

CHICKASAW  
*Heritage Series*



**MONTFORD  
JOHNSON**

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AN ORIGINAL BRAND

S E C O N D A R Y



## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- Why is Montford Johnson considered a key figure in the development of ranching, Indian Territory and the State of Oklahoma?
- How did the opening of the unassigned lands impact the ranching industry in Oklahoma?
- What role did women, First Americans and African Americans play in the growth and success of the cattle ranching industry in Oklahoma?



## LEARNING GOALS/OBJECTIVES:

- To assess the impact of the cattle industry on the state of Oklahoma both then and now
- To describe the significant contribution of Montford Johnson to the Chickasaw Nation, cattle ranching, and Indian Territory
- To recognize key events that played a role in the development of towns and industries within the Chickasaw Nation and beyond

## BACKGROUND:

Montford Thomas Johnson (November 1843–February 17,1896) was Chickasaw and a cattleman who lived in Indian Territory, what is now the present-day state of Oklahoma. Johnson was a well-known and respected entrepreneur, noted for his successful ranching operation that spanned a large area of central Oklahoma, including parts of what would eventually become Oklahoma City.

Montford Johnson's father, Charles "Boggy" Johnson, was an English Shakespearean actor. Charles came to the United States with his brother when he was 19 years old and traveled throughout the South with a theater company. Charles met and married Chickasaw citizen Rebekah Courtney, Montford's mother. She was half Chickasaw and half Scottish. Rebekah and Charles migrated with the Chickasaw to Indian Territory during the tribe's forced removal from their Homeland in the late 1830s.

Montford was born in November 1843, about two years after his older sister, Adelaide. A few months after he was born, his mother became ill with pneumonia and died. Charles, distraught by his wife's passing, decided to take the children and return east. As it was customary for Chickasaw families to take in motherless children and raise them as their own, Charles' in-laws insisted the youngsters stay in Indian Territory. They were left in the care of their maternal grandmother Sallie Tarntubby and grew up learning Chickasaw traditions and farming. Montford and Adelaide both attended school. Adelaide was a student at Rock Academy, a boarding school for girls. Montford was sent to the Chickasaw Manual Labor Academy. There, he learned advanced farming techniques necessary to yield successful crops. He and Adelaide remained under the care of their grandmother until her death in 1858.

After a short courtship, Adelaide married Michael Campbell in fall 1859. Montford married Michael's sister Mary Elizabeth a few years later. By 1862, the "War Between the States" had entered Indian Territory. Chickasaw leaders declared the tribe independent of the United States and signed a treaty committing men and supplies to the South. Both young men signed up to serve the Confederate cause. By 1863, Montford and Michael had become fathers. Unfortunately, the Civil War was going badly for the South as Union armies advanced further and further into Indian Territory. When Michael died in a drowning accident in the summer of 1864, Montford did his best to provide for not only his own family, but Michael and Adelaide's as well.

With the defeat of the Confederacy in 1865, the Chickasaw Nation's infrastructure had been utterly decimated. The few Confederate dollars that Montford's family had been able to save were now worthless and crops were suffering from the effects of the worst drought to hit North America in 300 years. Facing these obstacles, Montford set about the business of building a cattle ranch. He secured agreements with neighboring farms to round up cattle that had been driven into the mountains during the war. Montford received a finder's fee for each branded cow he returned to its rightful owner. Any unbranded cattle would belong to him outright. While rounding up cattle, Montford used salt licks to

entice the animals to enter uniquely designed pen-traps. Once the cattle entered, the pen-trap would not allow them to escape. This method greatly increased the number of cattle Montford was able to corral with relatively little effort.

Around this time, Montford hosted his friend Jesse Chisholm on a buffalo hunt on the western prairie lands of Chickasaw territory, south of present-day Norman, Oklahoma. The area was largely undeveloped, and Montford thought it would be a perfect place to graze cattle. With Jesse's help, it was suggested Montford negotiate agreements with the tribes living there. Montford was able to successfully parley a deal that allowed him to use the land as long as he did not hire white men as ranch hands. Montford established his first ranch in the spring of 1868, taking a team of men to Walnut Creek, the same location of the buffalo hunt. Montford placed ranch hand Jack Brown in charge of the Walnut Creek Ranch. As payment for his services, Jack received every fourth calf born on the ranch. By fall 1869, Montford moved his family to a new homestead at the site of Camp Arbuckle. He farmed a 50-acre plot and used the practice of burning fields to rid the land of old growth, as well as prevent diseases, detract ticks and other harmful pests. Montford used the controlled burn method at all his ranches throughout the rest of his career as a rancher.

