passing laws forbidding the speaking of the German language within the city limits. This imposed a particular hardship on older German-Americans who had never learned to speak English. In Major County, signs were posted on the doors of German churches, declaring "God Almighty understands the American language. Address him only in that tongue." Several German-American citizens were tarred and feathered, some beaten, and a few jailed on various charges of *sedition*.

In the fall of 1918, three Oklahoma towns changed their names because of their German origins. Korn became Corn. Kiel became Loyal.

Bismark became Wright in honor of the first McCurtain County soldier to give his life in the war.

Anti-German sentiment continued long after the war. For example, in 1919, the State Legislature passed a law forbidding public school classes to be taught in any language except English prior to the ninth grade. This law remained on the books for 30 years.

**What was the Green Corn Rebellion?** During World War I, the federal government started requiring young men to register for the draft — a lottery that chose men for the army. Some men defied the draft for religious or political reasons. They included Socialists and members of the Working Class Union (WCU).

Socialism had gained a foothold in recent years, and by 1914 Oklahoma was the strongest socialist state in the nation. Most members of the Socialist Party were peaceful people, not given to radicalism. They were much like their neighbors who belonged to other political parties. With the start of war in Europe and the strong chance of future American involvement, socialism declined.

In eastern Oklahoma, however, many tenant farmers and laborers had enrolled in the WCU, a socialist-related organization. Both the WCU and the Socialist Party were opposed to the draft. Early in 1916, the WCU took a radical turn and began following H.H. “Rube” Munson, a member of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). The IWW supported ending both the draft and the wage system. More importantly, it used violence to achieve its goals.

Members of the WCU burned barns and houses, and gave beatings to nonmembers. In some areas, they threatened and intimidated tenant farmers who did not belong to the union. They posted a notice in McIntosh County stating, “Notice. W.C.U. is called the Working Class union. We hereby notified you to come in and join our lodge in sight of



***On July 20, 1917, Secretary of War Newton D. Baker, blindfolded, drew the first draft number in the lottery to be called up: Number 258. Those drafted were to serve in the American forces during World War I. U.S. National Archives' Local Identifier:165-WW-420(P379)***

30 days. If not, we have got a way to make you join. Take warning. The W.C.U.” (*sic*)

Union organizers began urging the overthrow of the government, giving the war as the cause of the farmers’ problems and the draft as a threat. They urged farmers to rebel against the draft, calling the World War a “rich man’s war, poor man’s fight.”

In addition, organizers told members that thousands of men from other parts of the country were ready to fight for the working man’s cause. They claimed that, after the overthrow of the U.S. government, money which had belonged to the rich would be divided among those who had worked for wages. Many farmers, miners, and other wage-earners attended secret meetings where they took an oath to resist the draft and improve the condition of the working class.

Socialists only advocated reform through election and other legal means. But the WCU advocated open rebellion. It actually set a date for the beginning of a revolt: midnight on August 2, 1917. The plan was for three million people to revolt in all parts of the United States and march on Washington, D.C. They would camp along the way, roasting green corn and beef on barbecues.

Locally, men prepared for the insurrection by collecting guns and *ammunition*. They made plans to burn bridges, destroy railroad trestles, and cut telephone lines.

Then word of the plans leaked. Law officers in Seminole, Hughes, Cleveland, and Pottawatomie counties, along with two federal secret service agents, were trying to identify the movement leaders and locations of meetings. Seminole County Sheriff Frank Grall and his deputy, Bill Cross, were ambushed on their way to such a meeting. Cross was injured. The two men fled to Wewoka, but the encounter forced the beginning of the revolt a few hours ahead of schedule. Word of the ambush spread. Nervous citizens organized to protect themselves, their property, and their country.

Authorities recruited posses and searched the countryside. After several skirmishes and three deaths, they captured several hundred men. They held nearly 400 at the McAlester Penitentiary for trial; it was one of the few places large enough to hold them. The arrested men soon learned that they were allied with only a handful of sympathizers in Texas and Arkansas. There had been no three-million-man army.

