

Jesse Chisholm

JESSE CHISHOLM AND THE CHISHOLM TRAIL

Jesse Chisholm was an Indian **trader**, **guide**, and **interpreter**. He is famous for the Chisholm Trail, which **ranchers** used to drive their cattle from Texas to eastern **markets** in Kansas. Before the beginning of the Civil War, Chisholm had built several **trading posts** in what is now western Oklahoma. He never drove cattle on the trail named for him.

Chisholm's mother was a Cherokee. In the late 1820s he moved with her to the Cherokee Nation and settled near Fort Gibson. He became a trader and took trade goods west and south into Plains Indian country. He was **fluent** in 14 **dialects**, established small trading posts, and was soon in demand as a guide and interpreter. He was trusted by all for his fairness and **neutrality**.

Chisholm left the Cherokee Nation and settled in the Creek Nation, in what is now Hughes County. At various times he had trading posts on the edge of the Great Plains, including one near the site of Lexington (in what is now Cleveland County) and one at Council Grove (in Bethany, near what is now Oklahoma City). Much of his trading was done by taking wagons and going to the villages of the Comanche and other Great Plains tribes. At various times he rescued captive children and youths from the Comanches and Kiowas. He adopted them and reared them with his own family, treating them just as he did his own children.

In 1865, Chisholm and James R. Mead loaded a train of wagons at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and established a trading post at Council Grove on the North Canadian River, near the **site** of the Overholser Lake Dam, in present Oklahoma City. Many of his Wichita friends followed. Their route became the Chisholm Trail, which connected Texas ranches with markets on the railroad in Kansas.

Chisholm died of food poisoning after eating **rancid** bear meat at Left Hand Spring, near the site of present Geary, on April 4, 1868.

Vocabulary

dialect— a regional variety of a language differing from the standard language

fluent— able to speak easily and smoothly

guide— one that leads or directs another on a course

interpreter— a person who translates orally for people speaking different languages

market— a meeting together of people to buy and sell

neutrality— the quality or state of not favoring either side in a quarrel, contest, or war

rancher— a person who owns or works on a place for the raising of livestock (as cattle, horses, or sheep) on range

rancid— having a strong disagreeable smell or taste

site— the place or scene of an occurrence or event

trader— someone who takes part in the exchange, purchase, or sale of goods

trading post— a station or store of a trader or trading company established in a thinly settled region where local products (as furs) are exchanged for manufactured goods