Montford's Camp Arbuckle homestead was in the vicinity of a settlement named for him - Johnsonville. By 1878, the settlement had become a bustling town with new people arriving daily. Montford, who had always loved the great open spaces of Indian Territory, started to feel crowded. So, when the opportunity presented itself, he worked out a trade with his friend Caddo Bill Williams, exchanging a number of livestock for Caddo Bills' ranch east of Snake Creek, near Old Silver City (just north of present-day Tuttle, Oklahoma). It was also at this time Adelaide married successful horseman and rancher Jim Bond. Adelaide and her new husband moved to Silver City as well. They built their home a couple of miles west of the Chisholm Trail on the southern bank of the South Canadian River. Their homestead location was a suitable place for crossing the river, and cattle drivers often stopped there for a good meal and to spend the night. In later life, Adelaide was widely respected for her hospitality, philanthropy and dedication to various educational programs for children in the Silver City/Tuttle area.

During the 1870s and 1880s, the Chisholm Trail was the main route to drive cattle over land from ranches in Texas to Kansas railheads. Unfortunately, the longhorn herds traveling along the trail brought ticks that carried a deadly disease known as "cattle fever." While the longhorns were immune, Montford's cattle were not. Montford's ranch locations brought his cattle close to the Texas drives, and he had difficulty keeping his herds separate and healthy. It wasn't until railroad lines replaced cattle trails in transporting cattle across Indian Territory that ranchers began to see a reduction in the number of herds infected with the disease.



In 1880, the future looked bright for Montford and his wife Mary Elizabeth. During spring, they branded approximately 9,000 calves. Their cattle grazed on land between Pottawatomie country to the east, the North Canadian River to the north, the Wichita Reservation to the west and the Washita River to the south. That summer Mary Elizabeth fell ill. A doctor at Fort Reno, 25 miles away, was summoned. He determined she was suffering from an illness known as ergotism. She died on Aug. 27, and was buried in the family plot at the Silver City cemetery.

Toward the end of the decade, conflict arose when settlers known as “Boomers” made attempts to enter the Unassigned Lands prior to the signing of the Indian Appropriations Act of 1889. The Act stated that 1.8 million acres of the Unassigned Lands were to be opened to settlement for claimants, in what became known as the Land Rush of 1889. Some of Montford’s holdings were in this region. In preparation for the land rush, the Army ordered all cattlemen to remove their livestock from Oklahoma Territory. Montford’s son, Edward Bryant, known as “E.B.,” gathered men and began herding their cattle toward the Chickasaw Nation. They were able to successfully gather and complete the cattle drive to the Chickasaw Nation just hours before the land rush began April 22, 1889.

Many changes occurred following the land rush. Vast sections of prairie were fenced off with barbed wire. The Johnson family were the first ranchers in western Indian Territory to use the fencing to define areas of land they controlled. The dramatic increase in population caused tremendous growth for towns - especially those where railroad depots were located. Montford, along with friends and family, became founders of several banks in the towns of Chickasha and Minco. However, Montford remained primarily interested in ranching and continued to seek new lands to graze his livestock. In November 1893, federal officials created the Dawes Commission with the purpose of changing tribal lands held in common into single holdings that would be placed in the ownership of individual Chickasaws. Montford considered the commission to be a treachery. Most distressing were the commission’s policies that forbade Chickasaws from purchasing more land than was allotted, though white settlers were not restricted from purchasing as much land as they pleased. Despite much protest from the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations, the commission persisted.

Throughout his life, Montford suffered from poor health, the worst of which included malaria. He made several trips to Eureka Springs, Arkansas, to visit health spas. He was also prescribed various medicines in an effort to ease some of his ailments. In the winter of 1895-96, Montford fell sick with numerous illnesses at once. After being bedridden for several months, he died Monday, Feb. 17, 1896. The following day, businesses closed their doors out of respect for the Chickasaw rancher. He was 52 years old. Montford was buried in the Silver City cemetery next to his first wife Mary Elizabeth. E.B. took control of his father’s affairs and looked after his many siblings, most of whom were still children. Montford’s second wife Addie died in 1905. She was buried next to him.



