

Chronicles of Oklahoma

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EDITORIAL

The pageant at Tahlequah on May 7, depicting the high lights of Oklahoma history was not only well done but was essentially a most fitting picture in the environment in which it was presented, and the officials of the North-eastern State Teachers' College, and Miss Eula E. Fullerton and Mr. T. L. Ballinger, who planned and staged it are entitled to much credit for their conception and the success of their undertaking.

The day was perfect and the pageant was witnessed by thousands who carried away definite historical pictures of this country gained from the scenes developed before them. Such pageants indicate the growing interest in the history of our state and do much to promote inquiry and study on the part of our youth in a field that is but slightly known.

The occasion was the homecoming of the former students who came to join in the celebration of the eighty-first anniversary of the opening of the famous Cherokee Female Seminary. No factor in the history of this commonwealth has exerted a greater influence for progress and enlightenment than this school, the Male Seminary, and their graduates, many of whom attended the pageant. A modern institution, the Sequoyah Indian Training School had a creditable share in the success of the celebration.

Not all schools in the state are surrounded by the romantic historical background to be found at Tahlequah but others should profit by the example of such historical exhibits as a certain way of arousing interest and diffusing historical information.

—G. F.

The student of Oklahoma history will be interested in knowing of the progress made in the compilation of the territorial records of this and other states. This work was inaugurated by Act of Congress of March 3, 1925, which

authorized the Chief of the Division of Publications of the State Department to have collected, edited, copied and suitably arranged for publication, the official papers of the Territory from which each State was formed, now in the national archives, as listed in Parker's "Calendar of Papers in Washington Archives relating to the Territories of the United States," together with such additional papers of like character as may be found.

Pursuant to this authority, the work was inaugurated under the direction of the Chief of the Division of Publications of the State Department with the aid of trained historical experts and a force of copyists. A large mass of material was assembled and as the work expanded the Act of Congress was amended by another Act of February 28, 1929, directing the Secretary of State to continue the work of collecting, copying, arranging and editing of the official papers relating to the Territories of the United States, and to have them issued as a Government publication.

\$125,000.00 was appropriated for this work and for the printing and binding of an edition of 1950 copies for the Department of State, of which 6 copies are to be delivered to each Senator and 2 copies to each Representative; 8 copies for each State or Territory to be distributed to historical associations, commissions, museums or libraries and to other nondepository libraries therein designated by the Governor of each State or Territory, 4 copies for the library of the Department of the Interior, and the remainder to be for the use of the Department of State and for distribution by the Superintendent of Documents to depository libraries. Provision was made that the work of copy reading and indexing should be done by the regular editorial staff of the Department of State.

While a great mass of material has been prepared for publication and plans were made to publish some of them during the present year, these plans had to yield to the economy program of the administration; but Mr. Edward C. Wynne, Acting Historical Adviser, states that an effort will be made to publish the first volume during the coming fiscal year.

The writer has had access to the copies prepared and assembled for publication and has seen many interesting

documents relating to the early history of Oklahoma when it was a part of Arkansas Territory. There is no doubt that when this work is completed and deposits made within the State they will furnish valuable additions to the sources necessary to the study of early Oklahoma History.

—G. F.

APRIL 22

We cannot overestimate the importance of the date—April 22, 1889, in recording the history of our state. It is the real birthday of Oklahoma. In a number of places this day is celebrated each year with social entertainment, reunions, public speakings, banquets and historical pageants. Oklahoma City has had an “89ers” organization for nearly forty years and every year on April 22 there is held a banquet at which those who came to Oklahoma at the opening of the first public lands to homestead settlement, within the boundary lines of what was designated on the maps as Indian Territory, and the descendants of these first settlers meet in social amenity to celebrate the opening of Oklahoma. On several occasions the whole citizenship has made a festive event of the opening day and joined in the celebration.

Not only has the Capital City given recognition to the birthday of our state but many other places celebrate this historical event. Last year, 1930, April 22nd was celebrated at Ponca City by the unveiling of the statue of the Pioneer Woman in the presence of one of the largest and most representative crowds ever assembled upon such an occasion.

The most spectacular and elaborate celebration for 1931 was at Guthrie where many of the historic scenes connected with the race for land were reproduced. They had a big parade with 40 floats including a stage coach and a covered wagon drawn by oxen. It was altogether fitting that Guthrie should celebrate this event as that town was the center of the boomer rush and one of the two land office towns where the prospective settler filed upon public land. More people rushed into Guthrie and located there than at any other place in the new lands opened for settlement on April 22, 1889 by proclamation of President Harrison.

