

**RACHEL  
ANNA  
HAINES**  
**1842-1912**



**MOTHER  
OF  
BOOMER  
MOVEMENT**

Rachel Haines was a leader of the Boomer Movement, homesteaders who tried to settle Oklahoma Territory – without permission – in the 1880s. She is often considered the “Mother of Oklahoma”.

Rachel Anna Haines was born in December 1842 in Mason County, Kentucky. The family moved frequently, living in Missouri, Iowa, and Kansas. She often used her middle name Anna. In the early 1870s, she was hired as a housekeeper at “Payne’s Ranch”, between Towanda and Wichita, Kansas.

The ranch belonged to David Payne, who was born in December 1836 in Fairmount, Indiana. He was named for his famous cousin Davy Crockett, who had recently fallen at the Alamo. Considered a large man in his day, he stood six-foot-two and weighed over 250 pounds. “Ma” Haines would soon become Payne’s constant companion. Their common-law relationship produced a son George. In 1868 the family moved to Emporia, where Anna worked as a dressmaker and accumulated enough money to buy a Council Grove farm. Then they moved to the West Coast, residing in California, Washington Territory, and finally Portland Oregon. In the late 1870s, the family returned to Kansas.

In 1879, Cherokee lawyer Elias Boudinot, while working in Washington DC, advocated for opening of Oklahoma Territory’s Unassigned Lands, a north-south strip of two million acres in the heart of Indian Territory unattached to any tribe. It was President Rutherford B. Hayes’ policy to deny white settlers into Unassigned Lands but Payne was determined to succeed in obtaining land.

Payne began the Boomer Movement in 1880. Over the next few years, Payne, Haines and their followers made six invasions into Oklahoma Territory. Each followed the same pattern. Boomers would cross the Kansas border unobserved by troops, travel southward to Deep Fork Creek or North Canadian River, and begin establishing a colony. The troops would appear, arrest them, and escort them back to Kansas. In 1881, Payne was tried in Judge Isaac Parker’s Fort Smith court, but due to his lack of funds, he was allowed to resume his activities.

While on a speaking tour in November 1884 to raise money for his group, Payne choked on his breakfast and died of a heart attack at a Wellington, Kansas hotel. Haines was at his side. At the time of Payne’s death, he and Anna were making definite plans for their belated marriage, because the territory opening seemed far in the distance. Payne was buried in Wellington, in a burial lot owned by Haines.

Haines continued with the Boomer campaign, under the leadership of William Couch and “Pawnee Bill” Lillie, until President Benjamin Harrison proclaimed the Unassigned Lands open. On April 22, 1889, the Oklahoma Land Run allowed participants to choose 160 acres of land for an agricultural homestead. Haines staked a claim near the state capital in Oklahoma City, only to have it taken from her on the grounds she had entered the area prior to the official opening. Although she fought the matter in the courts, the homestead entry was cancelled in November 1894.

Years later, Oklahoma began to recognize its debt to David Payne, desiring to build a monument to Payne and move his body there for burial. But Haines balked. During her lifetime, she never permitted the removal of Payne’s body – unless her oil-producing “farm” from the 1889 Land Run was returned to her. She returned to the Pacific Northwest, homesteading in southern Washington near the Columbia River in 1909. Haines died in poverty in May 1912 at age 70 in Portland.