

HISTORY OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE FRISCO RAILWAY LINES IN OKLAHOMA

INTRODUCTORY.

During the discussion at a meeting in Washington, D. C., in 1866, between the representatives of the Five Civilized Tribes and the Government Commissioners, on the proposition of territorial form of government, one of the U. S. Commissioners asked: "What will you call the territory?" A full-blood Choctaw, a Presbyterian minister, by name of Allen Wright, instantly responded: "Oklahoma," much to the surprise and consternation of members of the other tribes, who naturally desired to deliberate before answering the question. In the Choctaw language, "Okla" means people, and "huma" or "homa" means red, thus signifying "Red People." And it was in accordance with this suggestion that the treaty between the Government and the Choctaw and Chickasaw tribes was signed.

When it is remembered that Oklahoma was not admitted to Statehood until 1907, and was at that time thirty-ninth state in population (in 1920 it had advanced to twenty-first position); when it is remembered that the state has taken first place in the production of mineral oils and refined oil products; that it has taken fourth place in the production of cotton, and has a greater coal area than Pennsylvania; that it ranks tenth in total value of farm products, and produces more broomcorn than all the other states combined, one can get an idea of the marvelous growth of this wonderful state and its unprecedented development.

The Atlantic and Pacific Railroad (now Frisco) was originally planned to be built from the state of Missouri to the Pacific Coast, with a branch from the Canadian River eastward to the western boundary of Arkansas, at or near Van Buren, and, on July 27, 1866, the U. S. Government authorized a land grant for such project of odd sections to the amount of twenty sections per mile on each side of

the road through the territories and sixteen sections per mile through states, the extent of this indemnity limit being thirty miles in states and fifty miles in the territories, on each side. Several miles of this project were built in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California, but the irony of fate seemed to be against such a system weathering the pioneering days, when there was little or nothing to haul, with the result that, today, Oklahoma is virtually the western terminus of the present system.

The St. Louis & San Francisco Railroad was a very important factor in the development of Oklahoma, the Frisco Railroad to-day being the first in mileage in the entire state, by almost two hundred miles, and only one other railroad system in Oklahoma approaching that. Its lines penetrate nearly every section of the entire state, and these various extensions were made when Oklahoma was in fact what its name then implied, the Indian Territory. But the vision seen by the officers of the then Frisco Railroad was not an idle dream; it was the foreshadowing of the reality of great fertile farms of wheat and cotton, of the growth of modern thriving cities. And the principal dreamer responsible for his company's acquiring or building these various extensions was none other than B. F. Yoakum. That he did dream and plan well, is evidenced by the fact that the first Oklahoma oil field was discovered adjacent to this company's line by the bringing-in of a fifteen hundred barrel well, about three miles east of Kiefer, in the spring of 1907, known as the Glen Pool; and the Frisco rails reach, or are near, every important field brought in since the discovery of this original Glen Pool, thus furnishing an immense tonnage of high-revenue freight—the receipts of Tulsa Station alone averaging almost one million dollars a month.

ATLANTIC AND PACIFIC.

The Atlantic and Pacific Railroad Company, created by an act of Congress approved June 7, 1866, acquired from the South Pacific Railroad Company, in October, 1870, a railroad completed for operation extending from Pacific, Missouri, to Pierce City, and a partially-built road from the latter point to the state line at Seneca, Missouri. The Atlantic & Pacific completed that portion of the road and extended

west in the then Indian Territory, thirty-four miles, to Vinita, finishing that part for operation about September 1, 1871, under Jno. B. Thomas, Chief Engineer. The terms of its creative act carried a grant of right of way and station grounds in the Territory. The road in the Territory never became Frisco property until 1897, when it was sold under foreclosure and acquired by the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad Company (the 1896 organization).

In 1881-1882 the Atlantic & Pacific extended its road from Vinita to the east bank of the Arkansas River at Tulsa, sixty-five miles. In 1885 and 1886 the road was extended to Red Fork, about three miles. The bridge over the Arkansas River, a pile structure, was completed in 1886. Prior to its completion, the rails were carried over the river on a temporary pile trestle, and when the water was high, the service west of Tulsa was discontinued until such time as the water receded, the bridge was inspected carefully, and the needed repairs were made.

