



Oklahoma
Historical
Society



Plan a Pioneer Day at Your School



Created by the Oklahoma History Center Museum
Learning and Engagement Department
800 Nazih Zuhdi Drive
Oklahoma City, OK 73105
okhistory.org/historycenter

Introduction

There are many steps involved in producing a Pioneer Day at your school.

Prepare your students with these primary lesson plans and activities about pioneer life. Students should understand who the pioneers were, what regions of the country and the world they came from, and what motivated them to move west. They should understand how western expansion and ideas of manifest destiny led to issues like the nullification of treaties with American Indian nations in Oklahoma and the creation of All-Black towns by Freedmen and African Americans who participated in the land runs.

- [The Opening of Oklahoma e-exhibit](#)
- [A Fluid Frontier: Minority and Ethnic Groups and Opportunity in Oklahoma e-exhibit](#)

Play pioneer games like marbles, primer book lessons, spelling bees, sack races, tug-of-war, and three-legged races. You can also create classroom-friendly versions of games like Pack Your Wagon or your own version of Oregon Trail!

Make traditional turn-of-the-century crafts like corn husk dolls and yarn dolls for younger students, or simple quilting, embroidery, or cross-stitch projects for older students.

Eat local pioneer staples and have students learn how food was grown and processed. Students can make butter, can vegetables, shell peas, or shuck corn.

Reserve a free hands-on history [traveling trunk](#) from the Oklahoma History Center Museum, full of historical items, clothing, books, and curricula.

- [Pioneer Life traveling trunk](#)
- [One-Room Schoolhouse traveling trunk](#)
- [OkieTales Pioneer Life traveling trunk](#) (for pre-K through 3rd grade)

Experience live demonstrations from museum educators, community guests, and experts. Students can learn about traditional crafts such as soap-making, spinning, quilting, and weaving through hands-on presentations. The Oklahoma History Center Museum also offers Pioneer Woman and Cowboy/Pioneer [living history presentations](#) at your school!

Reach out to tribal nations in your area for resources about the history of your city or county before statehood, and how the land runs affected American Indians.)

Read primary-source books for kids like *Pioneers to the West: Children's True Stories of Migration* by John Bliss or the autobiographical novel *Little House in the Big Woods* by Laura Ingalls Wilder.

Ask for help from parents, volunteers, school administrators, museum educators, and community members.

