

OKLAHOMA HISTORIAN

ANGIE DEBO HISTORIAN

This portrait by Charles Banks Wilson hangs in the Oklahoma Capitol.

Angie Debo was a renowned historian who wrote 13 books and hundreds of articles about Native American and Oklahoma history. She lived and worked at a time when being a woman made her achievements all the more remarkable. It was she who bravely, through her published works, revealed the depth of the corruption which had defrauded Indians from land granted to them through treaties. Debo revealed the mistreatment of Native Americans during their “removals.”



Her revelations were made during a period when many of those responsible were still alive. Debo faced resistance to publication of her book, *And Still the Waters Run*, but ultimately prevailed.

Angie Elbertha Debo was born January 30, 1890, in Beattie, Kansas. Her parents, Edward P. and Lina E. Debo, moved with her, by covered wagon, to Oklahoma Territory to the Marshall community when Angie was nine years old. Debo stayed in that area for the rest of her life. She began teaching school when she was 16, but she didn't earn her own high school diploma until she was 23 years old because there was no high school in Marshall.

Proceeding to the University of Oklahoma, she earned a bachelor's degree in history in 1918. She taught history at Enid High School for four years before departing for the University of Chicago to earn a master's degree in international relations. Women were not allowed to major in history at that institution. Her master's thesis was on "The Historical Background of the American Policy of Isolationism."

However, finding a teaching job was difficult due to her gender. Eventually, she was hired by Texas State Teachers College in Canyon, Texas, and was curator of its Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum while she worked towards her Ph.D. in history from OU. She received her doctorate there in 1933.

Her doctoral dissertation, "The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic," discussed the effects of the American Civil War on the Choctaw Tribe.

Her next book, *And Still the Waters Run*, was finished in 1936 and was controversial for its time. It explained the methods and practices used to deprive the Five Civilized Tribes of the land and resources, guaranteed to them by treaty, following their forcible removal from the southeastern U.S. to Oklahoma Territory. It made clear how the Dawes Act's policy of private ownership was forced on tribes and how that policy was used to deprive

Indians of their property.

The University of Oklahoma Press refused to publish the book, but in 1940, the Princeton University Press published *And Still the Waters Run: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes* when OU Press's former director moved to Princeton. The book is considered a classic and is widely referenced and consulted.

For a time, Debo was barred from teaching in Oklahoma, but, eventually, she was celebrated for her determination and scholarship.

She also continued to publish **extensively**. She wrote one fictional work, *Prairie City, the Story of an American Community*, based on the history of her hometown Marshall.

She finished her last book, *Geronimo: The Man, His Time, His Place* at the age of 85.

She died February 21, 1988. She was 98 years old.