Chapter 18

The Roaring Twenties

CHANGES IN THE STATUS OF WOMEN continued even more dramatically after the end of the war. Skirt lengths rose from the ankle to the knee and above. Women cut their hair in the short “bob” and some began smoking cigarettes in public. Oklahoma passed a state constitutional amendment giving women the right to vote, and in 1920 the Nineteenth Amendment to the national constitution was ratified.

ALICE MARY ROBERTSON. In 1920 Alice Mary Robertson became the second woman ever to be elected to the United States Congress. Not only was she a woman, but she was a Republican elected from a distinctly Democratic district. “Miss Alice” was a bristling, straitlaced, 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.

A schoolteacher and restaurant owner from Muskogee, she operated a cafeteria, which she advertised as a club for working girls. She was the daughter of missionary William Robertson, granddaughter of missionary Samuel Austin Worcester, and the daughter of Ann Eliza Worcester Robertson, the first American woman to hold a Doctor of Philosophy Degree. Alice Mary Robertson fell one year short of her own degree because of poverty. She never allowed a soldier to pay for a meal in her restaurant and stood staunchly against repeal of the 18th Amendment, prohibition of liquor.

Miss Alice and her mother turned their home into an orphanage for Creek Indian girls. They called the home “Sawokla,” a Creek word meaning “The Gathering Place.” As their charges grew in number, a larger
place had to be secured for their care. Miss Alice established a school and orphanage which she called Minerva Place and which later became the University of Tulsa. Minerva was the Roman goddess of wisdom.

During her short legislative career, Alice Mary Robertson became the first woman to preside over a session of the House of Representatives. It was the proudest day of her life. But Miss Alice was a woman of contradictions. The woman who freely fed servicemen at her cafeteria voted against servicemen’s pensions. They had volunteered to fight and should not be rewarded monetarily for doing their duty, she claimed. In addition, she scorned women’s suffrage.

Miss Robertson spent the last days of her life as a guest of the Will Rogers Hotel in Claremore, thanks to the generosity of Will Rogers and Lew Wentz. They hoped that the hotel’s mineral water baths would relieve the pain of her disease. Miss Robertson suffered from cancer. She died in 1932.

Other courageous female leaders of the age were Alice Brown Davis, who served as chief of the Seminole tribe, and Myrtle Archer McDougal, who headed more than 40 political and women’s organizations in her lifetime. A Lawton teenager named Lucille LeSueur became the state Charleston champion and went on to Hollywood to become Joan Crawford. Anabel Mraz, first-generation American and Oklahoman, became a ballerina with Pavlova’s ballet.

THE J. B. A. ROBERTSON ADMINISTRATION. Many social and labor reforms were enacted during the postwar period. Workmen’s compensation was established which required paying a person who had been injured on the job. Limits were set on the maximum number of hours an employee might work in a week. Widow’s pensions were established on a national level. Taxes were removed from raw farm products, and the State Bureau of Weights and Measures was established. The Oklahoma Corporation Commission began supervising the state’s cotton gins for fair prices and honest practices.
The State Insurance Board was established to protect citizens from insurance fraud. The State Historical Society was established, and the new University Hospital Building was erected almost as far outside of town on Oklahoma City’s 13th Street as the State Capitol Building was on 23rd Street.

The Robertson administration succeeded in upgrading the preparation and certification of teachers and establishing a subsidized textbook program. Preparation began for the consolidation of rural schools, and state aid was granted to some of the state’s poorer school districts. Robertson gained legislative approval for the construction of 1,300 miles of highways in Oklahoma, more than the combined total of mileage that his three predecessors had achieved.

The war had created an inflated economy in agricultural Oklahoma, and postwar deflation resulted in property foreclosures and bank failures. Wartime had brought higher prices to Oklahoma’s farmers, who had invested in more land and machinery. The end of the war brought lowered prices and inability to pay incurred debts. The same situation existed in Oklahoma’s oil fields. The state was thrust into a major depression in the early 1920s. Many state banks failed, and the State Bank Guaranty System collapsed.

Legislative investigations of state officials continued into the Robertson administration, and several impeachment hearings were held. One was against Lt. Governor Martin E. Trapp for alleged improper business transactions. The charges were dismissed by the Senate. Robertson himself escaped impeachment by only one vote in the House of Representatives.

There was extreme tension between the two state houses of government, and in March, 1921, the House adjourned without notice to the Senate and refused to reconvene even at the request of the governor. The appropriations containing funds to run the government had not yet been passed, but without the House of Representatives, the Senate could not function. The Senate also dismissed.