## MATERIALS/RESOURCES:

1. "Montford Johnson: An Original Brand" blu-ray or DVD
2. Placards: cattle ranching, Montford Johnson, Jesse Chisholm, map of the Chickasaw Nation/Indian Territory, cattle drives, map of cattle trails that ran through Oklahoma  
Blank Map, The United States (1 per student)
3. Viewing Guide, "Montford Johnson: An Original Brand"
4. T-Chart, Cattle Ranching
5. *The Cowboy Life*
6. Cattle Drive roles
7. Computers with access to the Internet

## ACADEMIC VOCABULARY:

unassigned lands	open range	spurs/rowel
steer	homestead	cattle rustling
bull	branding	barbed wire
Chisholm Trail	Buffalo cowboy	drift fence
cow	cowboy	Indian Peace
calf	chuck wagon	Commission Act
Indian Territory	allotment	Treaty of Medicine
Fort Marion	wrangler	Lodge
Dawes Act	trail boss	maverick
cattle drive	cattle puncher	



# LESSON PLAN

## ENGAGE:

To activate prior knowledge, the teacher should immerse students in cowboy culture using music and historical images.

### Activity 1: “Back in the Saddle Again”

While listening to old cowboys songs, teachers should have students conduct a gallery walk of old images depicting early ranching, maps of Chickasaw territory and cattle trails, cowboys and cattle drives.

- Offer students a chuck wagon tasting (small samples of biscuits, cornbread and pinto beans)
- Softly play cowboy songs while students enter classroom
- Hang laminated placards of photographs of early ranching, Montford Johnson, Jesse Chisholm, photographs of cattle drives/cowboys, maps of cattle trails and Chickasaw Nation/Indian Territory around classroom or hallway

## EXPLORE:

This activity will allow students to describe a point of view from the perspective of various trail jobs involved on a cattle drive.

### Activity 2: “Hit the Trail”

*Teacher should separate students into groups of four. The teachers may assign or allow students to select the roles of trail boss, cook, wrangler and cowboy. The teacher will provide each student with a brief description of his/her role and responsibilities.*

Assign each group a different cattle trail: Chisholm, Western Shawnee, Eastern Shawnee and Western Trail.

- The teacher should give each group a blank map of the United States.
- Student groups should quickly research their assigned trail.
- Groups should map the starting location, towns along the trail and endpoint location.



- Questions for research consideration:
  - o *How long would it have taken to get from the starting point to the endpoint? How far could a herd travel in a day?*
  - o *What was the goal of driving the cattle northward? Where did the cattle end up?*
  - o *What conditions would the people driving cattle have endured while on the trail?*
  - o *How did cowboys keep the herd together and moving? How did they protect the herd from predators and thieves? How did they protect them overnight?*
  - o *How much would each member of the cattle drive have been paid?*
  - o *How do ranchers move their cattle to market today?*
- Have students hang up their completed maps around the classroom or hallway.
- Host a Gallery Walk: Have student groups walk the maps, comparing the different trails and their findings. The teacher may develop a matrix for students to record information about the four main cattle trails found in Oklahoma.

## **EXPLAIN:**

By viewing the documentary, *Montford Johnson: An Original Brand*, students will deepen their understanding of events in Montford Johnson’s life and his importance in Oklahoma’s cattle industry.

### **Activity 3: “Montford Johnson: An Original Brand,” documentary**

*Students should use the provided Viewing Guide while watching the documentary, “Montford Johnson: An Original Brand.” At the conclusion of the viewing, students should be given the opportunity to react to the film either orally or in writing. The Viewing Guide may be found at the end of the lesson plan.*

## Activity 4: “Comparing Ranching: Past to Present”

*Have students complete a T-Chart comparing “Cattle Ranches on the Frontier” with “Modern-Day Cattle Ranches.” Students may use classroom resources, a textbook or the Internet to research these practices.*

- What were the significant changes?
- What caused the changes to occur in cattle ranching?
- How did technology affect cattle ranching and the lifestyle of ranchers?
- What are your predictions for future changes in the industry of cattle ranching?

*\*Note: Answers might include barbed wire, expansion of railroads, invention of refrigerated containers for transport, beef cattle markets and fear of spreading cattle diseases.*

## Activity 5: “Montford Johnson: the Man and Legend”

*The teacher should explain to students that they are going to complete a biographical sketch of Montford Johnson in the form of a Bio-Cube,*

<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/cube>

*The teacher should brainstorm key components with students on chart paper, interactive whiteboard or chalkboard. Components should:*

- include use of facts from reliable sources to briefly summarize Johnson’s significance, background and personality.
- relate Johnson’s story to other events and people from the same time period.
- tell his story with the targeted audience in mind.

