

Tvshka Homma: Capitol of the Choctaw Nation



Do you recognize this building? You might have seen it at the Choctaw Nation Labor Day Festival, at Christmas in the Park, or while attending a summer youth camp. This is the Choctaw Capitol Building, also known as the Old Council House. It is located at the center of the Tvshka Homma capitol grounds and has stood there since the 1880's. Tvshka Homma wasn't our first capitol location; in fact, there have been several other locations in the past. This month's edition of Iti Fabvssa will explore the history of our Choctaw capitols.

In 1834, just after the Trail of Tears, Choctaw leaders met together in Oklahoma to create a new constitution. This constitution not only reestablished our government in Indian Territory and set forth laws for our tribe, but also created a capitol for the Nation. They named the capitol Nvnih Waiya, after the sacred mound the Choctaw people had to leave behind in Mississippi. The capitol was located just 2 miles south of current day Tvshka Homma and built both a council house in 1838 and a house of representatives in 1843. Despite success at this location, our capitol was moved less than two decades later.

Fort Towson was one destination for Choctaws along the Trail of Tears. Upon their arrival many Choctaws stayed in the Fort Towson area and as a result, a thriving population grew in the town of Doaksville. Trade along the military road to Fort Smith as well as trade from the Red River

brought further growth to Doaksville. By 1850, Doaksville was the largest In Indian Territory. The 1850 Choctaw constitution moved the capitol to Doaksville, now the political and economic hub of the Choctaw Nation. In 1857, the Skullyville constitution changed the location of the capitol to Boggy Depot, over 60 miles to the east. This was highly controversial, however, and a new constitution was quickly written in 1860, moving the capitol back to Doaksville.

In 1854, the U.S. Army abandoned Fort Towson. Doaksville began to steadily decline, possibly due to the lack of goods now traveling on the military road and lack of protection during the American Civil War. After years of uncertainty and decline, in 1863 the Choctaw Nation amended the 1860 Constitution and moved the capitol to Chahta Tamaha, near current day Bok Chito, Oklahoma. At Chahta Tamaha was the Armstrong Academy for Boys. Because of the war, academy was closed and the building was used as the Nation's Council House till 1883 when the school was reopened.

With the news of a railroad coming through the Kiamichi Valley, and the installation of several new steam powered saw mills, construction began on a new council house in 1879. Four years later, in 1883, what we now know as the Choctaw Capitol Building finished construction. The area was named Tvshka Homma, meaning Red Warrior, in honor of Chief Jack McCurtain. By 1885 over 100 families and businesses had moved to the area. However, the railroad was built 2 miles south and the town resettled at 'New Tuskahoma'. Today, the Tvshka Homma capitol grounds is still used for many activities year round including cultural demonstrations, weddings, family reunions, tours, and gatherings. In the center of the grounds the capitol building still stands; representing the resilience, pride, and success of the Choctaw people.