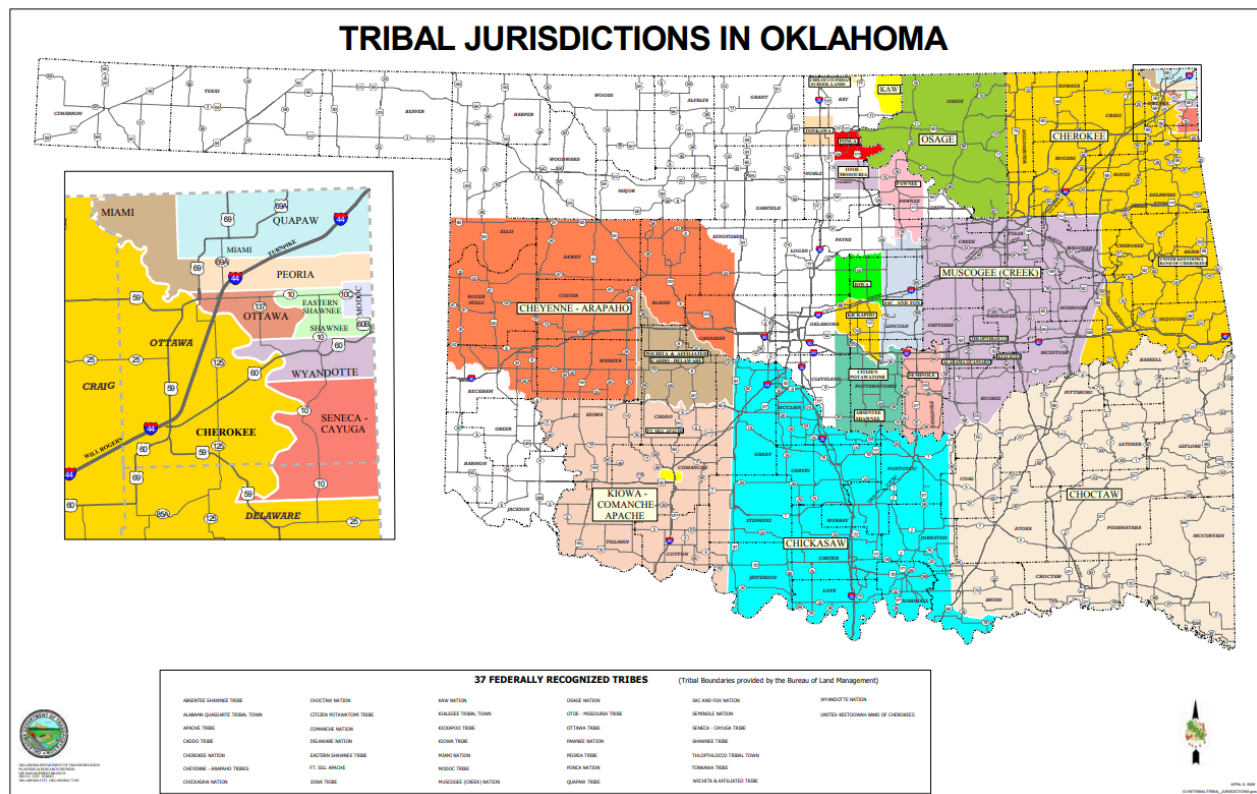
Maps and Resources

Tribal Jurisdictions in Oklahoma

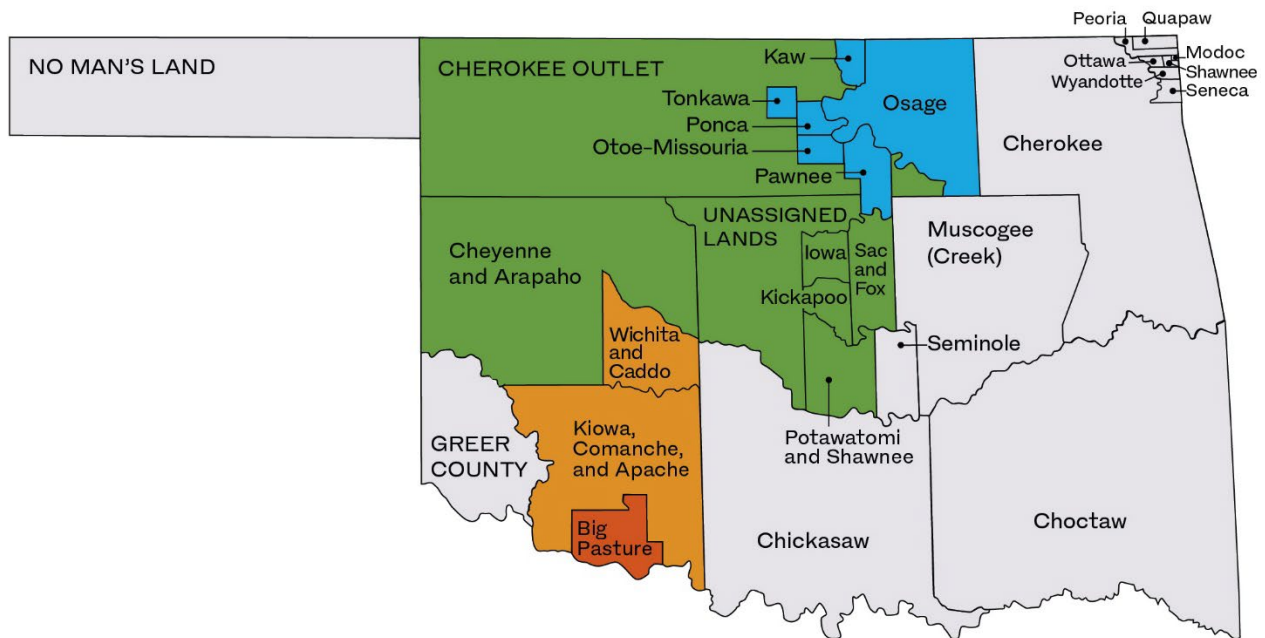
View the present-day tribal jurisdictions for the 38 federally recognized tribal nations in the state of Oklahoma. [A PDF of this map is available on the State of Oklahoma website.](#)

Find more information about tribes indigenous to Oklahoma, as well as maps and a timeline of Indian removal on the Oklahoma Historical Society's website at [okhistory.org/research/removal](https://www.okhistory.org/research/removal).

