

LAND, L. L.

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An Interview with Mr. L.L. Land, Oklahoma City.

By - Amelia F. Harris - Journalist.

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I came to Purcell from Kansas via the Santa Fe Railroad about April 1st, 1889, and went to look over several towns, and decided on Oklahoma City.

April 22, 1889, thousands of people boarded the Santa Fe; the cars were packed inside and on top, all over the engine, and some people were daring enough to sit on the cow catcher. The train was so loaded that it traveled very slowly and stopped at the boundary line which was the bridge over the Canadian River until the guns were fired at noon; then the train started across the bridge and the men began jumping off with their bags which would either burst or fly open, spilling clothes all along the railroad right of way, but these men would run and stick up their small boards, then go back and pick their clothes up.

People seemed to be wild and took all kinds of risks.

We arrived in Oklahoma City and I hurried south with the crowd, and was fortunate enough to get some lots between Broadway and California Streets. I bought some box lumber

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and had a store building erected - size 25 X 50 foot.

I returned to Kansas, chartered a car, filled it with a line of general merchandise and our household effect and with my wife came to our new home.

Our first home was a tent on the rear of my business lot where we lived for about three months, then as the best part of town seemed to be growing to the south of Grand Street, I bought a residence lot on Noble Street and had a three room frame house built and we moved out of our tent.

We lived on Noble Street for several years and I did so well in the general merchandise business that I decided to sell my store house and build on Broadway.

I went into partnership with R. T. Wright and we had a rock building built this time, 100 foot long and 100 foot frontage.

We divided this building and rented a space twenty-five foot front and a hundred foot deep to J. T. Sheppard for a meat market. We did well in our business and Sheppard did well in his, judging from the number of deer which he had hung across the front of the store and the other game, too. He shipped out carloads

of deer and quail. He shipped out only the hindquarters of deer.

Game was plentiful.

We ran our general merchandise store here for nine years and we had a great deal of Indian trade, especially the Kiowas, Comanches and Kickapoos. The Indians spent most generously.

As soon as they received their Government payment the bucks and squaws and dogs would come - providing the weather was warm - and camp at Walnut Grove, about one and a half miles southeast of the old Santa Fe Depot. The first thing an Indian did when he came to trade would be to get the \$10.00 and the \$20.00 bills changed into small change.

Then if an Indian bought a sack of flour he paid for that and motioned to his squaw to carry it out. The Indians bought just one thing at a time and paid and took it out to where one of the squaws was sitting and sometimes it would take all morning for the Indians to make their purchases in this manner.

Then that night the Indians would paint their faces and put on their finery and beads and jewelry and stage a big dance. Many of us town people would go down to see them and

would throw dimes and quarters into the circle where they were dancing.

The Indians were very friendly and the white folks enjoyed the Indian dances.

There was a big white man who always wore two pistols and he staked the corner lots on Grand Avenue and Boulevard and several men tried to contest his lots but not for long because this man would pull both guns at the same time and would say, "It's healthier for you to move on, Bud, I'm here to stay".

When the south part of town was platted and they came to this man's lot and it was in the street he kicked the chain off, drew both guns and said, "Make your street some wheres else, this is a lot", and this is the cause of the jog on Boulevard and Grand Streets.

Saloons and gambling houses were more numerous than any other business until they were ruled out.

My health failed and we sold our general merchandise business for a good price and our rock building and lots were sold for \$3,000.00 which was a good price we thought then; we sold to Major Allen.

Our first bank was about where the Huckins Hotel stands now.

Mr. Richardson from Texas established the Huckins Hotel.

After selling my business I engaged in the real estate business and when the town of Perry was opened I went up there and paid \$1000.00 for some business lots. Mr. Johnston from Texas offered me \$3000.00 for these lots which I accepted and he put up a deposit of \$5.00 to hold them until he could get his money from Texas.

T. M. Richardson our Oklahoma City banker went with the rush to Perry and he established a bank there too. Mr. Richardson said that he knew Johnston from Texas and that his word was good as his bond so I let Mr. Johnston have the lots on a \$5.00 deposit. He paid for the lots.

I spent seventeen years in the real estate business and acquired quite a bit of property.

I bought eight lots a half mile out on East Grand Avenue which I leased for oil in 1928. I got \$4000.00 for a lease on the eight lots after the well was brought in and I sold the oil royalty for \$10,000.

As for early day amusements, one attraction was the Assyrian who came to our town with a big red bear which would do a little performing; then the Assyrian would wrestle with the bear.

We had a mischievous man living there whom everyone called "Dr." and during one of these wrestling matches he threw a powder which was highly irritating called "High Life" on the bear and the bear almost killed the Assyrian before we could get them separated.

The merchants always threw the Assyrian 10 cents, and 25 cents after each performance, then other citizens would chip in too, but the Assyrian quit coming after "Dr" threw "High Life" on the bear.

Then we had the Medicine Show, a few tent shows, then silent moving pictures.

Before we moved to Oklahoma we lived in Kansas and the cowboys drove their cattle from ranges in the Cherokee Strip to Dodge City and this trail from Dodge City entered Oklahoma some where near the North Fork of Red River. This was a well beaten trail and these cowboys were all right

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until they got their cattle to market and sold, but after that they would start shooting up the town. They would ride their horses up on the side walks and if they saw a light at a window they would shoot it out. They shot up every little town from Dodge City to Oklahoma City. All Kansas citizens were afraid of Oklahoma cowboys.

I never heard of an officer catching an Oklahoma cowboy or doing anything to one, and I believe that the officers hid out and let the cowboys alone. The cowboys did a lot of damage but never killed anyone.