

PANHANDLE OF TEXAS.

Its Area, Its People, Its Lands, and Something of Its Past, Present and Future.

The Texas Panhandle, in view of its peculiar situation, its immense territory, its climatic condition, its healthy altitude, wide plains, convenient rivers, public lands, but barrenness of settlement and wild history with it attracting perhaps many fold more attention from the older states than any section of any other Western state or territory. And whatever description may be sent out of the good and bad of any new country should be free from all suspicion of an advertising scheme or of an immigration boom. The statements are true, and are intended, by mingling impartially the good and the bad, to convey themselves the proofs that nothing is extravagantly drawn. We certainly can disclaim any intention of working up an immigration excitement or of discouraging immigration. The cold facts are simply this: The people who cannot come to see for themselves want a reliable, published description of that portion of the Southwest designated the Panhandle of Texas. This paper has numerous readers in distant parts, and the list constantly grows, who read it for the information they may get about the peculiarities and prospects of this section. To comply with that wish, to gratify its present readers and to win more by chapters of Panhandle life that shall be truthful and at the same time tolerably elaborate, is the excuse for occupying this space with such accounts. The Panhandle proper, which is composed of the following twenty-seven counties, viz: Dallas, Sherman, Hansford, Ochiltree, Lipscomb, Hartley, Moore, Hatcher, Roberts, Hemphill, Oldham, Potter, Carson, Gray, Wheeler, Deaf Smith, Bland, Armstrong, Donley, Collingworth, Greer, Farmer, Castro, Swisher, Bricombe, Hall and Childress, has a total area of about 1,000 square miles, which means something near 3,000,000 acres. Of all these counties of the Panhandle but three are organized, Oldham, Wheeler and Donley. The others are attached to these for land and judicial purposes. In all these territories there are three towns, and one in each of the organized counties: Tascosa in Oldham county, Mobeetie in Wheeler, Clarendon in Donley. There is a newspaper in each of the three towns. The established post-offices of the Panhandle are Tascosa in Oldham county, Wheeler in Potter county, Zul in Hamford county, Springer Branch in Hemphill county, Mobeetie (besides Fort Elliott) as a government post in Wheeler county, Clarendon in Donley, Paloduro in Armstrong, and one or two other boxes of no responsibility for consequence. Other offices will be established, it is probable, during the year, where the needs of neighborhood are beginning to require them. There will be observed by those who inspect the current maps of the Panhandle certain lines or offices marked on the Canadian river above and below Tascosa, which are calculated to mislead in a measure. Such places as Trygville, Lathrop, Hays, Windom Adobe and one or two more never existed, only in the imagination of the Star Route swindlers, who put them there and made oath to them, by that means largely adding to their annual government salary for mail delivery. The configuration of the country is most romantic and picturesque. The Panhandle is mostly an elevated-plateau country, dotted by thousands of lakes which do not hold out, however, through drought, caused by the Canadian and its numerous small tributaries, through the Northern part, the Red River and its tributaries, the South, and intersected by occasional deep canyons. The plains are the more elevated portions, and are quite level. Waters not often found on these plains only in wet seasons, when the lakes overflow; but in recent years the winters have supplied it in a few places both by digging down some distance and by putting in tanks. Timber is equally scarce with the water supply, or even more so, both on the plains and throughout the Panhandle. The principal kinds found are cedar, cottonwood and mesquite bushes; the mesquite grows on the level prairies, the cedar among the brakes beside the water courses, and the cottonwood in the river and creek valleys. A good deal of the fire-wood used by the people who live adjacent to the large streams is the drift carried down during high water. The choice wood is of course the cedar. Perhaps nobody who has heard of our Panhandle at all, is ignorant that from the days of the Indians to the present, cattle-raising has been and is yet the principal, indeed the only occupation of the people. There are perhaps not less than a million head of live stock, cattle, horses and sheep, in the twenty-seven Panhandle counties, and the taxable valuation of properties runs up to the neighborhood of \$13,000,000 or \$15,000,000. A great share of the land in this section is the Texas school land; of the thirty million acres yet remaining of the great body of public domain set apart for the benefit of the school, university and asylum funds, most of it was and is located in the Panhandle and in the plains counties lying south of it. Immense tracts of these lands are leased from the state for pastures and under fence, the greater portion of it being very fair grazing lands, and much of it giving promise of developing into the farming tracts in future. These lands are upon the market for purchase by men who will settle on them—that is, all but the watered tract—and are also in the market subject to lease for grazing or other purposes, watered tracts and all. Ownership of the land can only be obtained by actual settlement and purchase, at \$2 per acre, in quantities to each individual of not more than a section—640 acres. One-fourth, one-half or three-fourths of a section merely may be taken. The object and the terms in selling this land on the market for sale is expressly to win settlement, so declared, and the requirements being on the purchaser are set forth in an oath to which he is compelled to subscribe; that he desires the land for a homestead; that he will move on the land within ninety days and reside on and improve it for three years; that he is not acquiring it for any one but himself; that he is twenty-one years of age, and that the interest will be paid yearly, and the principal within thirty years.