You can also find links to official websites of tribal nations at okhistory.org/research/tribalnations.



Land Openings in Oklahoma



■ Lands Opened by Allotment

- 1891: Tonkawa
- 1892: Pawnee
- 1904: Ponca and Otoe-Missouria
- 1906: Osage and Kaw

■ Lands Opened by Run

- April 22, 1889: Unassigned Lands
- September 22, 1891
 - Iowa
 - Sac and Fox
 - Potawatomi and Shawnee
- April 19, 1892: Cheyenne and Arapaho
- September 16, 1893: Cherokee Outlet
- May 23, 1895: Kickapoo

■ Lands Opened by Lottery

- July 9–August 6, 1901
 - Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache
 - Wichita and Caddo

■ Lands Opened by Sealed Bid

- December 1906: Big Pasture

Learn More in *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*

General Topics

- [Land Openings](#)
- [Land Runs, Women In](#)
- [Settlement Patterns](#)

Land Openings

- [Big Pasture \(sealed bid\)](#)
- [Cheyenne-Arapaho Opening \(run\)](#)
- [Cherokee Outlet Opening \(run\)](#)
- [Kickapoo Opening \(run\)](#)
- [Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Opening \(lottery\)](#)
- [Land Run of 1889](#)
- [Sac and Fox Opening \(run\)](#)
- [Wichita-Caddo-Delaware Opening \(lottery\)](#)