The appeal of the organizers quickly wore off. Union members began to realize they had been tricked into treason: insurrection against

the United States government. They faced charges of *sedition*, conspiracy, or resisting the draft. Law officials saw the trickery of the organizers, and dealt with most of the defendants mercifully. The courts suspended most prison sentences, and sent the men home to their families. Once there, however, many were without jobs and even without homes. Their former employers had dismissed them or refused to allow them to farm the lands they had been renting.

A few of the leaders and more *vigorous* rebels received prison sentences. No sentence was for more than ten years.

### **What was the Territorial Guard?**

The first military units from Oklahoma to serve a national cause were Oklahoma Territory's Troop D and Troops L and M from Indian Territory. These men served in the First

United States *Volunteer* Cavalry commanded by Colonel Leonard Wood and Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Roosevelt in the Spanish-American War of 1898. At home, they were part of the Territorial Guard.

After statehood, the Territorial Guard became the Oklahoma National Guard. The state activated its Guard several times for state and local duty prior to 1916. That year, the nation called troops to active duty to serve under General John J. Pershing at the U.S.-Mexican border. The bandit Pancho Villa had been making raids across the border into Texas and New Mexico. Those who served in Mexico returned home just in time for World War I.

**How did World War I affect Oklahoma citizens?** The United States joined the English and French when it declared war on Germany on April 16, 1917. Oklahoma's guardsmen shipped out with the Thirty-sixth Infantry, the Forty-second Infantry (known as the Rainbow Division), and the Ninetieth Infantry Division (also called the Texas-Oklahoma Division). They faced weapons that were even more destructive than



***Crowds gather to see soldiers off to war during World War I.***  
***Oklahoma Historical Society***

in previous wars. Two of them were poison gas and machine guns.

Soon college campuses emptied of young men and filled again with high school boys, training as radio operators and other *supplementary* personnel. Wiley Post, a farm boy who would later become America's foremost pilot, trained in communications at the University of Oklahoma campus. The war ended before his training was complete.

A major *artillery* training center was at Camp Doniphan near Fort Sill, and soldiers not only from Oklahoma but also from many other states trained there. Aviators trained at Fort Sill as well.

The first Oklahomans to arrive in France were those in the Thirty-sixth Infantry Division. They went to another training camp where they learned about trench warfare. On October 10, 1917, the Thirty-sixth Division engaged in its first battle in Europe at St. Etienne, France. They moved the line of defense forward twenty-one kilometers (16.8 miles) and took 549 prisoners. Oklahoman Lee Gilstrap earned the Distinguished Service Cross on his sixteenth birthday for his bravery in battle.

By the end of the war, 90,527 Oklahomans, including 5,000 African-Americans, had served their country's cause. Of these, 4,154 were wounded in battle and 1,064 were killed. Hundreds died of disease or were missing in action. The nation decorated more than 200 of these men for gallantry. Fifty-five men nationwide received the Medal of Honor from Congress. Three of them were George Price Hayes of Okarche, Samuel H. Sampler of Martha, and Harold L. Turner of Seminole.

Choctaw Indian Joseph Oklahombi was the war's most decorated soldier. He was also one of the most modest heroes. He helped to capture more enemy prisoners than any other soldier except for Sergeant Alvin York of Tennessee. When Sergeant York returned from overseas, he met great acclaim. When Joseph Oklahombi returned, he met two crooks who wanted to steal his land from him.

**What killed most Oklahomans in Europe during World War I?** The disease which killed most of the Oklahomans in Europe was the Spanish Influenza, which also caused great problems at home. One of the worst epidemics in history, the disease ran rampant across



**The "We Can Do It!" poster for Westinghouse, pictured Geraldine Doyle (1924-2010), at age 17. Howard J. Miller**

Europe and the United States. In Oklahoma alone, more than 125,000 cases were reported. With more than a third of the state's doctors and nurses overseas, the State Health Commission closed all public gathering places of all kinds. It even limited funerals to a maximum of twelve participants. The death rate from the *epidemic* reached 7,000 in the state. It reached 675,000 around the country before running its course.