On April 25th, the governor called a special session of the legislature for the purpose of passing the appropriations bills. The legislators returned to the State Capitol with far less hostility toward each other, and business was conducted smoothly. They adjourned May 21.

**INDIAN CITIZENSHIP.** On a national level, Indians throughout the country were granted full citizenship as a result of their participation
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 obtained the same privileges in all states. Arizona and New Mexico were the last to grant full citizenship privileges to their Indian populations.

**BOUNDARY DISPUTE.** Boundary disputes with Texas were settled in 1924. The Adams-Onis Treaty of 1819 had awarded the entire Red River to the United States, specifying 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 and sold oil leases in the river bed.

The matter went to court, and after several trials the United States Supreme Court decided that the Adams-Onis boundary was valid, even though the treaty had been made between the federal government and Spain. They further decided, however, that while Oklahoma could claim *jurisdiction* over the entire river, actual ownership of land and mineral rights on the south half of the river belonged to the United States Government.

**LABOR PROBLEMS.** The postwar period brought much unrest to the nation, particularly where labor was concerned. Returning veterans flooded the job market, and there was *extensive* unemployment. Oklahoma suffered right along with the rest of the nation. Membership in labor unions swelled and employees complained of unsafe working conditions and low wages. Strikes occurred everywhere. Streetcar workers struck in Chickasha and Tulsa, boilermakers in Tulsa, and newspaper printers in Oklahoma City. The strike among telephone operators in Shawnee, Drumright, and Muskogee resulted in rioting, and six units of the National Guard were called to control the situation.

On October 31, 1919, Halloween, the nation’s coal miners struck. Nine thousand Oklahoma miners walked off their jobs with their union 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, even though the state tried to continue production with the use of convict labor and *volunteers*. Military occupation passed without casualties, and troops were withdrawn in December when
the strike was settled.

Labor unions, farmers’ groups, and railroad organizations united to form a political organization. On September 17, 1921, a convention was held in Shawnee to organize the Farmer-Labor Reconstruction League. They demanded government control of industry, the elimination of private profits, and state aid for building homes for the poor, providing textbooks, and 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, its members were directed to register as members of the Democratic Party because of the Democratic domination of state politics. They sought to gain control of the party and through 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 serving as mayor of Oklahoma City when he received the gubernatorial nomination. He rejected the state’s Democratic Party platform and announced that he was running on the Farmer-Labor platform. This split the Democratic Party, but Walton was elected by a narrow margin. Nevertheless, Walton was unable to achieve the demands of the League, and he soon lost their support.

THE TULSA RACE RIOT. The postwar period also brought a great deal of racial tension to the nation. During wartime, many jobs originally held only by white employees had been opened to African-Americans. In addition, African-American soldiers, who had been discriminated against by their own government and military organizations, had enjoyed accep-
tance and a greater feeling of equality in Europe. They came home with new ideas about political, social, and economic standards. They strongly voiced their demands concerning employment and civil rights. Many whites resented African-Americans who were holding traditionally white jobs, and African-American and white competition for existing jobs resulted in increased anger between the factions. Mob violence began to occur, and 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 American. This racial tension helped set the scene for the Tulsa race riot of 1921, billed by the New York Times as “the worst race riot in history.”

The situation began when Dick Rowland, a nineteen-year-old boot black in Tulsa, delivered a package to the Drexel Building downtown. He rode the elevator with Mrs. Sarah Page, a young white woman who was working as the elevator operator. Upon leaving the elevator, Rowland stumbled and stepped on Mrs. Page’s foot. Mrs. Page became frightened and screamed. Rowland, also frightened, ran from the building. Mrs. Page claimed Rowland had tried to assault her, and the young African-American man was arrested the following day.

Following Rowland’s arrest, the Tulsa Tribune printed the story of the incident, including false statements concerning torn clothing and scratches on Mrs. Page’s face. Despite the denials by Tulsa’s chief of police, county sheriff, and mayor that any harm had been done to the woman, and despite the admission of the managing editor of the Tulsa Tribune that the statements about Mrs. Page’s facial scratches and torn clothes were false, anger had been aroused among the city’s whites. Lynch talk began to circulate. By 7:00 p.m. on May 31, 1921, a crowd of white men were gathering around the County Courthouse. The jail in which Rowland was being held was on the third floor.