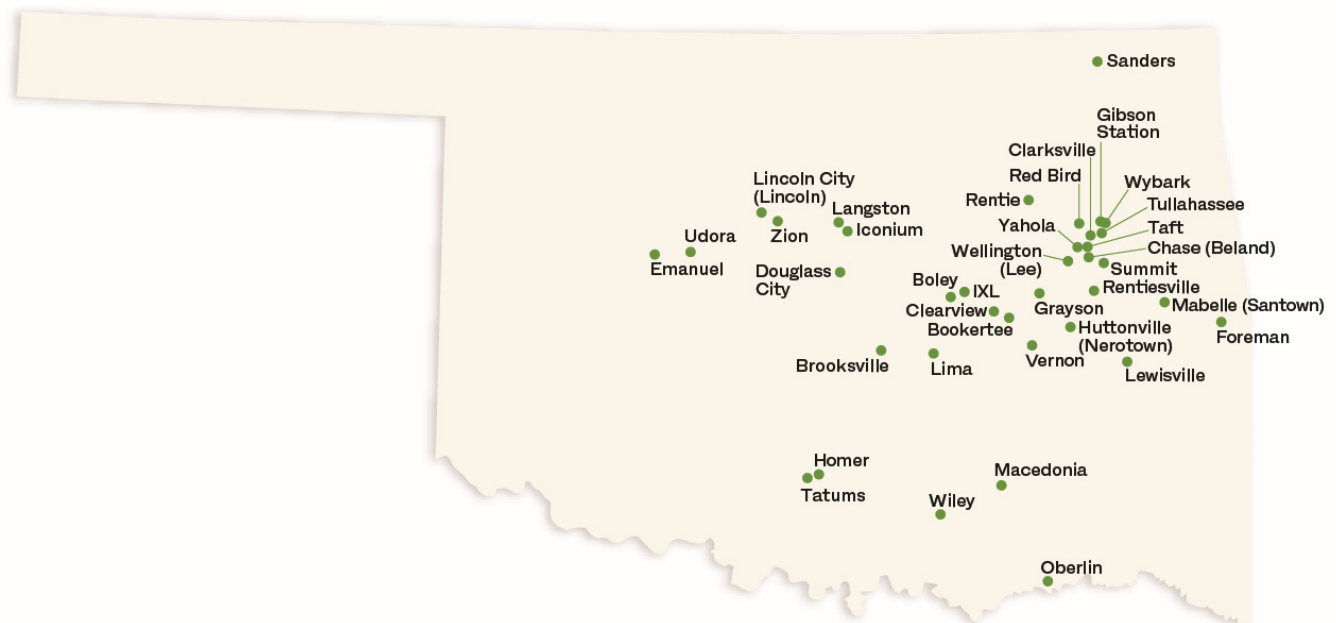
All-Black Towns of Oklahoma

All-Black towns emerged in Indian Territory after the Civil War, when Freedmen settled together for mutual protection and economic security. African Americans also established settlements in Oklahoma Territory following the 1889 Land Run and other land openings. All-Black towns represented an attempt to achieve individual, economic, and social advancement amid a racially segregated society.

This image illustrates approximate locations for 37 of more than 50 All-Black towns established in Oklahoma between 1880 and 1920. They represent townsites founded by African Americans and communities where Black officials controlled local government. Some towns existed for only a short period, while others remain incorporated today.

[Read more about historic All-Black towns in *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*.](#)

[All-Black Towns map, Oklahoma Historical Society, last updated October 2025](#)



Important Laws

The Dawes Act

The 1887 Dawes Act allowed the US government to take control of tribally held land and distribute it to individual tribal members. Some tribes, including several tribes in Oklahoma, were exempt from the Dawes Act.

[Read about the Dawes Commission in *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*.](#)

[View Dawes Act scans and a transcript on DocsTeach.](#)

Homestead Act (1862)

The Homestead Act, passed in 1862, encouraged westward expansion by offering a low barrier to claiming large tracts of public land and converting them into private property.

[Read about the Homestead Act in *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*.](#)

[View scans and a transcript of the Homestead Act on DocsTeach.](#)

The Curtis Act (1898)

The Curtis Act, passed in 1898, granted the US government authority to control Indian affairs. It granted the government the right to allot tribal land, including those tribes exempted in the Dawes Act, and abolished tribal governments.

[Read about the Curtis Act in *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*.](#)

Dismantling the Reservations



The Dawes Commission was tasked with arranging land cessions from the Five Tribes under Congress's authority (819, Oklahoma Historical Society Photograph Collection, OHS).



The Iowas were the first tribal nation to negotiate an allotment agreement with the Jerome Commission after trying to avoid giving up their land. They received about 27¢ per acre for the land left after allotment assignments. Here, Iowa tribal members are photographed in Guthrie on September 16, 1889 (3431, W. P. Campbell Collection, OHS).



The Sauk and Fox concluded their agreement, negotiated by Chief Moses Keokuk (Waw-Naw-Ke-Sah), on June 12, 1890, receiving close to \$1 an acre (16193, E. A. Burbank Collection, OHS).



The Cheyenne and Arapaho quit negotiations in protest. Many tribal members believed that the signatures collected to approve the agreement were acquired fraudulently.

This image shows Cheyenne and Arapaho delegates who counseled for the Cherokee Outlet, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma Territory, 1889 (20738.N7.0, Edna M. Couch Collection, OHS).



Chief Tawakoni Jim, Wichita and Affiliated Bands, requested that a lawyer represent his tribal nation in negotiations. The Jerome Commission rebuffed this as a waste of money. The Wichita refused to negotiate without an attorney, so one was appointed (19609, Oklahoma Historical Society Photograph Collection, OHS).



Lone Wolf the Younger, Kiowa, appealed to the Supreme Court to stop allotment in *Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock* (1903) (2117.28, Reverend George W. Hicks Collection, OHS).