**What cultural changes occurred in Oklahoma as a result of the war?** In the States, employment was high. Some jobs that were previously open only to whites were being filled by African-American people. They enjoyed the opportunity to earn better money and prove their talents.

Women, too, were filling in for men who had gone overseas. They worked in munitions factories, in stores, on streetcars, and on railroads. They operated farm machinery, practiced animal husbandry, and became salespeople and engineers. Their *suffrage*, or voting rights, became an issue. In 1918, at the close of the war, Oklahoma voters passed a state constitutional amendment giving Oklahoma's women the right to vote. This was two years before Congress passed the national amendment for women's *suffrage*.

In the 1918 primary election, Democrats elected James B. A. Robertson, instead of William H. Murray, as their nominee for governor. Robertson then defeated Republican candidate Horace G. McKeever and Socialist candidate Patrick S. Nagle. Governor Robertson took office in 1919.

The *devastating* war ended on November 11, 1918, at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. Oklahoma's fighting men arrived home seven months later, in June 1919. Many cities threw victory parades to celebrate. For years people called it "the great war" because of its size and world-wide destruction.

**How did the Roaring Twenties change all of America?** After World War I, America made dramatic social changes. Congress ratified the Eighteenth Amendment, prohibiting sales of alcohol, in 1920. That year it also ratified the Nineteenth Amendment, giving women the vote, although only fourteen states allowed women to serve on juries. Popular culture led, and reacted to, a sense of carefree fun and daring possibilities. For example, skirt lengths jumped from the ankle to the knee and women cut their long hair into a short, practical "bob." Arts and entertainment were more daring, too. Known as The Roaring Twenties, the times were full of change, and sometimes conflict, for both the working



**Joseph Oklahombi**  
Oklahoma Historical  
Society

class and minorities. This changed how the majority lived, too.

### **What changes occurred under Governor J. B. A. Robertson?**

The post-war period put many social and labor reforms into effect. One law *established workmen's compensation*, which required paying a worker who had been injured on the job. Employers had to limit the number of hours an employee might work in a week. Widow's pensions began on a national level. Taxes were removed from raw farm products, and the state created a Bureau of Weights and Measures. The Oklahoma Corporation Commission began supervising the state's cotton gins for fair prices and honest practices.

The state started a Historical Society to preserve its unique story. It formed an Insurance Board to protect citizens from insurance fraud. Oklahoma City constructed the new University Hospital Building on Thirteenth Street. It seemed almost as far out of town as the State Capitol Building, which was on Twenty-third Street.

Governor J.B.A. Robertson's administration upgraded the training and certification of teachers. It created a *subsidized* textbook program. It began to consolidate rural schools and granted aid to some of the poorer school districts. Robertson got legislative approval to construct 1,300 miles of highways in Oklahoma, more than the combined total of mileage that his three predecessors had achieved.

Wartime had brought higher prices to Oklahoma's farmers, who had invested in more land and machinery. But the end of the war lowered prices and debts piled up. The same situation existed in the oil fields. In the early 1920s there were property foreclosures. Nationally, a recession was on, but the state's economy actually went into a depression, which is worse. Many state banks failed. Then the State Bank Guaranty System collapsed.

Legislators continued to distrust state officials. They conducted investigations and held impeachment hearings during the Robertson administration. One was against Lieutenant Governor Martin E. Trapp for alleged improper business transactions. The Senate dismissed those charges. Robertson himself escaped impeachment by only one vote in the House of Representatives.

There was extreme tension between the two state houses of government. In March 1921, the House adjourned without notice to the Senate. The House refused to return even at the request of the governor. The funds to run the government had not yet been approved, but without the House of Representatives, the Senate could not function. So the Senate

also dismissed.

On April 25, the governor called a special session of the legislature for the purpose of passing the funding bills. Somehow the legislators returned to the Capitol with less hostility and conducted their business smoothly. They adjourned May 21.