In 1886, the road, under G. F. Huggins, Chief Engineer, was built to Sapulpa, ten miles. At this time Sapulpa consisted of a depot, a small hotel operated by a party by the name of Smith, and a general merchandise store conducted by Henry Hall. To build and equip the 111.77 miles of line in the Territory, cost about \$2,000,000, and of itself the line was not a paying proposition; it is doubtful if sufficient revenue was earned at any time in its existence to meet its operating and maintenance expenses and pay interest on its cost. There was no land in cultivation and consequently nothing was produced to ship out. In the spring months, Texas cattle by the thousands were shipped in to fatten on the millions of acres of grazing land, and to be shipped out to market in the latter part of August, when owing to the wonderfully nutritious properties of the grass, they would be as fat as grass could make them. It was a comparatively uninhabited country, and, aside from the shipments of cattle, there was little or nothing to sustain a railroad. The line was operated between Red Fork and Sapulpa only during stock-moving time. It was not until the St. Louis & Oklahoma City Railroad Company built to Oklahoma City, in 1898, that the Atlantic & Pacific enjoyed a living revenue.

ST. LOUIS & SAN FRANCISCO RAILWAY.

By an act of Congress, passed and approved in 1885, the St. Louis & San Francisco Railway Company acquired the right to construct its road between Ft. Smith and Red River north of Paris, Texas, through the Choctaw Nation. By this act it acquired its right of way and station grounds, paying the Choctaw Nation for them. The road from Ft. Smith, Arkansas, to Paris, Texas, was constructed in 1886 and 1887. The operation of traffic trains between its termini was inaugurated on July 1, 1887, about 169 miles, of which 144 were in Oklahoma.

KANSAS CITY, FT. SCOTT & GULF RAILROAD.

In the summer and fall of 1896, the Kansas City, Ft. Scott and Gulf Railroad Company extended its road from Baxter, Kansas, to the north bank of the Neosho River at Miami, thirteen miles, of which twelve miles were in Oklahoma. In 1901 this line was rebuilt with new and heavier rails; the Neosho River was spanned with a 300-foot steel bridge on concrete substructure, designed for heavy power; and the line was then extended to a connection with the Frisco at Afton, thirteen miles. Shortly afterward an excellent service was inaugurated between Kansas City and Oklahoma City and Fort Worth, Texas.

ST. LOUIS & OKLAHOMA CITY RAILROAD.

The St. Louis & Oklahoma City Railroad Company, an Oklahoma corporation, was incorporated in November, 1895, for the purpose of constructing a road from Sapulpa to Oklahoma City, a distance of 103 miles. Messrs. C. G. Jones and Henry Overholser, (both deceased), of Oklahoma City, were the prime movers in this undertaking, and Jones, especially, worked unremittingly until early in 1898, when he was able, through the assistance of some Illinois friends, Messrs. Johnston Brothers & Faught, to enlist moneyed interests in St. Louis to finance the scheme and build the road. It was completed in December of that year. It is to be observed in passing that at about that time, or soon after, Oklahoma City began to really grow and to assume the aspect and proportions of a real city, as distinguished from

a big country town. At the time this road was completed for operation into Oklahoma City, its population was not more than 4,000 or 5,000 and general conditions were bad.

KANSAS, OKLAHOMA & GULF RY.

Another aggressive Oklahoman, Mr. Ed. Peckham, of Blackwell, together with his associates, organized the Kansas, Oklahoma Gulf Railway Company in 1897, and during the year 1899, built a railroad from a connection with the Frisco on the state line south of Arkansas City, to Blackwell, a distance of nearly eighteen miles.

ST. LOUIS, OKLAHOMA & SOUTHERN RY.