*Students will be introduced to the Bio-Cube and the steps for completing it. The teacher may want to complete a Bio-Cube as an example of the type of work expected. Students should be prepared to justify why they chose to include the information used on their Bio-Cubes.*

The finished Bio-Cube handout should be cut out and folded into cube shape.

*Share with classmates and examine two to three other students’ Bio-Cubes.*

- What information did they choose to include that is different from your content?
- Why did they choose that content?
- Be prepared to share the most significant detail you learned about Montford Johnson that you had not previously considered.



## EXTEND:

In this activity, students will experience cowboy culture and write a cowboy poem.

### Activity 6: “Around the Campfire”

*Read the poem, *The Cowboy Life*, to students. Provide students a copy of the poem as a handout, or have students view the following YouTube link containing more contemporary cowboy poetry*

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zU2bdk2llQw>**

*or alternatives found at <https://www.americancowboy.com/tag/poetry>*

Discuss with students the following characteristics of cowboy poetry:

- depicts life on the ranch, western lifestyle, trail life, humorous anecdotes, memories of times and people long gone and sarcasm regarding modern things
- soothes jittery cows and reduces the likelihood of stampedes
- contains rhymed, metered verse
- written for oral recitation
- provides entertainment on the trail or around the bunkhouse

*Teacher will direct students to write their own short cowboy poems. Students may work individually or in small groups. Poems may feature Montford Johnson, events in his life, cattle ranching or trail life in general.*

Students will be given time to produce a quality product, create audio or video recordings (if preferred) and/or gather any props that are needed for a live reading at the Cowboy Poet Gathering. Some students may prefer setting their poem to music and performing it with guitars and other instruments.

*The teacher should then hold a classroom Cowboy Poet Gathering and listen to each student’s or group’s poem. If there are time limitations, the teacher could choose to have one poem read at the start or end of class each day. The teacher should do his/her best to create an authentic Cowboy Poet Gathering; it could be held in the auditorium, outside on hay bales or some other suitable location.*

## EVALUATE:

Student products and performances may be used as both summative and formative assessments. A more traditional summative assessment might also be developed to close the lesson and demonstrate student understanding.

# ALIGNMENT TO OKLAHOMA ACADEMIC STANDARDS FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES

## 9TH-12TH GRADE CONTENT STANDARDS

OKH.1.1 Integrate visual information to identify and describe the significant physical and human features including major trails, railway lines, waterways, cities, ecological regions, natural resources, highways and landforms.

OKH.2.4 Describe the consequences of Indian Removal on intertribal relationships with western nations, such as the Osage, Comanche, Kiowa, Cheyenne and Arapaho.

OKH.3.2 Assess the impact of the cattle and coal mining industries on the location of railroad lines, transportation routes and the development of communities.

OKH.3.3 Analyze the influence of the idea of Manifest Destiny on the Boomer Movement.

OKH.3.4 Compare multiple points of view to evaluate the impact of the Dawes Act (General Allotment Act) which resulted in the loss of tribal communal lands through a transfer to individual property and the redistribution of lands, including the Unassigned Lands and the Cherokee Outlet, by various means.

OKH.3.5 Explain how American Indian nations lost control over tribal identity and citizenship through congressional action, including the Indian Reorganization Act.

## SOCIAL STUDIES PRACTICES

2.A.9-12.1 Develop, investigate and evaluate plausible answers to essential questions that reflect enduring understandings across time and all disciplines.

2.B.9-12.1 Use interdisciplinary lenses to gather and evaluate information regarding complex local, regional and global problems; assess individual and collective actions taken to address such problems.

3.A.9-12.1 Gather, organize and analyze various kinds of primary and secondary source evidence on related topics, evaluating the credibility of sources.



3.A.9-12.3 Develop questions about multiple historical and/or contemporary sources to pursue further inquiry and investigate additional sources.

3.A.9-12.5 Evaluate how multiple, complex events are shaped by unique circumstances of time and place, as well as broader historical contexts.

3.A.9-12.6 Assess the significance and impact of individuals and groups throughout local, national, tribal and world history, tracing the continuity of past events to the present.

3.A.9-12.7 Analyze complex and interacting factors that influence multiple perspectives during different historical eras or contemporary events.

3.B.9-12.4 Evaluate the extent to which political and economic decisions have had significant historical and global impact on human and physical environments of various places and regions.

3.B.9-12.5 Analyze the connections between historical events and the geographic contexts in which they have occurred, including the causes and processes of environmental changes over time.