**Who was Alice Mary Robertson?** In 1920, Alice Mary Robertson became the second woman ever to be elected to the U.S. Congress up to that time. She was a Republican elected from a distinctly Democratic district. “Miss Alice” was a bristling, strait-laced, scholarly woman who gave her entire life to public service, although she held public office for only one term. She was not related to Governor J.B.A. Robertson.

She was born in the Creek Nation, Indian Territory, to William Schenck Robertson and Ann Eliza Worcester, who were missionaries. Her mother was the first American woman to hold a Doctor of Philosophy degree (Ph.D.). A schoolteacher and restaurant owner from Muskogee, Miss Alice ran a cafeteria, which she advertised as a club for working girls. She never allowed a soldier to pay for a meal in her restaurant. She stood firmly in favor of Prohibition.

Robertson was fluent in the languages of the Five Civilized Tribes. She and her mother turned their home into an orphanage for Creek Indian girls. They called it “Sawokla,” a Creek word meaning “The Gathering Place.” As their enrollment grew, they needed a larger place. They founded a school and orphanage called Minerva Place, after the Roman goddess of wisdom. It later became the University of Tulsa.

During her short legislative career, Robertson was the first woman to *preside* over a session of the House of Representatives. It was the proudest day of her life. But she was a woman of contradictions. The woman who freely fed soldiers at her cafeteria voted against servicemen’s pensions. In addition, she scorned women’s *suffrage*.

Alice Mary Robertson was one of several notable women of this era. Others included Alice Brown Davis, who served as chief of the Seminole tribe, and Myrtle Archer McDougal, who headed more than forty political and women’s organizations in her lifetime. A Lawton teenager, Lucille LeSueur, became the state Charleston (dance) champion and went to Hollywood, where she won an Oscar as Joan Crawford. Anabel Mraz, first-generation American and Oklahoman, became a ballerina



**Alice Mary  
Robertson**  
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Senate Historical  
Preservation Fund,  
Inc. and Mike Wimmer.

with Pavlova's ballet company.

During the 1920s, Angie Debo began her career as a historian. She moved from Kansas to Oklahoma in a covered wagon at the age of nine. She attended one-room schools until she was 12 — her rural area had no high school. She passed an exam and started teaching in Logan and Garfield counties at the age of 16. After Debo did earn a high school diploma, she studied at the University of Oklahoma, and graduated in 1918. She went on to become a nationally known writer and historian. Her portrait is in the state capitol.

**How did Indians attain full U.S. citizenship?** On a national level, Indians received full citizenship as a result of their role in World War I. Oklahoma's Indian population had enjoyed the right to vote in state elections since statehood. After 1920, they could also vote in national elections. It was 1948 before they had these same privileges in all states. Arizona and New Mexico were the last to grant full citizenship to their Indian populations.

**Who owns the Red River?** The Adams-Onis Treaty of 1819 had awarded the entire Red River to the United States. It said that the northern boundary of Texas was the southern bank of the river. When the oil booms began at the turn of the century, Texas claimed the southern half of the river itself and sold oil leases in the river bed.

The matter went to court. After several trials the U.S. Supreme Court finally decided in 1924 that the Adams-Onis boundary was valid. This confirmed Oklahoma's *jurisdiction* over the entire river. The Court further decided, however, that the federal government, not the state, owned the land and mineral rights on the south half of the river.

**How did Oklahoma deal with labor strikes?** The nation's relief after the end of the Great War gave way to unrest. Returning veterans flooded the job market, and there was widespread unemployment. Membership in labor unions swelled as workers complained of unsafe conditions and low wages. Strikes occurred everywhere.

Oklahoma suffered right along with the rest of the nation. Streetcar workers struck in Chickasha and Tulsa. Boilermakers struck in Tulsa and newspaper printers struck in Oklahoma City. A strike among telephone operators in Shawnee, Drumright, and Muskogee resulted in rioting. The governor called on six units of the National Guard to control that situation.

