

PRUSA, JOSEPH.

INTERVIEW

6087

203

PRUSA, JOSEPH.

INTERVIEW.

8087

John C. Kerr
July 28, 1937
Interviewer

Interview with Mr. Joseph Prusa
1202 Grove Street
Perry, Oklahoma.

I was born in Bohemia, March, 1864. When I first came to America I came to Omaha, Nebraska, then came on the train for the Opening of the Cherokee Strip. In coming across the Strip to Hennessey on the Rock Island Railroad the train broke down close to what is now Bison. There was only a section house there then. The train was awfully crowded and all got off to stretch and get fresh air and they scattered around. The soldiers came up and some officers and rounded us up like cattle, they thought we were all going to be Sooners.

I got on the first train north out of Hennessey, it run from four to six miles per hour. There were people hanging all over it and they would jump off and run out over the country to stake claims. There was a woman hanging on and standing on the steps of the train, it stopped and she hopped off and ran to the railroad right-of-way fence and climbed over the four-wire fence. She had on a sunbonnet and a Mother Hubbard dress; it got all tangled

PRUSA, JOSEPH.

INTERVIEW.

8087

2

up in the wire fence and she just jerked it off, threw the sunbonnet away and we saw it was a man trying to fool the people and beat them to a farm.

The train stopped again at a section house, there was a well here and a man guarding it with a Winchester rifle and selling water at 10¢ per drink. He raised the price to 25¢ and his well was just about dry when a fellow rode upon a fine spotted horse that was about run down and offered the man at the well \$1.00 for a bucket full for the horse. The man at the well refused, so he jerked out two .45 six-shooters, stood them all off and watered his horse, gave the man a silver dollar and rode away.

I went on in to Enid but there was some trouble and the train didn't stop but went about two miles north to a new town where they were selling lots pretty high. I stayed there about one week then got about twenty pounds of cooked ham and some bread and walked across the country to Perry, about forty-five miles. There were no roads, I just cut across the prairie. I thought the wolves would eat me up at night but I built big fires to sleep by.

PRUSA, JOSEPH.

INTERVIEW.

8087

3

My brother got a farm north of Perry and I settled on a school quarter adjoining it and later bought it. My brother got a yoke of oxen and we broke sod with them, sometimes they would get dry and hot and take plow and all to the creek to get water. We raised castor beans, Kaffir corn, sweet potatoes and watermelons.

There were contests filed on many farms and some few people were killed.

There were no roads to Perry, we had to ford Black Bear Creek and the banks were so steep I lost about eight bushels of wheat out of the wagon, it just slipped out over the end in going up the hill.

I paid \$14.00 for a shack to live in; sometimes we had to swim the creeks to get to town, especially if court was going on and it had rained.