4.A.9-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, evaluating features such as author, date and origin of information.

4.A.9-12.2 Analyze information from visual, oral, digital and interactive texts (e.g. maps, charts, images, political cartoons, videos) in order to draw conclusions and defend arguments.

4.A.9-12.3 Appropriately apply and demonstrate understanding of academic vocabulary in a social studies context.

5.A.9-12.1 Compose narrative writing, when appropriate to a given purpose or task, citing evidence from informational texts.

5.B.9-12.3 Construct visual and/or multimedia presentations, using a variety of media forms to enhance understanding of findings and reasoning, for diverse audiences.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is Montford Johnson considered a key figure in the development of ranching, Indian Territory, and the State of Oklahoma?
2. How did the opening of the unassigned lands impact the ranching industry in Oklahoma?
3. What role did women, American Indians and African Americans play in the growth and success of the cattle ranching industry in Oklahoma?



## VIEWING GUIDE

### **1. How did the Montford Johnson family and other Chickasaws families settle into their new Indian Territory communities in ways that were similar to their lives in their Homeland?**

*POSSIBLE ANSWERS:* In the ancestral Homeland, the Chickasaw had been agriculturalists and they continued to be so in Indian Territory. They also continued to hunt animals for food.

### **2. What role did women play in keeping Chickasaw families and communities together during removal? How was this similar to their roles in tribal government and hierarchies?**

*POSSIBLE ANSWERS:* Chickasaw were matrilineal; women had important decision-making power within the tribe. Families depended on women to run the ranch while the men were gone on long cattle drives.

### **3. In what ways did citizens of Indian Territory feel the effects of the Civil War?**

*POSSIBLE ANSWERS:* During the Civil War, schools were shut down, infrastructure was destroyed, wandering soldiers collected cattle and other foodstuff to eat and the tribe officially supported the Confederacy. The Union abandoned Indian Territory, loyalties were divided by family and friends and people turned their herds loose to fend for themselves.

### **4. How did the introduction of railroads, the historic Treaty of Medicine Lodge and the Indian Peace Commission Act impact both Chickasaw and Plains tribes?**

*POSSIBLE ANSWERS:* These were all attempts to assimilate the tribes into white society. Unassigned lands were taken from their holdings, other American Indian tribes were moved onto unassigned lands and railroad companies were allowed to build lines through Native American lands.

### **5. How did Montford Johnson's influence as a landowner and rancher impact the cattle industry, the Chickasaw Nation and the State of Oklahoma?**

*POSSIBLE ANSWERS:* Johnson gathered up the cattle roaming the Arbuckle Mountains during the Civil War and was able to build a large cattle empire. Johnson expanded his land base by reaching agreements with other tribes to lease their land for grazing. Johnson also was the first to utilize sharecroppers in Oklahoma, giving each family a start-up herd and allowing them to keep 1-in-4 head of cattle for whatever purpose they chose. Johnson also advocated for driving cattle through Oklahoma to profit from the demand for beef in the northeast United States.