We are also pleased to note that many of the schools of

the state have special programs for April 22nd. These programs impress the history of our state upon the minds of the rising generation and foster a pride in being citizens of Oklahoma.

The story of the race for homes into a new and unsettled country will never be forgotten by those who participated in that event. While it is true that only a small part of what now constitutes the State of Oklahoma was opened to white settlement by American citizens under the provisions of the United States homestead law on April 22, 1889, yet, it was the first land opened and the opening of the other public lands and the Indian reservations of the west half of our state naturally followed.

The Legislature should enact a law making April 22nd a public holiday to be known distinctly as "Oklahoma Day."

D. W. P.

A BELATED TELEGRAM

We are republishing below a telegram sent by a correspondent, or perhaps a staff reporter, of the Fort Worth Telegram to that paper from Purcell, Indian Territory dated April 22, 1889—the reporter was laboring no doubt under the excitement of the event described and did not stop to verify all the stories he heard but his account of the race from the South Canadian was in the main accurate. Certainly this story should be preserved coming from one who was there and had first knowledge of this historic event. His statement that 10,000 people "plunged into the muddy waters of the South Canadian" and later not less than "20,000 were struggling in the quick sand waters of the stream" may have been just a typographical error. However, it was just a guess, and as one who participated in this race from the east side I am of the opinion that the number of people who entered Oklahoma that day has been exaggerated by most writers. I did not see any part of the "2000 Federal bayonets."

Had Edna Ferber in writing her story, *Cimarron*, read this telegram to the Fort Worth paper and started the race in this fiction story from the South Canadian it would have been equally spectacular and more accurate. At least it

would not have been necessary for her characters to run through a big prairie fire on April 22 while the green grass was six inches high.

OKLAHOMA IS OPEN

Special to the Gazette.

Purcell, I. T., April 22, 1889. At high noon to-day in accordance with the proclamation of the president of the United States an awful suspense was broken. A state and five cities were born and a scene beggaring description was enacted on the borders of the new territory when the tens of thousands of cranks and suckers were authorized to pass over and possess the promised land. At 11:40 a double-header, pulling twenty-six coaches with 2500 people aboard, pulled out of Purcell amidst a deafening yell and firing of Winchesters and six-shooters. The train moved up to the bridge across the Canadian three miles above town and there waited.

THE FINAL SIGNAL

To be given by Uncle Sam, who was represented by more than 2000 Federal bayonets distributed along the borders. At high noon the shrill notes of the bugle echoed up and down the river, when, in less time than is required to tell it, 10,000 people in full view of the thousands of spectators on the hills and bluffs along the stream and from the housetops in the city plunged into the muddy waters of the Canadian. In the mad rush midst the whooping, yelling and shouting, men were thrown from their horses, wagons overturned, riderless horses running hither and thither, dogs howling after their disappearing masters, the shrieking mob on the hill sides, the waving of parasols and handkerchiefs, all produced a scene never before and possibly never again to be witnessed in the history of our country. It is not at all probable the waters of the Canadian ever received such a churning as they got to-day. At the same moment, at the lowest estimate, not less than twenty thousand people were struggling in the quicksands and waters of this stream, bordering Oklahoma territory—some on horseback, some in wagons, buggies, on buckboards and on foot.

Scores of women participated in the mad rush and not unsuccessfully either, for it is said to the credit of the fair sex the first claim was staked by a woman, a Mrs. Patsy Malooney, a woman of some frontier notoriety. A dining-room girl at the Clifton house joined the boom with grip in hand, three days' rations and four pine sticks with which to stake her claim. The excited throng had scarcely reached the opposite shore when the bloody work of settling disputed claims began and four men were killed. No particulars can be learned for no one will talk about it. Troops are being distributed over the territory as fast as possible for the preservation of order. Purcell is gutted and deserted. Many of the business houses are closed and others are left with any one who would take charge while the proprietors joined the boom. Lemonade stands, faro banks, wheels of fortune, restaurants and keno halls are deserted, and before many a proprietor returns, crape will be hung on his door knob. Neither a Winchester, a six-shooter, nor a spade can be had in this town for love nor money. They were staple articles in the make-up of every boomer's outfit.

THE FATAL DAY

Special to the Gazette.