On October 31, 1919, Halloween, the nation's coal miners struck. Nine thousand Oklahoma miners walked off their jobs with their union

## Do You Know?

The official State Meal of Oklahoma is chicken-fried steak, fried okra, squash, cornbread, barbecue pork, biscuits, sausage and gravy, grits, corn, strawberries, black-eyed peas, and pecan pie.

brothers in other states. Governor Robertson sent 2,000 members of the Oklahoma National Guard to take control of the mines and keep peace in Pittsburg, Latimer, LeFlore, Haskell, and Okmulgee counties. Thus, the Oklahoma strike drew national attention. Many industries were paralyzed because of the lack of coal. The state tried to continue production with the use of convict labor and volunteers. Military troops left in December when the strike was settled.

Labor unions, farmers' groups, and railroad organizations united to form a political organization. On September 17, 1921, they held a convention in Shawnee to organize the Farmer-Labor *Reconstruction* League. They demanded:

- government control of industry;
- elimination of private profits;
- state aid for building homes for the poor;
- state aid for textbooks; and
- state aid in creating jobs for the unemployed.

In February 1922, they announced their support of several political candidates, including John "Iron Jack" Walton for governor.

Although the League was not party-affiliated, it directed its members to register with the Democratic Party because of the Democratic domination of state politics. The League tried to gain control of the party and use it to achieve their demands. John C. Walton, a native of Indiana, was in engineering and in the municipal construction business. He had served as Oklahoma's Commissioner of Public Safety and was mayor of Oklahoma City when he received the League's *nomination*. He rejected the state's Democratic Party platform and said that he was running on the Farmer-Labor platform. This split the Democratic Party, but Walton was elected by a narrow margin. Nevertheless, Walton could not achieve the demands of the League, and he soon lost their support.

**What was the Tulsa Race Riot?** This post-war period also brought a great deal of racial tension to the nation. African-American soldiers had found *discrimination* in their own government and military organizations. But in Europe they found acceptance and a greater feeling of



**World War I  
soldiers**  
*Oklahoma Historical  
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equality. They came home with new ideas about political, social, and economic standards. Also, during the war, many jobs originally held only by whites had been opened to other people. They began demanding jobs and civil rights.

Many whites resented African-American people in traditionally white jobs. This competition for jobs caused more anger. Mob violence occurred. Several African-American veterans, some still wearing their uniforms, were lynched by angry white mobs. In 1921, there were sixty-four people lynched in the United States; fifty-nine were African-Americans. This racial tension helped set the scene for the Tulsa race riot of 1921, described by the *New York Times* as “the worst race riot in history.” (See Spotlight feature on the Tulsa race riot.)

**What presence did the Ku Klux Klan have in Oklahoma?** During the Roaring Twenties, there were citizens who ignored law and order regularly. Congress had prohibited the sale of liquor in 1920, but people drank “bootleg” liquor, gambled, and enjoyed other illegal forms of entertainment. They learned the latest slang to take part in these activities: A “bootlegger” was a man who stuffed his cowboy boots with small, flat bottles of illegal liquor. A “moonshiner” made corn liquor by the light of the moon. A “speakeasy” sold alcohol to customers who knew a secret code word or the name of a trusted person. Customers could also gamble in a speakeasy.

A common white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant (“WASP”) reaction to all this immorality was to go to the other extreme. White Oklahomans felt spiritually shaken by World War I and the flu *epidemic*. They were rejecting *Bolshevism* (violent overthrow of capitalism), evolution, and *atheism* (nonbelief in god). In this era of social change, they were looking for old-time *fundamental* beliefs. Large numbers of citizens found comfort in the Ku Klux Klan’s patriotism, Protestantism, and white supremacy, as well as in its take-charge attitude toward law and order.

Because a great many “WASPs” lived in Oklahoma, state membership in the KKK grew to more than 100,000. The symbol of the Klan was a burning cross, the same symbol which had warned clans of armed trouble in ancient Scotland. This fiery cross marked the ceremonies of Klansmen when they gathered in their hooded costumes and listened to speakers promoting extreme values.