### **6. What did you find most interesting about the life of Montford Johnson as depicted in the documentary?**

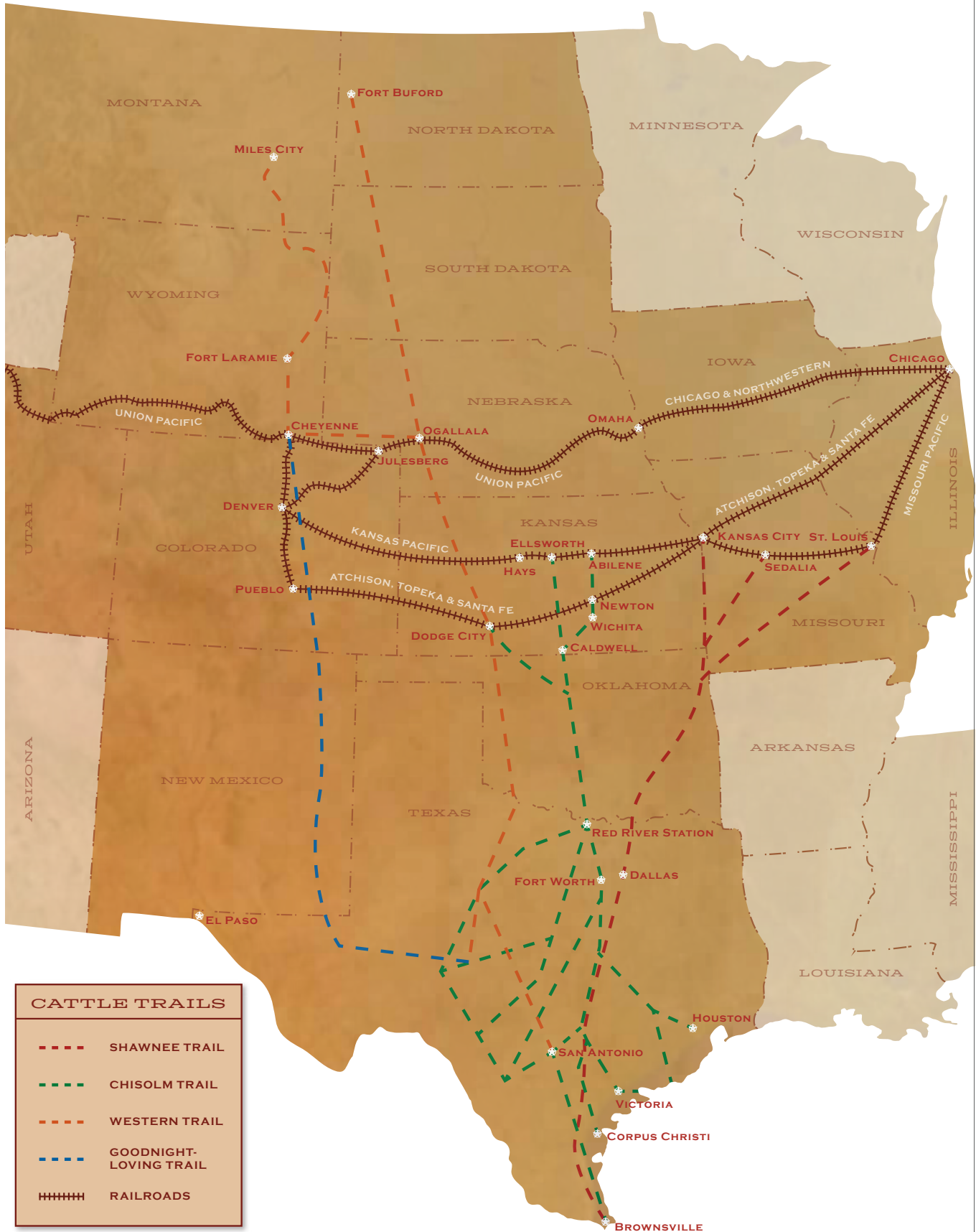
*POSSIBLE ANSWERS:* Answers will vary.