present (September, 1886) the gradual invasion of our plains country has set in from the south, the southeast, and a movement is just threatening along the northern frontier, which is expected by another year to bring in a hundred families, and perhaps to organize one or more counties. Such grain and produce of all kinds as may be raised and made for many years yet find a valuable market without having to seek it away from home. As a matter of fact, the man who buys his section of land may make a lease and pasture on it, or he may, but as a matter of fact they will not open it. The stockman who has paid his lease price in advance, and expended largely in inclosing, building and providing water, most naturally dislikes to see his pasture taken away from him and cut up into farms. To the settlers themselves it seems an injustice which they will seldom attempt, preferring to hunt other lands or do without, rather than risk the strife they would expect to inaugurate. There are of course lands outside of any pasture, but when continuous inclosures frequently run for twenty or thirty or even fifty miles in a single direction they force the settlers to another neighborhood and even to another county. The present laws are not calculated to settle the Panhandle. The immense tract of 3,000,000 acres which was given to the Capitol syndicate, as it is called, for constructing the Texas capitol building, is situated up and down the western counties, some of them being Oldham. This has been and is being inclosed for a permanent pasture, and stocked with a vast number of cattle. Half a dozen other prominent companies and many minor holders make the stock business in this extreme of our section a most important one. Oldham and attached counties are somewhat farther west than the other quarters, and unless the law of the lands, the nature of the soil and the presence of their river and creeks should make it profitable in some ways to other sections, then the stock interests may prevail and predominate in these parts yet, while the advancing immigration is filling up spots far out. At least one important advantage of this portion is the water courses. Flowing streams within a reasonable distance, such as courses across the western and northern portion of the Panhandle, are certainly a material advantage. Another is the fact that at this town, Tascosa, is soon to be the only bridge, the only perfectly safe crossing at all times, on any river in the Panhandle country. Such a crossing of such a stream in a sparsely settled country is an advantage to people who have to travel back and forth more or less, which cannot be over-estimated. It will be no less a benefit to the man who is seeking his home or his prospecting in the Panhandle, especially to those coming from north and west, and it is destined to make this the highway for immigration and incoming travel. There will be such railroads running across the country, perhaps intersecting here from all the corners of the empire, before settlement has fairly demerited or fully needed them, as will tend to push rapidly the agricultural interest which is once under way. As for the soil, it is of the same substance and nature almost all parts, being decidedly sandy. The health is no better anywhere than in this western region, there being absolutely no malarial or miasmatic diseases, and the water obtained by digging is of the purest and best. The population of the whole Panhandle being less than thirty thousand, every body is counted, the west part has its proper portion; a full share part of the business of the entire country is transacted at Tascosa; and the people are no way rougher and they are quite as sociable and intelligent as frontier countries usually can show. The steady growth and stability of Tascosa as a town, is shown partly in the confidence of the property holders and business men, and in the figures at which real estate is held. Towards the command high prices for the West, decided declines show no indication of lowering. Situated in a country whose principal industry is calculated to keep money in circulation, and so to insure good prices for merchandise, produce, etc., and to command good wages for such work as can be found in Tascosa, even without a railroad in the Panhandle, it will be a substantial, progressive, thriving town, in a productive, genial, healthy country. Wonderful Phenomenon in Dakota. Bismarck, Dak., Dec. 17.—A report has reached here from the Bad Lands that an immense quantity of fire was discovered in that famous region about 100 miles west, at an early hour Wednesday morning. Two towns who have been after game in the Bad Lands which cover an immense area, were startled by seeing a blaze of fire shoot up into the air over 100 feet and for over an hour the flames which came rushing through the crust of the earth were thirty feet in height. The snow was melted about the place for a distance of over a quarter of a mile and the effect on the atmosphere was quite perceptible. For years there have been reports of coal veins in the Bad Lands, but never until now have they developed any explosive symptoms. Scientists who have traveled over this region have accounted for the strange formations by the supposition that at one time the entire area was an immense coal-bed which became ignited through some local cause, and as it burned away the crust of the earth fell in. This "burning mine" or veins of coal which have been burning ever since the discovery of the country, and the smoke from many of which can be seen from the Northern Pacific railroad. It is believed the cause of the great geyser of fire which burst forth to-day in the games accumulated by the burning coal and the explosion was the natural result of the pent-up forces. When last heard from large flames of fire were being emitted at intervals of from ten to fifteen minutes, and if this continues it will be the greatest and most novel attraction of the continent. The flames burst through a very small aperture in the earth and present a most beautiful pyrotechnical display. It has been estimated that the "Fire Geyser" is hoped by those who have heard of this discovery that the phenomenon will prove permanent, as it will be a great attraction to travelers and tourists and will add in the many wonders of this famous wilderness.

