

The Lure of the West

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The far away Western Black Land prairies had a lure for, it seemed, everyone. And horseback travelers who visited them, on their return found ready listeners for their tales of the vast stretches of fertile lands - covered with waving grass.

Though the scarcity of water and the belief that it was not under the soil, and that rain was inadequate, an old superstition that has ever attached to new and undeveloped countries, colored every report of that land of promise, just as the prevailing fallacy today - that rainfall increases with settlement of a country, where it is alone attributable to development and conservation of moisture.

There were ever wagon trains coming in drawn by longhorn oxen with frames twice as large as were those of the cattle of the tick infested timbered countries - bringing dry hides, wheat and flour. And, loading back with merchandise, household goods, and yellow pine lumber for which there was an ~~ix~~ insatiable demand.

Then came the drover with slick fat steers to shame timber cattle - 200 to 300 in a herd. A packery was built at Jefferson where beef was pickled and barreled for shipment ~~forxxxx~~ by boat. And numbers were driven on to Memphis, Natches and other markets. It was a foretaste of the great drives that were to be.

In the summer of 1861, my mother with her family of seven, to give them the opportunities that the West was supposed to afford, followed a brother who had already established himself and was building a town in Parker County, an Indian frontier county - Veal Station. Veal Station, a village that under the impetus of immigration and supported by cattlemen whose families were there, and some who came for the advantages of a school - that attracted patronage - flourished for awhile. And then, as did many other frontier towns, ceased to grow as men went into the Civil War and immigration stopped and indian ~~degra~~ depredations increased - and settlers for safety's sake abandoned their homes, retracing their steps until they found safety from the savage depredations. The town shrank and lost its importance and finally its identity.

It is a strange characteristic of the human race that causes them to pass over millions of acres of fertile vacant or cheap lands to settle in a less desirable section where they are exposed to Savage attacks - where one carries his life in his hand, but there is an unaccountable fascination in such a life, a stimulant that is lacking in a peaceful locality.

After a peaceful period on the Norther or Red River end of ~~x~~ the Texas indian frontier, just before the opening of the Civil War in ~~ix~~ 1860, the Comanches and ~~KX~~ Kiowas (powerful tribes) in resentment for outrages committed against them under sanction of government agents, began raids on the white settlements. It continued through out the Civil war and was worse for several years after its end, continuing into the 1870s, closing perhaps in 1877 after campaigns led by General Miles and McKenzie in the Panhandle of Texas.