The KKK masked its more violent deeds with good public relations. Wives of Klansmen delivered baskets and gifts to the needy at Christmas. Okmulgee Klansmen presented a widow and her five children with

## Do You Know?

Governor John Walton’s inauguration celebration included a huge public barbecue with more than a mile of trenches to cook tons of meat. He invited the whole state, attended, and entertained more than 160,000 people with parades, brass bands, and string bands. Larry O’Dell, “Walton, John Calloway (1881-1949),” *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia> (accessed March 28, 2007).

a new home. Klan leaders preached against vice, corruption, and unfair business practices. So citizens who were shocked at society's immorality continued to join.

Reports began to circulate concerning other kinds of activities, however. In Coweta, an angry father sent "a discourteous note" to a school teacher after she had *reprimanded* a child. That man suffered a whipping, and the Klan was accused of it. The KKK supposedly whipped a Tulsa woman for selling illegal beer. In Broken Arrow, a couple was beaten for "living in adultery." During the first six months of 1923, an estimated 2,500 to 3,000 beatings took place in Oklahoma.

**How did Governor John Walton deal with the Ku Klux Klan?** People began to believe Klansmen were immune to the law. But Governor Walton pledged to "end mob violence." Nicknamed "Iron Jack," Walton became the first Oklahoma governor under whose administration a Klansman was convicted of a crime. Three men were convicted of flogging a Broken Arrow farmer.

On September 15, 1923, Walton declared martial law over the entire state. He stationed 6,000 troops in various parts of the state with heavier concentrations in Creek, Oklahoma, Murray, and Payne counties. The visibility of martial law stirred anger in many citizens. E.K. Gaylord, publisher of the *Daily Oklahoman* and the *Oklahoma City Times*, accused Walton of using the situation to get publicity for his political career. Indeed, Walton did become a national figure in his fight against the Klan. One New York journalist called him "a man of courage and determination" and "a strong contender in the next national election."

Walton's use of martial law seemed random to many people, and his popularity began to lessen. There were rumors of impeachment, and one Oklahoma City newspaper called for "Neither Klan Nor King." As threats of impeachment grew, there were attacks on the governor's character. They criticized his personal policy against capital punishment and his policy of liberal pardon and parole. Walton's critics claimed that he was operating outside the law, breaking constitutional guarantees, and depriving the citizens of liberty by his use of the National Guard.

Walton and his followers saw themselves as battling a secret *sub-*



**Governor  
John C. Walton**  
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*versive* organization which sought to take over the government. They believed that regular legal processes were useless because the KKK had *infiltrated* the legal systems and held *numerous* offices. Walton even accused the legislature of having many Klan members.

**Why did the legislature impeach Governor Walton?** The legislature attempted to convene — to impeach the governor. They were met on the capitol steps by armed guards who refused to allow them to enter, by order of Governor Walton. He claimed that the legislature could not convene unless called by the governor or convening in a regular session. As a result, on October 2 the state held an election in which voters passed the Russell Amendment. It revised the Constitution, so that legislators could call themselves into session for the purpose of impeachment.

Right after the election, the lawmakers scheduled a special session for October 17. But then Governor Walton called a special session to meet even earlier, on October 11. He wanted to pass laws for the control of the Ku Klux Klan.

The legislature met on October 11, but immediately called for an investigation of the governor's activities. The House of Representatives charged Governor Walton with twenty-two offenses, including "willful neglect of duty, incompetence in office, and offenses involving moral turpitude (lack of values)." The Senate tried him on eleven charges, including "illegal collection of campaign funds, padding the public payroll, suspension of habeas corpus (a safeguard against illegal imprisonment), excessive use of pardon power, and general incompetence."

Tempers flared at these hearings. One representative was physically assaulted and thrown out of the chambers for making anti-Klan statements. When he collected his composure and returned to the speaker's platform, he was warned, "Choose your words carefully and don't start a riot here."