The St. Louis, Oklahoma & Southern Ry. was organized in the office of Wm. Ragan at Shawnee, Oklahoma, August 13, 1895, with the following directors: Charles N. Points, Henry G. Beard, Wm. Ragan, Henry C. Linn, Edward L. Thomas, and, at later dates: John F. Brown, of Sasakwa, (Governor of Seminole Nation), W. H. P. Trudgeon, of Purcell, Oklahoma, General Pleasant Porter, of Muskogee, Oklahoma, John C. Williamson, of St. Louis, Missouri, joined the organization with officers as follows: Charles N. Points, President, John F. Brown, Vice President, Wm. Ragan, Secretary, Henry G. Beard, Treasurer & General Manager.

It seems that no particular route had been settled upon, but on November 5, 1895, it was voted on motion of W. H. P. Trudgeon that A. L. Phillips be appointed Engineer, and in company with President C. N. Points, that he make examination in the Red River at or near Willis, Indian Territory, west of Denison. Accordingly, the two gentlemen started out equipped with a team, hand level, and aneroid. President C. N. Points furnished the team and his services for five dollars a day. Late in November, 1895, they opened negotiations with persons at Lexington, Indian Territory, and with various citizens of Chickasaw Nation, with the view of interesting some of them in becoming stockholders in the St. Louis, Oklahoma & Southern, and they also wrote Congressman Flynn for a copy of the President's veto of the Oklahoma Central Bill, which, incidentally, was giving them some concern. In May, 1896, C. N. Points, John F. Brown,

and General Pleasant Porter went to St. Louis for the purpose of obtaining aid for the speedy construction of this line.

In July, 1896, C. N. Points, Wm. Ragan, and Henry G. Beard were appointed a committee to confer with certain citizens of Tecumseh relative to a railroad then being built by these citizens, with the view in mind of securing this road. This committee was to also negotiate with towns along the proposed line with the view of procuring aid to build the road. They particularly attempted to get aid out of Claremore, Norman and Chickasha.

At a meeting December 1, 1896, C. N. Points, H. G. Beard, and as many directors as would go, were authorized to accompany the engineer on a trip to Claremore, Indian Territory, and the general manager was authorized to put surveyors in the field to run a route commencing at a point on line of the Frisco R. R. at Claremore, or between Claremore and Sapulpa, to be determined by the President and the general manager, this line to be run in a southwesterly direction to Wewoka and to further run from Shawnee to some point on main line between Wewoka and Willis. There had been some correspondence with localities in Texas with the view of interesting that section in the project, and in April, 1897, it was unanimously voted to continue the reconnaissance of Engineer A. L. Phillips, on horseback, between Wewoka and Whitesboro, Texas, for the purpose of ascertaining the most feasible route between these two points, and to obtain data as regards resources of the country.

It has been determined early by resolution that, until the company was chartered by the National Congress of the United States, no assessment would be made on the stock, but that such assessments as were necessary to cover current expenses would be levied upon the stockholders themselves, individually, and that, before the issue of said charter of the National Congress, there should be no indebtedness incurred beyond such sums as might be raised in this way. But on May 4, 1897, it was voted to negotiate a loan of six thousand dollars for the purpose of defraying expenses of a survey in order to prepare plats to be submitted to the Secretary of the Interior for his approval. This loan was secured by the entire capital stock of the company issued to

its members and assigned in blank. And about this time they were experiencing considerable difficulty in locating a feasible route from Hugh Henry's ranch to Wewoka. Governor Brown, of the Seminole Indians, as noted above, was deeply interested in the object sought and was one of the officers. About 1899, Johnston Brothers & Faught, of St. Elmo, Illinois, became interested in the proposition at the instance of B. F. Yoakum, and, with the aid of St. Louis capitalists, financed and constructed the road from Sapulpa to Denison, Texas, about 198 miles, of which 193 were in Oklahoma. Surveys of definite location were begun in January, 1900, and for some time the grading outfits were close on the heels of the locating engineers. The road was completed for operation into Denison about the middle of March, 1901, and through service between Sapulpa and Sherman, Texas, was begun on March 17. The road and equipment franchise and other property passed to the Frisco in June, 1901.

ARKANSAS & OKLAHOMA R. R. Co.