**A C T I V I T Y 1**  
**BACK IN THE SADDLE AGAIN**

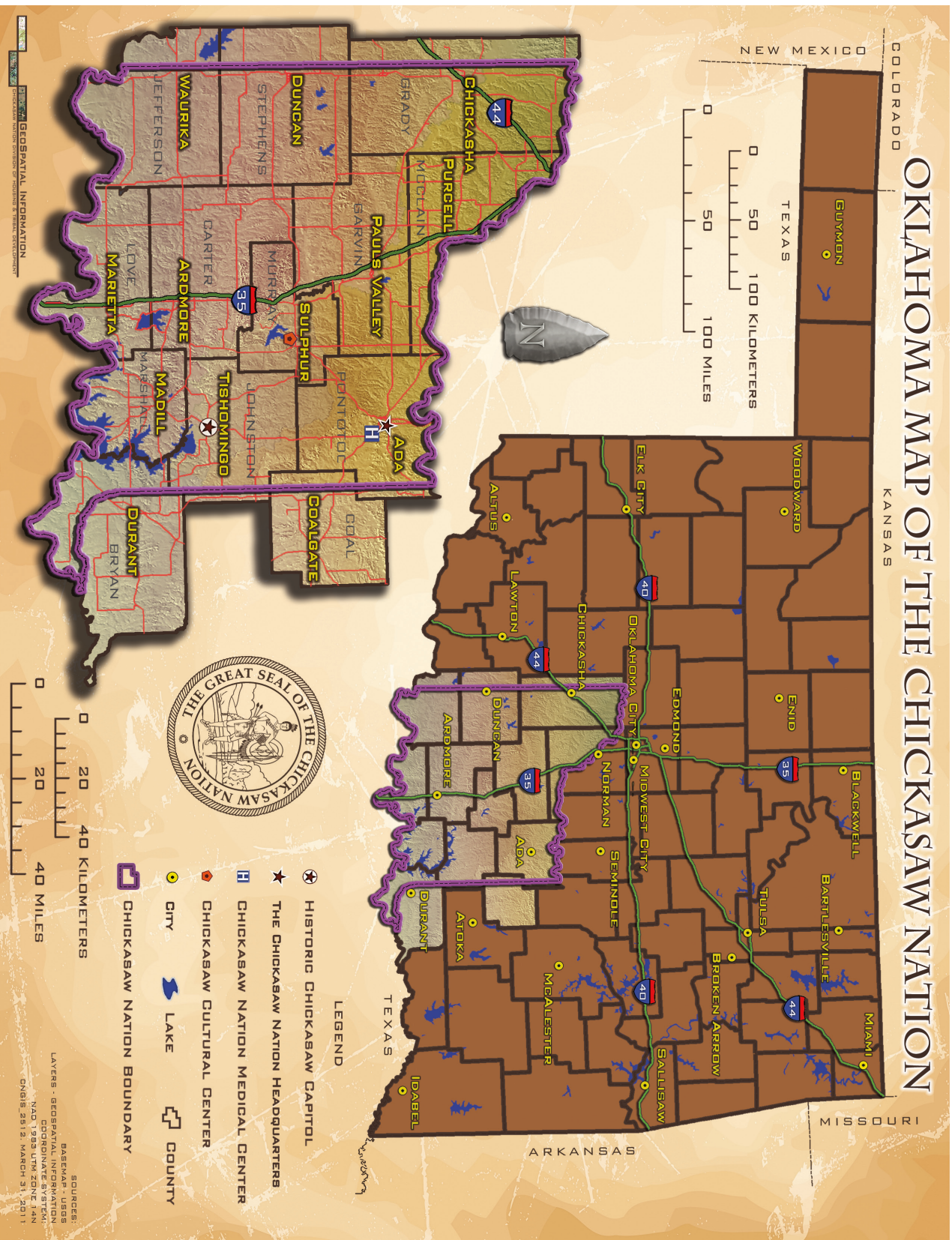
For this activity, use samples of documents (located in the resource tub).