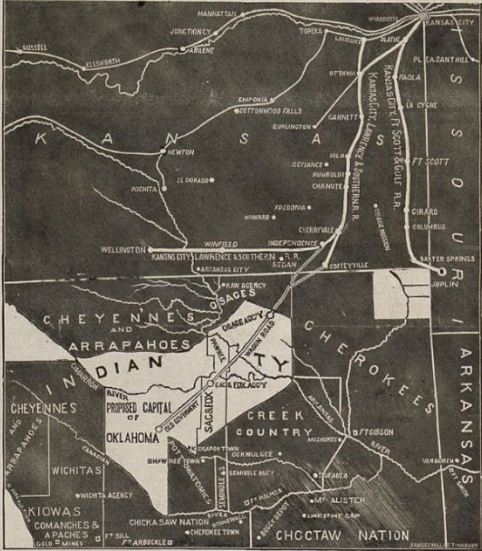
1889 Land Run: Opening the Unassigned Lands

THE PRESIDENT

In his last message to Congress, strongly recommends that the Indian Territory be opened for settlement, and there is no doubt but that Congress at its present session will pass the necessary act declaring the unoccupied lands in

INDIAN TERRITORY

THAT
GARDEN OF THE WORLD,
OPEN FOR
HOMESTEAD AND PRE-EMPTION



MAP OF INDIAN TERRITORY.
Showing the Lands that will be subject to Homestead Entry and How to Reach Them.
White indicates Homestead Lands, of which there will be over 10,000,000 Acres.

In view of the early opening of the Territory, it is necessary for those who would improve the opportunity to secure Free Land and Homes in this magnificent country, to be prepared to start as soon as the lands are declared by Congress to be subject to Homestead Entry. The rush will be great, and early comers will have every advantage.

**Every Person 21 Years of Age or Over will be
ENTITLED TO 160 ACRES.**

COFFEYVILLE & INDEPENDENCE

The two large towns on the Border, and the nearest points to the Public Lands will be the

GREAT OUTFITTING POINTS

FOR

Immigrants to the Indian Territory.

The Old Government Wagon Road starts from both these points. Plenty of Wood and Water on the route, and all large streams and bad crossings are avoided.

THE GOVERNMENT LAND OFFICE IS AT INDEPENDENCE.

THE KANSAS CITY, LAWRENCE & SOUTHERN R. R.

Being the Short, Direct and only Good Route to the Public Lands in the Territory, are making every preparation necessary to accommodate the rush, and will make

Special Low Rates for EMIGRANTS and their HOUSEHOLD GOODS

J. E. LOCKWOOD, General Ticket Agent, Kansas City, Mo.

Ranssey, Miller & Hudson, Printers.

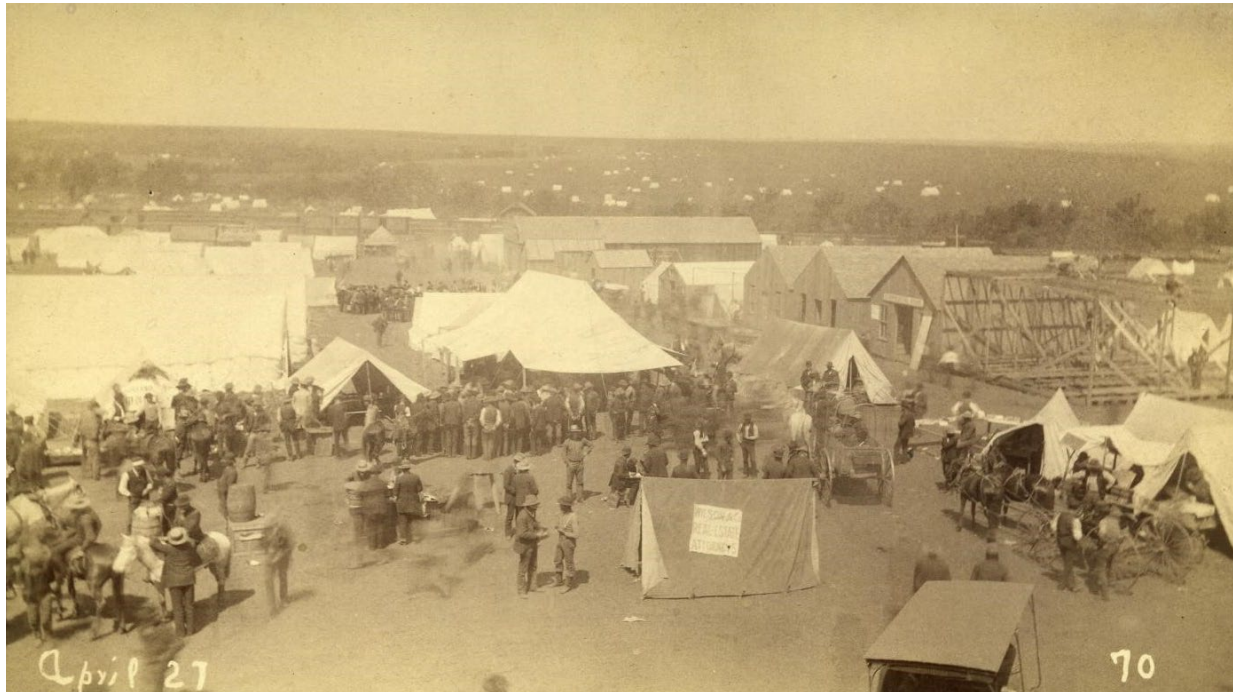
Advertisement for the first land run (image courtesy DocsTeach).