The next road to be built into Oklahoma, which is now Frisco property, was the line from Rogers, Arkansas, to Grove, Oklahoma, forty-seven miles, of which about eleven miles are in Oklahoma. It was completed into Grove in November, 1900. This line was built by J. M. Bayless, of Cassville, Mo.

ARKANSAS & CHOCTAW R. R. Co.

In August of 1901 a contract was awarded Messrs. Johnston Brothers & Faught for the major portion of the construction of the railroad of the Arkansas and Choctaw Railway Company, from Arkinda on the east to Ardmore. This road was financed by St. Louis capital, and its construction was prosecuted with the usual vigor of the contractors. This line crosses many good-sized streams near their confluence with Red River, and much masonry and many heavy steel bridges were necessary. The construction and erection of these, delayed considerably by high waters, impeded the progress of construction. The line was completed with a gravel-ballasted track into Ardmore, 168 miles in August, 1903. A branch line from Kersey to Texas Junction on the Sapulpa-Denison line, nine miles long, was also

constructed during the construction of the main line between Arkinda and Ardmore.

OKLAHOMA CITY & WESTERN R. R.

The Oklahoma City & Western Railroad Company, an Oklahoma corporation, together with the Oklahoma City & Texas Railroad Company, a Texas corporation, built the road from the end of track of the former St. Louis & Oklahoma City Railroad Company, at Oklahoma City, to Quanah, Texas, 174.85 miles of this road being Oklahoma. This line was contemplated some three years before actual construction started thereon. Extensive preliminary surveys were made in 1898 and 1899, but it was not until late in 1901 when B. F. Yoakum, with the aid of the St. Louis Union Trust Company, of St. Louis, was able to raise the necessary finances to actually build the road. A large portion of this road traverses what was the Kiowa and Comanche Indian reservation, and it was not until after these Indians had taken their allotments, and the residue was thrown open to white settlers in 1901, that construction of the road was definitely determined. There were only two intermediate towns below Chickasha worth considering, namely, Altus, in Greer County, and Lawton (named after General Lawton of the U. S. Army) which was designated as a U. S. Land Office.

The Sac and Fox, Iowa, Pottawatomie, Shawnee, Kickapoo, and in fact all Indian lands made available for settlement, were opened at a given hour, and in each case there was a wild scramble for the most desirable homestead claims. Conflicts and disputes were so numerous that it was decided that the method of opening other reservations to settlement should be on a different plan. So when the Indians of the Comanche-Kiowa and Wichita-Caddo reservations were induced to take allotments and permit the surplus lands of their reservation to be thrown open to settlement, it was arranged that each intending settler should register at the Government Land Office in El Reno and Lawton, and that the name of each should be enclosed in large boxes, to be mounted on axles so they could be shuffled and mixed. This unique lottery, as it was called, probably closed the homestead era in Oklahoma. From land of this reservation, three counties

were formed, viz., Caddo, Comanche, and Kiowa. In the drawing, a telephone operator, a Miss Beall, drew Claim No. 1, part of the section on which Lawton is now situated. Work was started on the Oklahoma City & Western R. R. in October, 1901, and the line was placed in operation between Oklahoma City and Lawton in August, 1902, eight or nine months before its final completion into Quanah.

ARKANSAS VALLEY & WESTERN RAILWAY.

The Arkansas Valley & Western Railway Company, incorporated in Oklahoma Territory, in January, 1902, was organized to construct the road connecting with the main line of the Southwestern Division at A. V. & W. Junction (now West Tulsa) to a connection with the Santa Fe at Avarad in Woods County, Oklahoma, with a spur two miles into Jennings. This road was built and equipped by Messrs. Johnston Brothers in the same manner as the road from Oklahoma City to Quanah. Work was begun in the fall of 1902, and was completed to a connection with the B. E. & S. W. at Steen, 118 miles, in December, 1903, and from Enid to Avarad, fifty-seven miles, was completed in February, 1904.

BLACKWELL, ENID & SOUTHWESTERN RAILWAY.