Walton offered to resign if the legislature would pass an anti-Klan law. Legislators chose, however, to impeach him. He was convicted and removed from office. However, the legislature went on to pass laws forbidding the use of hoods or masks. It made severe penalties for unlawful entry and personal assault by people wearing hoods or masks. Although the state Klan organization remained active, its membership and its power began to decline.

Walton served less than a year as governor. It was the shortest term of any elected Oklahoma governor but he accomplished his purpose in

that time. He broke the hold of the Ku Klux Klan on the state. Walton ran repeatedly for other public offices but lost. He died on November 15, 1949.

**How did Governor Martin Trapp handle the recession economy in Oklahoma during his *tenure*?** Lieutenant Governor Martin E. Trapp replaced Walton in the governor's office. During his term, a three-man Highway Commission was created. Since a recession had taken hold of the state and the nation, the state adopted a rigid economic program in an effort to lessen its risks. The state reduced financial aid to poorer school districts and repealed the free textbook law. It closed and sold the prison farm at Aylesworth. It also revised tax laws to increase gasoline taxes and automobile license fees. The state created commissions for real estate, forestry, conservation, and fish and game protection. In addition, it formed a Bureau of Criminal Investigation.

Governor Trapp was regarded as efficient and successful. Because he had served more than one-half of a regular governor's term, the State Supreme Court ruled that he could not run in the next election. After leaving office, Trapp demonstrated his abilities in the business world, succeeding in real estate, municipal securities, and oil. Very civic-minded, he belonged to seven civic clubs. He died on July 26, 1951, in Oklahoma City.

**How did KKK member Henry Johnston become governor?** Although the power of the Klan was waning, it had a definite effect on the gubernatorial election of 1926. An attorney from Perry, Henry S. Johnston, had been a member of the Constitutional Convention and President Pro Tempore of the Senate of the first state legislature. He also served as secretary of the Perry KKK group from 1923 to 1925, and had eager Klan support for his candidacy. In addition, he was supported by many anti-Klan voters who were never convinced that Johnston was a member of the organization. Johnston firmly insisted that the Klan was not an issue, and he refused to define his position on the KKK. His opponent tried to make it an issue, which caused confusion among the voters. Johnston won the election.

The state's eleventh legislative session began poorly. Many state officials had opposed Johnston's candidacy. When he interfered with the selection of the Senate President Pro Tempore, he began a long rivalry



**Governor Henry S. Johnston**  
*Oklahoma Historical Society*

with the Senate. The men refused to approve several of his appointees and passed no major legislation. They distrusted many of the governor's advisers. They especially distrusted his secretary, Mrs. O.O. Hammonds, the first woman to hold that position. They claimed that she influenced the governor.



**Charlie Christian was a key figure in the development of bebop and cool jazz. He died March 2, 1942.**

After the eleventh legislature adjourned, the governor tried to gain control of several boards, including the Highway Commission. When he removed the highway engineer from office, people started talking about impeachment. They grew louder when Johnston seemed to favor the Klan. He pardoned two Klansmen convicted of floggings, and he pressured the Highway Commission to appoint several known Klansmen to important positions.

The legislature tried to impeach the governor in December 1927. A State Supreme Court ruling declared *invalid* the 1923 Russell Amendment, which allowed a legislature to convene itself. This meant that only the governor could call a special session of the legislature, and he refused to do so. The legislature ignored this court ruling, however, and formed a committee to investigate the governor. That month, when they tried to assemble to bring charges against the governor, they were met by seventy National Guardsmen.

The legislators dispersed and reassembled at the Huckins Hotel. They voted to impeach not only the governor but the Chief Justice of the State Supreme Court and the president of the State Board of Agriculture. Two court actions followed, the first prohibiting the issuance of state warrants for House members and the second prohibiting the House members from acting as a legislature.