By 9:30 p.m., a crowd of African-American men began to gather, also, determined not to allow Rowland to be lynched. Approximately 2,000 white men had gathered, and groups of African-American men were circling the block in cars. Several of both groups were reportedly armed. Pleas from law enforcement officials for the crowd to disperse were ignored.

Some seventy-five African-American men exited the cars and began milling with the white crowd. This incensed several of the white men, and one white man tried to disarm an African-American man. During the ensuing struggle, the weapon discharged and the chaos began. Several
shots were fired, and one white man sitting in his car a block away was killed by a stray bullet. When one African-American man was wounded and ambulances arrived to attend him, white rioters surrounded him and refused to let the ambulance attendants remove him. He died where he lay.

Doors and windows of every hardware store, pawnshop, sporting goods store, or arms shop in Tulsa were smashed as the mobsters armed themselves. Looters quickly followed, and one hardware store reported more than $10,000 in losses.

Three- to four-hundred white men tried to storm the Tulsa Armory but were stopped by Tulsa’s National Guard unit, which had been in the process of mobilizing for its annual training encampment when the riot began. The unit had received orders from the governor’s office to protect the arms in the building and to be ready in case aid was requested by civil authorities. On June 1, 1921, Chief of Police John A. Gustafson, Tulsa County Sheriff William McCullough, and District Judge V.W. Biddisson sent the following telegram to Governor Robertson:

Race riot developed here. Several killed. Unable handle situation. Request the National Guard forces be sent by special train. Situation serious.

By midnight, factions had formed combat lines along both sides of the railroad tracks which separated the African-American section from the white section of town. The worst fighting occurred between midnight and dawn of Wednesday, June 1. White mobs infiltrated the African-American areas, looting and burning the entire district and preventing firefighters from combating the fires. Colonel L.J.F. Rooney’s Tulsa guardsmen were standing with fixed bayonets, patrolling banks, power plants, water plants, and downtown busi-
ness buildings. Other guardsmen were en route to Tulsa from Oklahoma City. Guardsmen in Wagoner, Muskogee, Vinita, and Bartlesville were called to readiness in case further troops were needed.

When the Oklahoma City troop train arrived at the Tulsa railroad yard at 8:00 a.m., the entire African-American sector appeared to be burning. General Charles Barrett, arriving on the train, later reported that 25,000 whites, “armed to the teeth, were ranging the city in utter and ruthless defiance of every concept of law and righteousness.” Martial law was declared at 11:30 a.m., June 1, and the additional mobilized troops were transported to Tulsa.

When the riot was over, between thirty and forty blocks of homes and businesses had been burned in the African-American sector of Tulsa. There were 1,315 homes destroyed, an additional 314 looted and vandalized, and 4,291 African-Americans left homeless. More than 3,000 Tulsans were wounded, and it is reported that many more did not seek treatment because they didn’t want to be identified with the riot.

Thousands of African-American refugees had fled the African-American neighborhood of Greenwood. A few were given shelter by their white employers, especially the African-American maids who worked for white women. Members of one white church put African-Americans inside their building and marched around the perimeter to protect them from white rioters.

In Claremore and other places, detention camps were set up to house the African-American refugees and supposedly to protect them. However, the inhabitants were not allowed to leave for several days unless called for by a white employer.

In Tulsa during the riot, white soldiers, law officers, and deputized volunteers disarmed African-Americans and took them prisoner. African-American prisoners were taken to Convention Hall, where they were searched and then transported to various holding camps around the city. White rioters, on the other hand, were simply disarmed and sent home.

The total official death count was thirty-six — twenty-six African-Americans and ten whites — but African-Americans refused to accept the count. Many African-Americans fled the city and never returned. Several missing persons were assumed to be among those who fled, although no evidence of either flight or death could be obtained.

Governor Robertson called for a grand jury investigation of the riot. The report blamed “an impudent Negro, a hysterical girl, and a ‘yellow’ journal.” Of the eighty-nine indictments which resulted from the investi-
gation, only one was against a white defendant.

A commission was formed in 1997 and its report was issued in 2001. It recommended that reparations be paid to survivors and descendants of survivors. It also recommended a scholarship fund, an enterprise zone for economic development, and a memorial.

**THE KU KLUX KLAN.** On Thanksgiving night, 1915, outside Atlanta, Georgia, Colonel William Joseph Simmons and a handful of supporters resurrected the terror of the South, the Ku Klux Klan. By the 1920s, the Klan had reached a peak of power never before achieved, and Oklahoma was a prime Klan state. The citizens, spiritually and emotionally shaken by World War I, were rejecting Bolshevism (violent overthrow of capitalism), evolution, and atheism (non-belief in god) and were looking for the old-time fundamental beliefs. It was a ripe time for the basic Klan doctrines of patriotism, protestantism, white supremacy, and law and order.

