

Dr. R. O. Prideaux, writes the following interesting story of his life up to his settling in Archer County. And in an early issue will relate his experiences here:

AT HOME JANUARY 6, 1911

TO THE ARCHER COUNTY NEWS:

Gentlemen-- In compliance with ye editor's request, I furnish this contribution.

I was born in England, Somerset County, town of Martock, in the year of 1844, February 29. I came to America with my parents in 1856, and landed on American soil at New Orleans, where I saw gangs of slaves chained together for sale and being sold, which was a strange sight to my youthful English eyes.

At that time ships of all nations could be seen lying at the wharves or coming in or departing from New Orleans. I went by river packet or steamboat, and St. Louis, which was a town of about 2,500 inhabitants, and the river wharves were lined with steam boats for sale. Today it is a city of over 600,000 inhabitants, and the steam boats traffic on the Mississippi is gone. The railroads killed it. From St. Louis I went by river up the Mississippi to the mouth of the Illinois River, thence up that river to Peoria, thence on the Rock Island Railroad to Morris, Illinois, where I grew to manhood.

During my boyhood I heard lots about Kansas. A teacher that was teaching a County school I attended in the winter of 1858-9 could hardly stay to teach his term of school out for the Pikes Peak fever. Many people from that place went to Pikes Peak in the summer of 1858 to get rich mining gold. About all came back in the fall busted.

I saw Chicago first in 1858. Then it was a city of about 30,000,

and the boomers thought she was big. We had boomers then, as now, and they said that Chicago would spread all over Cook County.

The people that I lived with took the New York Tribune and Horace Greeley's advice was to "Go West, young man, and grow up with the Country." So when I became of age, I went West. Iowa, Nebraska and the Dakotas had no charm for me, because they were all too far north. I wanted a warmer climate than northern Illinois, so after visiting several states Kansas appealed to me, and the Southern part especially. I went to Ft. Scott, Kansas, thence to Osage, Missouri, where I hung out my shingle to practice medicine. After a year and one-half I went to the North end of Neosho County. At that time the Osage Indians owned Southern Kansas, West of Labutte County. In May, 1868, the Osage Indians held a treaty with Commissioners representing the United States Government, which lasted about six weeks. The camp was on Drum Creek, about eight miles northeast of the present town of Independence. There I first saw the noble red man, but after a stay around camp three days, I came away with the impression, that instead of the Indian being the noble red man, which I had always been taught to believe, he was a disgusting savage. There was a company of United States troops at the camp to protect the white man; but notwithstanding that there was a white settler killed out on the Verdigious River, about thirty miles west of the camp; killed by Indians because he settled on the Indian lands before the treaty was concluded. Two years after this treaty when the United States census was taken in 1870 there was the present town of Independence, the county seat of the county named Montgomery, with a population of 7,500 for town and county, and that country had not one solitary white man in May, 1868. This is a sample of how 11,000,000 acres was settled after that treaty was concluded. The Osage Indians went to the territory where they now

are and drove the deer with them. From 1868 to 1872 Kansas could badly discount Texas in her present boom.

But 1868-9 the Kansas Legislature enacted a law, authorizing school districts and geographical townships to vote bonds without limit. Every school district voted bonds, they could sell at par or face value. The town boomers would vote school bonds to build school houses big enough in many instances, to seat three times the number of children the town or school district had. The towns would vote township bonds to build roads, build bridges or anything else to boom the country. For instance, the Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railroad was built from Junction City, Kansas, down the west bank of the Neosho River, when it got down to Humboldt, it was going to miss the town about three miles west, then the town of Humboldt voted \$80,000.00 bonds for the road to come to the west bank of the Neosho River, about a mile west of town. The Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railroad got the money from these bonds. Then again this same town, Humboldt, voted \$40,000.00 bonds to the King Iron Bridge Company to build machine shops in Humboldt, and the shops were built and the company got the bonds. The shops possibly cost \$5,000.00 and the King Iron Bridge Company used the shops to punch holes in the bridge iron for a year or two. Humboldt is a county line town, located in Allen County, Iola being the County Seat, and not wanting to be out done by Humboldt, voted township bonds for \$40,000.00, and gave another Bridge company to build shops at Iola.

Humboldt township in 1873 paid \$6 taxes on every hundred dollars valuation, and I heard the taxes went to \$10 on the hundred dollar valuation. I lived ten miles south of Humboldt at Chamute, Neosho County, and I paid five dollars on the hundred assessed valuation. The taxes afterward went to \$10 and \$12 on the hundred assessed valuation. The

corn crop was the chief crop of that country, and when the people made corn enough to pay their taxes, they thought they were doing well. I thought Kansas was bankrupt and would never pay all the bonds, so I thought best to look for a new place, that I could grow up with the country. I have spent many half a night on skates on the ice in Northern Illinois. In Kansas I only had skates on but two or three times, did not get ice enough for much skating, yet it was too cold for me, so southward I drifted, as naturally as ducks or birds in the fall of the year. I passed the southern most construction of the Missouri, Kansas & Texas road at Boggy depot in the Indian Nation, December 1871; crossed Red River at the old rock crossing, and camped a week on Red River near the old town of Preston, which consisted of one brick store, and in the geography that I studied it was found as a horse trading point. I went to Sherman on to Pilot Point, then to Denton, Fort Worth, Cleburne and Waco, thence west to Meridian, Hico, Comanche and Brownwood. Brownwood consisted of five log cabins and was the county seat of Brown County. At every county seat I investigated about the amount of taxes paid and always found them exceedingly low. Cattle, horses, sheep and hogs running at large, and never requiring feed unless you worked them. The people killed fat beef all winter long from off the range, and barring a few people, called desporadoes, the people were as fine a set as I ever saw. I had found an Eldorado, I thought, and would make it my home. I bought 800 head of cattle and drove them back to Kansas in the fall of 1872. I stayed in Kansas during 1873 to settle up my business. I burnt a book with \$3,000.00 of professional accounts and shook the dust of Kansas off my feet in April, 1874. I had a divided one-seventh interest in the town of Chamute, and I left that to be sold for taxes and have never redeemed it for I have never tried. Altho Chamute is a

city now and one of the big gap cities, yet I do not begrudge them their prosperity, for they have earned it. During the summer of 1874, I rode up the Brazos River from Graham to Round Timbers and down the West Fork to Jacksboro, up and down the Salt Creek in Young County, and from Round Timbers down the little Wichita to near where Henrietta now stands, and I decided to locate on the West Fork of the Trinity, where I now am, and have been ever since. -- Well Mr. Editor, I may have given you too much now, so will stop.