# MONTFORD JOHNSON

## ACTIVITY 1 BACK IN THE SADDLE AGAIN

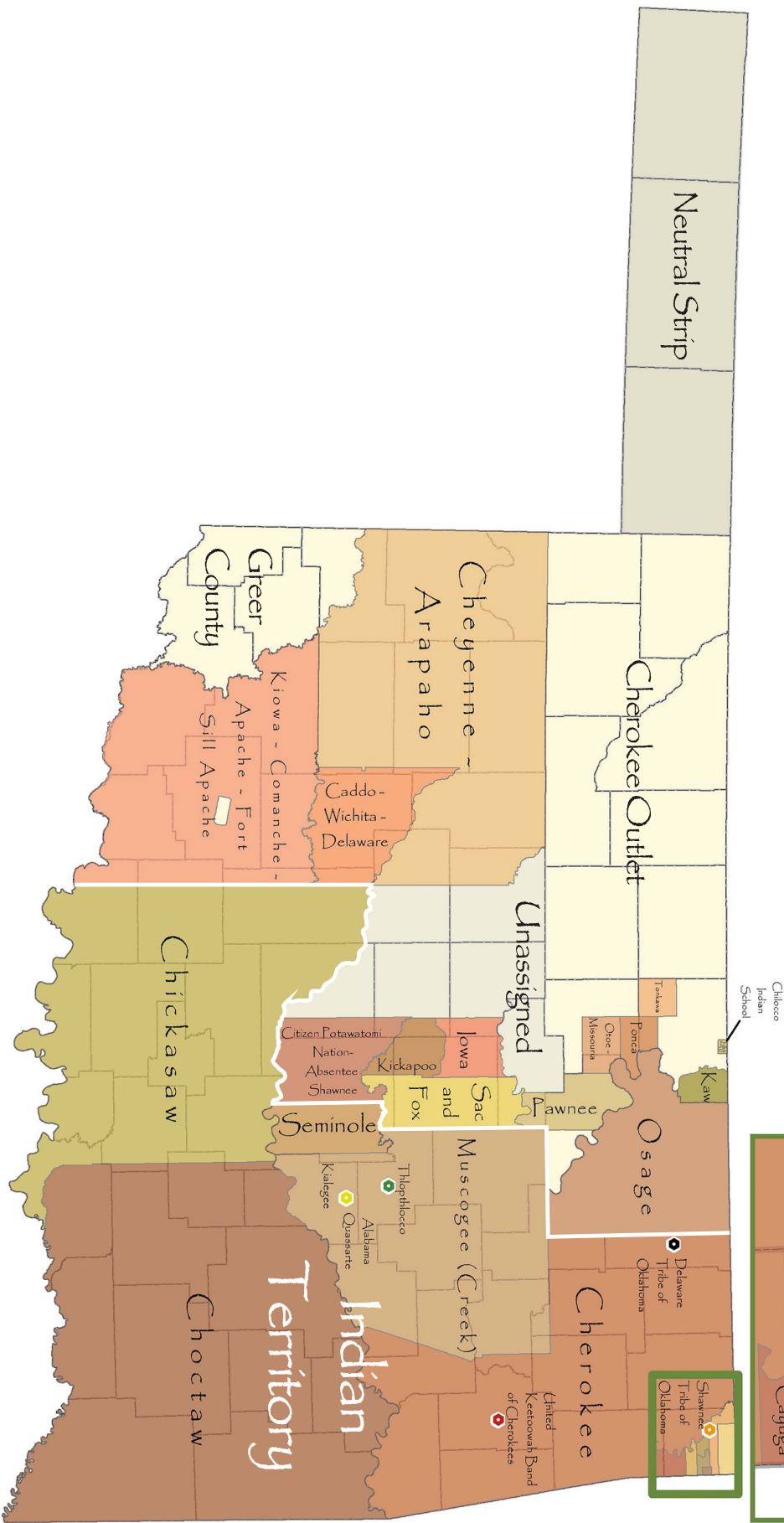


# OKLAHOMA MAP OF THE CHICKASAW NATION





# Oklahoma and Indian Territories



## **HIT THE TRAIL ROLE DESCRIPTIONS**

### **Trail Boss**

Must lead crew of 12 men in driving 1,500 cattle to Kansas. Responsible for making decisions for the best welfare of the cattle and cowboys, handling the money and paying the crew at the sale of the cattle. Your job is to make sure your group stays on task and everyone in the group has a voice in creating the trail map. You should also assist with research and contribute to the final product.

### **Cook**

Must be able to drive the mule-drawn chuck wagon, provide three hot meals per day for trail workers and assist in other duties as assigned.

Your job is to get all the materials needed to complete the map, record critical points from the small group's discussion, along with findings or answers, and to research and contribute to the final product.

### **Cowboy**

Must work together with other cowboys in driving a herd of 1,500 cattle to Kansas. Your job is to present the group's map to the rest of the class and research and contribute to the final product.

### **Wrangler**

Responsible for the horses on a cattle drive to Kansas. Your job is to observe team dynamics and guide the consensus-building process (help group members come to a common conclusion).



**A C T I V I T Y 4**  
**COMPARING RANCHING:**  
**PAST TO PRESENT**

## **CATTLE RANCHING T-CHART**

Cattle Ranches on the Frontier	Modern-Day Cattle Ranches

1. What were the significant changes?
2. What caused the changes to occur in cattle ranching?
3. How did technology affect cattle ranching and the lifestyle of ranchers?
4. What are your predictions for future changes in the industry of cattle ranching?



**The Cowboy Life (1921)**

The bawl of a steer  
To a cowboy's ear  
Is music of sweetest strain;  
And the yelping notes  
Of the gray coyotes  
To him are a glad refrain.  
And his jolly songs  
Speed him along  
As he thinks of the little gal  
With golden hair  
Who is waiting there  
At the bars of the home corral.  
For a kingly crown  
In the noisy town  
His saddle he would n't change;  
No life so free  
As the life we see  
'Way out on the Yaso range.  
His eyes are bright  
And his heart as light  
As the smoke of his cigarette;  
There's never a care  
For his soul to bear,  
No trouble to make him fret.  
The rapid beat  
Of his bronco's feet  
On the sod as he speeds along,  
Keeps living time  
To the ringing rhyme  
Of his rollicking cowboy's song.  
Hike it, cowboys,  
For the range away  
On the back of a bronc of steel,  
With a careless flirt  
Of the raw-hide quirt  
And the dig of a roweled heel.  
The winds may blow  
And the thunder growl  
Or the breeze may safely moan;  
A cowboy's life  
Is a royal life,  
His saddle his kingly throne.  
Saddle up, boys,  
For the work is play  
When love's in the cowboy's eyes,  
When his heart is light  
As the clouds of white  
That swim in the summer skies.

traditional, from *Songs of the Cowboys*, 1921