Crossing during the 1889 Land Run (21412.BH772.2, Z. P. Meyers/Barney Hillerman Photographic Collection, OHS)



A woman holding down a claim on a town lot in Guthrie, Oklahoma Territory, following the Land Run of 1889 (15727, D. S. Mitchell Collection, OHS).



Street scene after the land run, April 27 (18026, OHS Photograph Collection, OHS)



In addition to claims staked by individuals, towns appeared overnight. A man looks for a town lot (19535.2, OHS Photograph Collection, OHS).

1893 Land Run: Opening the Cherokee Outlet



Land run strippers were participants in the land run. This image probably shows a town in Kansas prior to the Cherokee Outlet run (4990, Oklahoma Historical Society Photograph Collection, OHS).



(21412.BH772.2, Z. P. Meyers/Barney Hillerman Photographic Collection, OHS)



The first train leaving the line north of Orlando for Perry, Oklahoma Territory, September 1893 (5308, John L. Coffey Collection, OHS).



Cherokee Outlet opening land office, 1893 (6512, John E. Shanafelt Collection, OHS).



Cherokee Outlet opening, waiting to file at the Enid Land Office, Enid, Oklahoma Territory, 1893
(20282.76.12.3, Museum of the Cherokee Strip Collection, OHS).

Newspaper Coverage

View historic newspapers on The Gateway to Oklahoma History, the Oklahoma Historical Society's online repository.

1889

- [The Indian Chieftain](#). (Vinita, Indian Terr.), Vol. 7, No. 33, Ed. 1, Thursday, April 25, 1889, Page: 1 of 4
- [The Telephone](#). (Tahlequah, Indian Terr.), Vol. 2, No. 49, Ed. 1 Friday, April 26, 1889, Page: 1 of 4
- [Oklahoma City Times](#). (Oklahoma City, Okla. Terr.), Vol. 1, No. 10, Ed. 1 Monday, April 29, 1889, Page: 1 of 4

1891

- [The Indian Chieftain](#). (Vinita, Indian Terr.), Vol. 10, No. 3, Ed. 1 Thursday, September 24, 1891, Page: 2 of 4
- [El Reno Herald](#). (El Reno, Okla., Indian Terr.), Vol. 3, No. 15, Ed. 1 Friday, September 25, 1891, Page: 2 of 6

1892

- [The Indian Chieftain](#). (Vinita, Indian Terr.), Vol. 10, No. 33, Ed. 1 Thursday, April 21, 1892, Page: 1 of 4
- [Stillwater Gazette](#). (Stillwater, Okla.), Vol. 3, No. 19, Ed. 1 Friday, April 22, 1892, Page: 1 of 8

1893

- [The Guthrie Daily Leader](#). (Guthrie, Okla.), Vol. 1, No. 247, Ed. 1, Sunday, September 17, 1893, Page: 1 of 4
- [The Oklahoma Times Journal](#). (Oklahoma City, Okla. Terr.), Vol. 5, No. 89, Ed. 1 Sunday, September 17, 1893, Page: 1 of 4
- [The Daily Oklahoma State Capital](#). (Guthrie, Okla.), Vol. 5, No. 128, Ed. 1, Monday, September 18, 1893, Page: 1 of 4