Guthrie, Oklahoma, April 22.—A new state is born. What its extent will be cannot now be foretold, its christening also will come later, but this is the date of its birth. And never was state born amid more excitement; never was delivery looked forward to with such expectancy, or accouchment attended to by so many nurses and doctors. At high noon the engines poked their noses over the north and south borders, and soon train after train crossed into the new territory freighted with living packages of expectant enthusiasm piled in as closely as possible. It is estimated that some 20,000 people were brought in from the North by the Santa Fe road. They ran fifteen trains, and claim to carry 1500 people on each. A great many got off at each station above here, and yet when they reached here every train seemed to be chuck full. As soon as the trains began to slow up for Guthrie the boomers jumped off and ran in all directions.

THE EARLY SETTLERS OF OKLAHOMA

The present inhabitants of Oklahoma, as well as the inhabitants of the country at large, seem to have a wholly erroneous conception of the character of the early settlers of Oklahoma.

It is one of the duties of the Oklahoma Historical Society to correct this error and to collect and make available data from which the true character of the early settlers can be learned. The society is doing this by preserving a practically complete file of most of the newspapers published in Oklahoma since the early settlement, by authentic historical articles published in *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, by gathering specimens of the arts and crafts of the early days, and in various other ways.

It is true that the old newspapers "played up" crime much in the same way that is done today, but the great bulk of matter contained in the early papers consisted of the doings of an intelligent, peaceful, law-abiding people, of the building of homes, improvement of farms, the building of churches, schools, towns and cities, and of the struggles, hopes and visions of the builders of a great commonwealth. Neither Indian Territory nor Oklahoma Territory was settled by outlaws and criminals, the sensational writers and novelists to the contrary, notwithstanding. There were a few outlaws, very peaceable and inoffensive in comparison with the criminals and bandits of today in the wild and woolly East. Anyone can make a list of all the early day bad men who were bad enough to get their names in newspaper headlines, in novels, all the Daltons, Doolins, Newcombs, etc., and compare their number with the number of people who settled Oklahoma and Indian Territory, and it will be found that at no time was there more than one bandit to ten thousand law-abiding people.

The early settlers came here to make homes, to rear their families and to build a great progressive civilization. Criminals and outlaws do not build States. The writer lived in both Oklahoma Territory and Indian Territory in an early day. The people were not gun carrying, swash-buckling desperadoes. He lived in the Territory for many years before he even heard of a home being burglarized, a person held up on the street or highway. People did not lock their doors,

did not expect to be held up and robbed or to be unlawfully interfered with in any way.

Neither were the early settlers illiterate or deficient in intelligence. They did not use expressions attributed to them by some novelists and story writers, such as "whar," "thar," and other similar expressions. In all his residence in the State, the writer has never known but one man who used such expressions. The ignorant, illiterate and unambitious do not go to new countries and build great States. They stay at home. The young, intelligent and energetic people with a vision are the pioneers who accomplish this. It is they who go to new countries and build States.

Still, it is human nature for people to like to "tell it big." It is a terrible temptation for some to magnify the great dangers they went through in early life. It makes interesting reading and adds a touch of heroism to the one relating his experiences.

The part of Oklahoma formerly known as Indian Territory was settled gradually through many years, commencing with the removal of the Indians from East of the Mississippi River. For many, many years, with the exception of the customs of the various Indian Nations, the only laws governing Indian Territory were the United States laws providing for the prosecution of felonies. There were no laws regulating civil conduct, nor any provisions for the collection of debts or enforcing civil rights; yet the country was settled up and the people were prosperous and happy, living peaceably, paying their debts and performing all the duties one neighbor owes to another.

On April 22nd, 1889, tens of thousands of people in a single day went into Oklahoma Territory, and for more than a year there was no law to govern them except the rules adopted by each community separately. They laid out cities, platting them into lots, blocks and streets, after every inch of land had been taken possession of, removing people from the land wanted for streets, with fewer crimes of violence than are committed in the ordinary village of twenty-five hundred people in any one month at the present time.

In a recent issue of *The Chronicles*, quotations are made from an early day's newspaper which call attention to the fact that for five years after the organization of an Oklahoma

County, there was no occasion for calling a grand jury. While in most counties grand juries were called earlier, this is a typical illustration of the law abiding character of the early settlers.

The good points of the early settlers should be emphasized instead of trying to make heroes out of a handful of bad men, thereby libeling and besmirching the memory of the real heroes.

H. C.