



ON THE WICHITAS

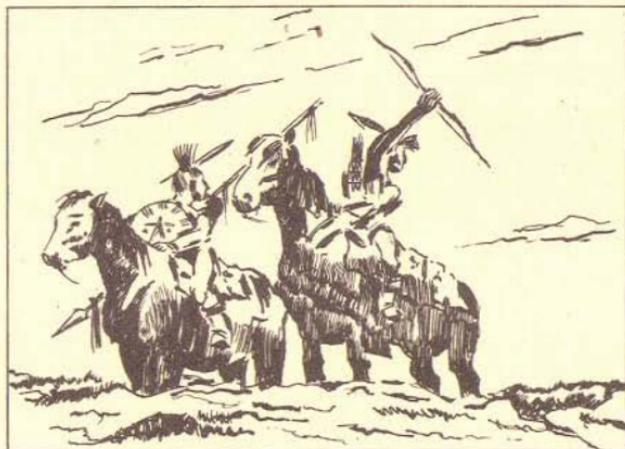


Conservation Pioneer Has Colorful History

As you enjoy the pleasures of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge, do not miss the opportunity to imagine some of the colorful history of the area. Kiowas and Comanches clashed on these plains for many years.

Spanish and French explorers left legends as they passed through. Outlaws flourished in the mountains, a safe rocky hideout. Prospectors feverishly launched a Wichita gold rush. And conservationists, realizing the

value of our wildlife, struggled to make the area a home for buffalo, elk, white-tail deer, and longhorn cattle. The area is rich in historical milestones.



1867

Treaty of Medicine Lodge Signed

The 1867 Treaty of Medicine Lodge officially gave the Wichita Mountains and much of the surrounding territory to the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache tribes. However, in 1892, these Indians "agreed" to

cede the lands and accept an allotment pattern of land distribution to be enforced by the U.S. Government. Then potential settlers began clamoring for the land to be opened to settlement.

1881 SILVER!

In 1881, the cry of "silver" rang through the Wichita Mountains, and prospectors swarmed to the area. In 1892, another discovery of silver produced yet another boom. The turn of the century began the excitement of the Oklahoma gold rush. Miners came from all parts of the United States to stake their claims. Some men found small pockets of gold; others were disappointed. To keep money flowing in, local mining towns would "salt" the mines. When miners started to leave the area, local townspeople would toss a few gold nuggets about. Gold fever would run high again. As the oil industry began to expand in the first decade of this century, however, speculators turned from minerals to oil.

1901 Wichita Mountains Reserved

Realizing that with the population growth of this area, all of Oklahoma's wildlands would disappear — just as much of the wildlife already had — the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce created a special committee to explore the possibility of

preserving a part of the reservation as a park. Because of this work, on July 4, 1901, President McKinley declared 57,120 acres of the Wichitas a forest preserve at the same time the rest of the land was open for settlement.

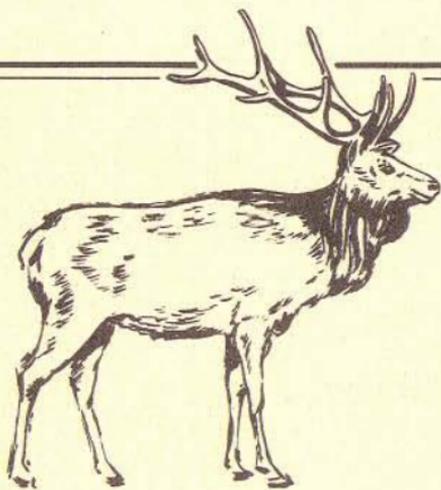


1905 Buffalo Arrive



Between 1830 and 1880, buffalo hunters and settlers reduced the population of buffalo from 60 million to 1 thousand. By 1900, only a few small herds were scattered throughout the United

States. On October 18, 1907, 15 buffalo arrived here from New York. The animals prospered, and the herd increased. Today, the herd is maintained at approximately 625 head.



follower in the footsteps of Frank Rush — Forest Ranger Earl Drummond — was a key figure in the fight to save the Texas longhorn from extinction and on August 1927 he saw his dream fulfilled. Thirty longhorns arrived at the preserve, a herd that has now grown to 300 animals.

1907 Wildlife Preserved

a new species of elk that reached a population of 300 by 1925 and now numbers about 500. The last native turkey was gone by 1910, but Mrs. Rush nursed wild



Frank Rush was gamekeeper in the Wichitas from 1907 to 1923, and he deserves most of the credit for the early development of the game preserve. Under his management, the white-tailed deer and other native wildlife began to flourish once again. The last native elk had been killed in 1881, but Rush supervised the introduction of



turkeys from Texas and other parts of Oklahoma and helped increase the flock to 40 by 1914. In 1925, the flocks were large enough to permit capture for stocking on other game preserves. A

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1935

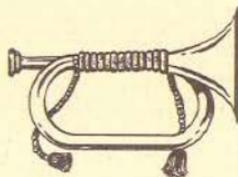
Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Named

In 1935, administrative changes gave this area its present name — Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. In the mid-1930's, the Civilian

the Wichita National Forest and Game Preserve. The CCC was begun in an effort to provide work for unemployed young men during the depths of the Great Depression and at the same time accomplish much-needed conservation work on publicly owned land. The CCC built dams on streams to provide year-round water for big game animals, constructed recreation facilities to increase public enjoyment,

and increased fencing to improve management of big game herds.

Because of early efforts, herds of once endangered animals have increased, and a bit of Oklahoma's heritage has been preserved. The foresight of many people has allowed the Wichita Mountains to become a natural home for wildlife and a place for us to better understand and appreciate our natural heritage.



Conservation Corps (CCC) established three camps in

TODAY



**WICHITA MOUNTAINS — A LEADER
IN THE CONSERVATION MOVEMENT**