Other segments of society were ignoring law and order by drinking bootleg liquor and participating in gambling and other unlawful forms of entertainment. A whole new vocabulary had to be learned in order to participate in the activities. A bootlegger was a man who stuffed his cowboy boots with small, flat bottles of illegal liquor. A moonshiner distilled his corn liquor by the light of the moon. A speakeasy was an establishment where a patron knocked on the door and whispered the secret code word or the name of a trusted person in order to be admitted. He could buy illegal liquor or do some gambling once inside.

The typical white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) reaction to all this immorality was to go to the other extreme and the typical WASP lived in Oklahoma. Thus, membership in the KKK grew to more than 100,000 in the state. The symbol of the Klan was the burning cross, the same symbol which had warned clansmen of alarm and armed trouble in ancient Scotland. The fiery cross marked the ceremonies of the Klan as hundreds of members in their hooded costumes gathered to listen to speakers promote the purposes of the organization.

The KKK masked its more cowardly deeds with good public relations. The Kamelias, the women’s auxiliary of the Ku Klux Klan, and their klansmen husbands delivered baskets and gifts to the needy at Christmastime. Okmulgee klansmen presented a widow and her five children with a new home. Klan leaders preached against vice and corruption and unfair business practices. Citizens who were shocked at society’s immorality
continued to join.

Reports began to circulate concerning other kinds of activities, however. An angry Coweta father was whipped for sending “a discourteous note” to a school teacher after she had reprimanded a child. A Tulsa woman was whipped for selling illegal beer. A Broken Arrow couple were beaten for “living in adultery.” During the first six months of 1923, an estimated 2,500 to 3,000 beatings took place in Oklahoma, and Governor Jack Walton pledged to “end mob violence.”

GOVERNOR JOHN WALTON. “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, proving that klansmen were not immune to the law as people had begun to believe.

Cold War raged between the Klan and the governor, and on September 15, 1923, Walton declared martial law (where the military takes over government law enforcement) over the entire state. Six thousand troops were stationed 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, and 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.”

With what many considered the random use of martial law, Walton’s popularity began to lessen. There were rumors of impeachment, and one Oklahoma City newspaper called for “Neither Klan Nor King.” Threats of impeachment grew, and attacks were made on the governor’s character. His personal policy against capital punishment and his policy of liberal pardon and parole were vigorously criticized. Walton’s critics claimed that he was operating outside the law, violating 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 subversive 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.

The legislature attempted to convene for the purpose of impeaching 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 convey unless called by the governor or convening in a regular session. As a result, an election was held on October 2 in which voters passed a constitutional amendment allowing legislators to call themselves into session for the purpose of impeachment.

Immediately following the election, a special session was scheduled for October 17. The next day after the call was issued, Governor Walton called a special session to convene on October 11 to pass laws for the control of the Ku Klux Klan.

The legislature met on October 11 and immediately called for an investigation of the governor’s activities. The House of Representatives charged Governor Walton with twenty-two charges, including “willful neglect of duty, incompetence in office, and offenses involving moral turpitude (lack of values).” The Senate convicted 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.”

The governor had previously accused the legislature of having many Klan members. During the hearings, one representative was physically assaulted and thrown out of the chambers for 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 had also 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, but the legislature went on to pass laws forbidding the use of hoods or masks and establishing 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 with the impeachment of John C. “Iron Jack” Walton, who not only served the shortest term of any elected Oklahoma governor but accomplished his purpose in that short length of time. He broke the hold of the Ku Klux Klan on the state.

Governor John C. Walton
Walton, who had served less than a year as governor, ran repeatedly for other public offices but lost. He died on November 15, 1949.

**GOVERNOR MARTIN TRAPP.** Lt. Governor Martin E. Trapp replaced Walton in the governor’s office. During his *tenure* of office, a three-man Highway Commission was created. The state adopted a rigid economic program in an effort to lessen the dangers of the recession which had enveloped the state and the nation. Financial aid to poorer school districts was reduced, the free textbook law repealed, and the prison farm at Aylesworth was closed and sold. Tax laws were revised, increasing gasoline taxes and automobile license fees. Commissions were *established* for real estate, forestry, conservation, and fish and game protection. A Bureau of Criminal Investigation was also *established*.