1901

- [The Daily Ardmoreite](#). (Ardmore, Indian Terr.), Vol. 8, No. 240, Ed. 1, Tuesday, August 6, 1901, Page: 1 of 8
- [The Daily Gazette](#). (Stillwater, Okla.), Vol. 1, No. 158, Ed. 1 Tuesday, August 6, 1901, Page: 1 of 4

The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture

The *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture* includes more than 2,600 entries about the people, events, communities, and sites that shape our history. Find more entries at okhistory.org/encyclopedia.

- ["Allotment"](#)
- ["Boomer Movement"](#)
- ["Cherokee Outlet Opening"](#)
- ["Cheyenne-Arapaho Opening"](#)
- ["Crazy Snake Uprising"](#)
- ["Curtis Act \(1898\)"](#)
- ["Dawes Commission"](#)
- ["Harjo, Chitto"](#)
- ["Indian Territory"](#)
- ["Kickapoo Opening"](#)
- ["Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Opening"](#)
- ["Land Openings"](#)
- ["Land Run of 1889"](#)
- ["Land Runs, Women in."](#)
- ["Oklahoma Territory"](#)
- ["Redbird Smith Movement"](#)
- ["Sac and Fox Opening"](#)
- ["Settlement Patterns"](#)
- ["Sooner"](#)

Pack Your Wagon Activity

What will you take?

You and your family of four are moving west! You can only pack 2,400 pounds of goods in your wagon safely. What will you take, and what will you leave behind?

Tools	Pounds
Axe	12
Sod plow	55
Shotgun and ammunition	25
Revolver and ammunition	15
Plane	5
Level	5
Saw	8
Hammer	5
Nails	5
Nail puller	3
Curry comb	3
Shovel	10
Hoe	10
Large hunting knife	3
Metal bucket	3

Food and cooking	Pounds
Dutch oven	15
Find china dishes	45
Flour	20 (per person)
Cornmeal	20 (per person)
Bacon	10 (per person)
Sugar	5 (per person)
Coffee	5 (per person)
Butterchurn	15
Coffee pot and grinder	5
Meat grinder	5
Tin plates and cups	20
Pots and pans	20
Mixing bowl	3
Glass pitcher	5
Silverware	10

Furniture	Pounds
Oak china cabinet	200
Grandfather clock	75
Wooden chair	15
Table	60
Rug	12
Bed	100
Blanket	5
Cradle	15

Washing and grooming	Pounds
Soap	5
Toothbrush	1
Shaving kit	3
Clothes	10 (per person)
Mirror	5
Washboard	10
Washtub	15
Vanity set	5

Light, heat, and fuel	Pounds
Matches and match holder	5
Lantern and kerosene	25
Stove for cooking and heating	220
Candles	10

Miscellaneous	Pounds
Books	20
Broom	3
Sewing kit and darning egg	5
Treadle sewing machine	55

Make a Whirligig

A whirligig is a kinetic toy that spins. You can make your own whirligig with just a string and a button. A video tutorial is available from the [Job Barr Cabin Museum on YouTube](#).

Supplies

- A large button with two or four holes, or a piece of cardboard/cardstock cut in a large circle
- 2.5 feet of string, yarn, or thin ribbon
- Scissors

Directions

1. If you are using a large button, skip to step 3. If you are using cardboard or cardstock, cut out a four-inch circle. The circle can be decorated using crayons or colored pencils
2. Punch two small holes in the circle, about $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch from the center
3. Thread the string into the holes and tie the ends together
4. Pull the string until the button/circle is in the middle
5. Tie a loop on each end of the string large enough for one or two fingers to fit inside
6. Attach the finger loops to each hand, and twirl/spin the string away from you to “wind up” the toy
7. Stop twirling/spinning, and pull the ends taut. The string will continue spinning or unwinding and may make a whirring sound.