National Guard troops once again went to the capitol, so the senators met again at the Huckins Hotel. They decided they had a right to meet as a legislature and to sit as a court of impeachment. Yet they also decided that, since the Russell Amendment had been declared *invalid*, the House had not been legally convened and was not legally in session when it filed charges against the defendants. Then the Senate adjourned. This incident became known as the “ewe lamb rebellion” because of a remark made by Governor Johnston concerning the suggested firing of Mrs. Hammonds. He claimed that firing her would be like throwing a ewe lamb to the wolves.

**Why was Governor Johnston impeached?** The push for impeach-

ment went on hold till the next session. During the national campaign of 1928, Johnston supported Democratic candidate Alfred E. Smith, the governor of New York, for President. Smith was both a Roman Catholic and a supporter of Prohibition repeal. Johnston's support of Smith further damaged his image with the Oklahoma public.

During the twelfth legislature, the House of Representatives impeached Governor Johnston on eleven charges. The Senate convicted him on one charge, incompetence. He was removed from office and Lieutenant Governor William J. Holloway replaced him. Johnston returned to Perry where friends and neighbors welcomed him. He practiced law there until past his ninety-fourth birthday.

Governor William Judson Holloway had been a school teacher, a lawyer, the county attorney of Choctaw County, and President Pro Tempore of the Senate. He was a conservative governor who brought peace and calm to the frenzied legislature. His administration formed a new Highway Commission. It drew up a new schedule of salaries for state officers, raising the pay of most, and provided a new election law for a "run-off" of the state primary elections.

**How did Oklahomans love of jazz music influence its development?** One of the bright spots of the 1920s in Oklahoma was the introduction of jazz. The music originated and was shaped in various places in the United States. New Orleans's Basin Street is generally accredited with its birth, but Oklahoma City's Second Street certainly contributed to its development. Located in the heart of Oklahoma City's African-American business district, Second Street had several clubs that featured jazz bands for entertainment. Among the best of those bands was the Blue Devils. Bill "Count" Basie played with the group at one time, as did guitarist Charlie Christian, who went on to join Benny Goodman.

**Who were well-known Oklahoma criminals sought by the FBI?** Crime was a big business nationwide in the twenties and thirties. Prohibition had spawned gangs of illegal liquor traffickers and sellers of other vices. Bank robbers blasted their way around the nation. Some of them came from the depressed areas of eastern Oklahoma. George "Machine Gun" Kelly and his wife, Kathryn made the most-wanted list of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). So did Bonnie Parker, Clyde Barrow, and Charles "Pretty Boy" Floyd.

Just as outlaws had hidden in the Cookson Hills and turned into folk



**Count Basie**  
MGM/Verve Records

heroes in the 1800s, “Pretty Boy” Floyd hid there and became a folk hero in the 1920s. Called “Pretty Boy” because of his handsome face and love of clothes, Floyd was shot and killed by law officers in 1928. Streams of fans, friends, and the morbidly curious attended his funeral. Souvenir hunters completely stripped the coffin’s satin lining.

During the Roaring Twenties, the FBI developed a crime lab and a central system of fingerprint files. Eventually law officers found and killed both Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow. They also captured and convicted “Machine Gun” Kelly and his wife of kidnapping Charles Urschel, an Oklahoma City oilman. The Kellys were sent to the federal penitentiary in Leavenworth, Kansas.

The repeal of Prohibition by the Twenty-first Amendment in 1933 did not end bootlegging, nor did it end organized crime. The FBI, however, succeeded in reducing crime and fear.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. When did the Great War begin? When did America get involved? When did it end?
2. What was the Green Corn Rebellion?
3. Give the accomplishments of the Robertson administration, including social and labor reforms.
4. Identify three or more causes for the unrest of the 1920s. Include social and economic issues.
5. Describe the loss of lives and property during the Tulsa Race Riot.
6. Describe what you think it would be like to live in Oklahoma today if the Ku Klux Klan had remained powerful.
7. What was the Nineteenth Amendment?
8. What was the Russell Amendment?
9. Look up the word “impeachment.” Is it an accusation or a conviction?
10. Make a list of governors through 1930. How do you think their records influence the public opinion of state government?