The Blackwell, Enid & Southwestern Railway Company, incorporated in Oklahoma Territory, in March, 1900, constructed the railroad from Blackwell through Enid to Red River north of Vernon, Texas, 238.65 miles. Construction of this was begun about September 1, 1901, by the Choctaw Construction Company (afterwards absorbed by the Bee Line Construction Company) and eighty-four miles to the Choctaw Northern Crossing at Darrow was completed for operation early in 1902. The road was completed to the Red River late in 1902, or early in 1903. The construction and equipping of this line was financed by St. Louis capital.

SULPHUR LINE.

The United States Government, in behalf of the Indians, made a reservation of the Springs, together with forty acres of land at Sulphur Springs, about nine miles west of the station of Scullin on the Sapulpa-Denison line, and in April, 1902, the Sulphur Springs Railway Company was incorpor-

ated in Oklahoma Territory to build a railroad from Scullin to Sulphur Springs. The work of construction was begun by Johnston Brothers in the fall of 1902 and the road was completed for operation in the late spring of 1903. It is nine miles in length.

O. & C. C. RAILWAY AND S. O. & M. C. & RAILWAY CO.

The Ozark & Cherokee Central Railway Company, an Arkansas corporation, constructed a railroad from Fayetteville, Arkansas, to Muskogee, Oklahoma, 103 miles long, seventy-four miles in Oklahoma. It was completed into Muskogee in March, 1903. The construction and erection of the steel bridge over the Arkansas River delayed the date of completion.

MUSKOGEE-OKMULGEE LINE.

The Shawnee, Oklahoma & Missouri Coal and Railway Company, an Oklahoma Territory corporation, constructed a railroad from Muskogee to Okmulgee, forty miles. Construction was begun in April, 1902, and was completed for operation in April, 1903.

SAPULPA AND OIL FIELD RAILROAD.

In 1915, T. B. Slick and B. B. Jones brought in the discovery well of the Cushing field, which later developed into the largest pool in the Mid-Continent Field. Soon after this Mr. J. A. Frates endeavored to get the Frisco Railway to build a line into this new field, but on account of the Frisco not being in position to finance the line, nothing was done by them. About this time, arrangements were made with Haskell interests to build a line into the field from Jennings, and shortly thereafter J. A. Frates, Sr. incorporated and built the Sapulpa and Oil Field Railroad from a connection with the Frisco main line at Depew to Shamrock, a distance of eleven miles. This line was completed in 1916, and was later sold to the Frisco Railroad.

MIAMI-MINERAL BELT RAILWAY.

In about 1905 or 1906 development of lead and zinc properties was started at Commerce, Oklahoma, which resulted in building of the O. K. & N. R. R. between Miami and Com-

merce, and these mines were worked somewhat intermittingly for about ten years when it was thought the ore beds were exhausted. In 1916 the Eagle Picher Company, of Joplin, put on a very extensive drilling campaign, going after deeper veins of ore, which they confidently felt existed, and after expending possibly one million dollars on such drilling, their faith in this new field was rewarded by proving up one of the richest ore beds in the entire Tri-State District.

Early in 1917, Messrs. T. B. Slick and J. A. Frates, Sr., realizing the possibilities of this field, conceived the idea of building a net work of tracks throughout the new field, for by this time, lead and zinc had soared to highest prices on account of the world war. They incorporated the Miami-Mineral Belt Railroad with the following officers: J. A. Frates, Sr., President, T. B. Slick, Vice President, J. A. Frates, Jr., Vice President, Wm. Matthews, Vice President and Chief Engineer, J. H. Grant, Vice President, and in February, 1917, started actual construction of a 32-mile line out of Quapaw, Oklahoma. At this time the field was served by the Frisco Railway and the M. O. & G. Railway, but with no tracks into the field, except the short spur from Miami to Commerce, the principal portion of the field being without direct railroad facilities.

In ninety days after starting work, the Miami-Mineral Belt Railway was handling freight from two lines serving the field which by that time were choked with loaded cars of all sorts of materials, which were being rushed in for the completion of fifty-seven miles then under construction. This property was built under an amicable understanding with the Frisco, and it has since co-operated closely with that company.

JAMES L. ALLHANDS.

Joplin, Missouri.