

After the Civil War, the federal government authorized a trial court to open at Fort Smith. Isaac C. Parker was the first judge of the District Court for the Western District of Arkansas.

Using technical terms, Parker was an "Article III" judge. That means his position (like all other judicial positions at his level, in the Federal District Courts nationwide) was authorized by Article III of the United States Constitution.

Parker's jurisdiction extended into Indian Territory (as Oklahoma was known at the time).

When he first arrived at Fort Smith, Parker appointed a U.S. Federal Marshal who then deputized 200 additional men to serve as deputy marshals. Bass Reeves was one of the deputy marshals.

The Indian Territory had become a lawless place. Outlaws from surrounding areas fled there, to keep from being arrested and tried for their crimes. Judge Parker's deputy marshals were charged with finding, and arresting, those individuals.

Very good at their jobs, the marshals arrested many people (causing Judge Parker's court room, in Fort Smith, to become a very busy place). Some of the convicted defendants were given the death sentence. At the time, death sentences were carried-out by hanging.

A new set of gallows, for executing convicted criminal defendants, was erected outside the Fort Smith courthouse. The National Park Service, at Fort Smith, features those gallows—and some highlights about the way they were used—in this video clip.

Credits:

Video by the Fort Smith National Park Service. Public domain.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Execution-at-the-Fort-Smith-Gallows)

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