N. A. T. REJOINER. What He Says about Irvinson A. Jones' Criticism of the Tariff. Irvinson A. Jones, Tex. Dec. 15, 1888. To the Editor of the Gazette. I have just had the honor to read Mr. Irvinson A. Jones' letter to THE GAZETTE criticising some remarks of mine on the tariff, which appeared in THE GAZETTE of the 25th ult. His letter had escaped my attention and I would not have known of its existence had not my friend, Judge Lowry of the Taylor County News, presented me a copy. I stated that the effect of protective tariffs had always been to reduce, after a while, the price of articles manufactured in this country out of raw materials grown by ourselves. This is an absolute fact which no man can deny, and Mr. Irvinson's statement is "laughable." No doubt he thinks so, but it is because he has taken the wild statements of politicians as gospel truth without examining for himself. By way of trying to prove that my statement is "laughable," he mentions quinine, saying it was very dear while there was a tariff on it, and that it had fallen very low since the tariff was taken off. Well, that is all true, but the Cinchona tree from which quinine is made does not grow in this country and cannot be made to grow here. The tariff on quinine was purely for "revenue on it" and in no sense a protective tariff. Does Mr. Jones know a single person in the United States who grows a Cinchona tree for commercial use? No, not one. Likewise the tariff on coffee and tea, when we had such a tariff, was purely for "revenue only" and in no sense protective, because we do not grow tea and coffee in this country, and never can. If we should put a duty of \$1000 on each of these, coffee and tea, it would not develop "protection" in any industry in the United States. It would be for "revenue only" and the government would be the sole beneficiary of the duty, except the few persons engaged in the manual labor of packing and preparing the goods for export. Mr. Jones will be so good as to allow me to say so, his reference to quinine in this connection shows his utter ignorance of the tariff question. So far as that question is concerned he is a big blunderer. It is for iron, steel, mica, and milk and sugar-ties, and not on strong meats. He has the first rudiments yet to learn. And mark the effect which the putting of quinine on the free-list has had on the market of that article in the United States. Powers & Wightman, Philadelphia, were perhaps the largest manufacturers of quinine in the world. They still manufacture it largely, but what they have done since the removal of the duty. They have moved their manufacturing establishment to Philadelphia to Holland, because with our higher wages for labor they could not manufacture the article at all in this country and compete with the foreign manufacturers. They had to move out of the country with their factory or quit the business. This of course has secured a hundred American people out of employment. Still, it is right to take off the duty on quinine. It was imposed under the hard necessities growing out of the tariff, and it was taken off as soon as those necessities relaxed. Thus our government is not the horrid monster which Mr. Jones and others of his school would teach us to believe. He says that the price of plate-glass has not been reduced by the high tariff on it. This is not true. It is now 50 per cent. ad valorem. Heretofore it was 35 per cent. ad valorem. I notice that in the report of the late tariff commission Mr. A. S. Hiltchcock of St. Louis, who is a large dealer in that article, stated before the commission that the price had fallen since the tariff was put on it. The price had fallen from \$2.50 per square foot to \$1 per square foot. Nobody contradicted the statement, because it was the truth. Previous to the Morrill tariff all our plate-glass came from Russia, and we were paying these European monopolists whatever the market demanded of us, or \$2.50 per square foot. Under the protection of the Morrill tariff Americans went to manufacturing plate-glass, and behind the scenes they were working hard to get it out of our hands. Now we make about three-fourths of all that is used in this country, and will soon make all that is used and some to ship abroad. Thus we have built up a splendid American industry, thereby saving our country a vast deal of money. Now, Mr. Jones, was not that good? These are the only instances Mr. Jones can give to upset the statement that I had made, namely, that protective tariffs have always, after a little while, greatly reduced the price of articles manufactured in our country, and that the growth of our country, and the well-being of the country, will be the result of a tariff list. There are very many hundreds of things on our tariff list. I hope Mr. Jones will be so good as to try again. Perhaps he will take some notes to help him out from some of our Tariff Commissioners. Please let him try. Treasurer Lubbock, who is a tremendous trader, may also be able to give him some notes. By all means, let him apply to me. Mr. Jones says that protective tariffs have nothing to do with higher wages for the laboring man. He admits that wages are very much higher in the United States than they are in Europe—and God grant they may always continue to be so—but he is positive that protective tariffs do nothing to do with that; because, says he, wages are very much higher in California than they are in Maine; and says he, proudly, "is there any protective tariff in California as against Maine?" I am really struck by Mr. Jones' freshness in a really stupidly grand argument. He is so fresh that it would really take tons of salt to salt him up just a little. Wages are so much higher in California than they are in Maine because of the proximity of the sea and more productive soil, and if this continues it will be the greatest and most novel attraction of the continent. The flames burst through a very small aperture in the earth and present a most beautiful pyrotechnical display. 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I am just in receipt of large shipments of Oranges, Lemons, Cocoanuts, Malaga Grapes, CALIFORNIA LONDON LAYER RAISINS, SEND ME YOUR ORDERS, JOSEPH H. BROWN, WHOLESALE GROCER, THE MARTIN-BROWN CO. Corner Main and Fourth Streets, The Only Exclusively Wholesale Dry Goods House in Fort Worth. WE RECOMMEND CLARK'S MILE END SPOOL COTTON For Hand and Machine Sewing. A Full Stock in All Numbers for Sale by the. Ordinance No. 408. An ordinance regulating the moving of dead bodies and the issuance of burial permits. Be it ordained by the city council of the city of Fort Worth...

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