Governor Trapp was regarded as efficient and successful, but because he had served more than one-half of a regular governor’s term, the State Supreme Court ruled that he was ineligible to succeed himself in office. After leaving office, Trapp demonstrated his abilities in the business world, becoming successful 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.

**GOVERNOR HENRY JOHNSTON.** 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. Johnston 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, Omer Benedict, tried to make it an issue, which resulted in confusion among the electorate and an
The state’s eleventh legislative session began poorly. Many state officials had opposed the governor’s candidacy. When he interfered with the selection of the Senate President Pro Tempore, an unending rivalry was begun between the state’s highest official and the Senate. The Senate refused to approve several gubernatorial appointees, and no major legislation was passed. The Senate distrusted many of the governor’s advisers, and they also distrusted his secretary, Mrs. O.O. Hammonds, the first woman to hold that position. They claimed that Mrs. Hammonds influenced the governor.

After the 11th legislature adjourned, the governor tried to gain control of several boards, including the new five-man Highway Commission. When he removed the highway engineer from office, talk of impeachment was heard. Anti-Klan antagonism grew worse when Johnston pardoned two klansmen convicted of floggings and after he pressured the Highway Commission to appoint several known klansmen to important positions.

The legislature attempted to impeach the governor in December, 1927. A State Supreme Court ruling declared invalid the Russell Amendment, passed during the Walton crisis for the purpose of allowing a legislature to convene itself. This means that only the governor could call a special session of the legislature, and he refused to do so. The legislature ignored the court ruling, however, and formed a committee to investigate the governor. On Monday, December 25, 1927, when legislators tried to assemble to bring charges against the governor, they were met by Adjutant General Charles Garrett and seventy National Guardsmen.

The legislators dispersed and reassembled at the Huckins Hotel. They voted to impeach not only the governor but Chief Justice Fred S. Branson of the State Supreme Court and Harry B. Cordell, president of the State Board of Agriculture. Two court actions subsequently occurred, 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 were once again sent to the capitol, this time
to the Senate chambers, so the senators met again at the Huckins Hotel. They decided that they had a right to meet as a legislature and to sit as a court of impeachment. They further decided that, since the Russell Amendment had been declared invalid, the House had not been legally convened and was not actually in session when charges were filed against the defendants. 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.

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 12th legislature, the House of Representatives impeached Governor Johnston on eleven charges. The Senate convicted him on one charge, incompetency. He was removed from office and Lt. Governor William J. Holloway replaced him. Johnston returned to Perry where friends and neighbors welcomed him. After his removal, Johnston said, “I have lost the office of governor. I have retained my honor and integrity. I retire with a clear conscience. I retain the public confidence…” And in Perry his statement was certainly true. Johnston practiced law in Perry 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. Another new Highway Commission was formed (again a three-man board), a new schedule of salaries for state
officers was drawn up, raising the pay of most, and a new election law provided for a “run-off” of the state primary elections.

OKLAHOMA JAZZ. One of the bright spots of the 1920s in Oklahoma was the introduction of jazz. The new form of 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 2nd Street certainly contributed to its development. Located in the heart of Oklahoma City’s African-American business district, 2nd Street housed several establishments 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.

CRIME AND CRIMINALS. 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, and some of them came from the depressed areas of eastern Oklahoma. George “Machine Gun” Kelly and his wife, Kathryn, Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow, and Charles “Pretty Boy” Floyd all made the most-wanted list of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Most of them met violent deaths.

Just as Jesse James, the Dalton Gang, the Doolins, and the Youngers had hidden from time to time in the Cookson Hills of the nineteenth century and became folk heroes, “Pretty Boy” Floyd headquartered 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 devotees, friends, and the morbidly curious passed by his coffin on the day of his funeral. The satin lining was completely stripped from it by souvenir-hunters.

Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow were killed by law officers, but “Machine Gun” and Kathryn Kelly were captured and convicted of kidnapping Oklahoma City oilman Charles Urschel. George Kelly was 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 effectiveness of the young FBI agency, however, largely curtailed the activities of gunslinging mobsters.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Give the accomplishments of the Robertson administration, including social and labor reforms.
2. Describe the period of social, economic, and racial unrest in Oklahoma during the twenties.
3. Describe what you think it would be like to live in Oklahoma today if the Ku Klux Klan had remained powerful.
4. Describe the loss of lives and property during the Tulsa Race Riot.
5. List five outlaws who lived in Oklahoma.

Crucified Land is by American painter Alexander Hogue, who immortalized images of the ruined landscape of the 1930s Dust Bowl.