

A GENERAL HISTORY OF THE
TOWN OF PRAGUE, OKLAHOMA, 1902-1948

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By

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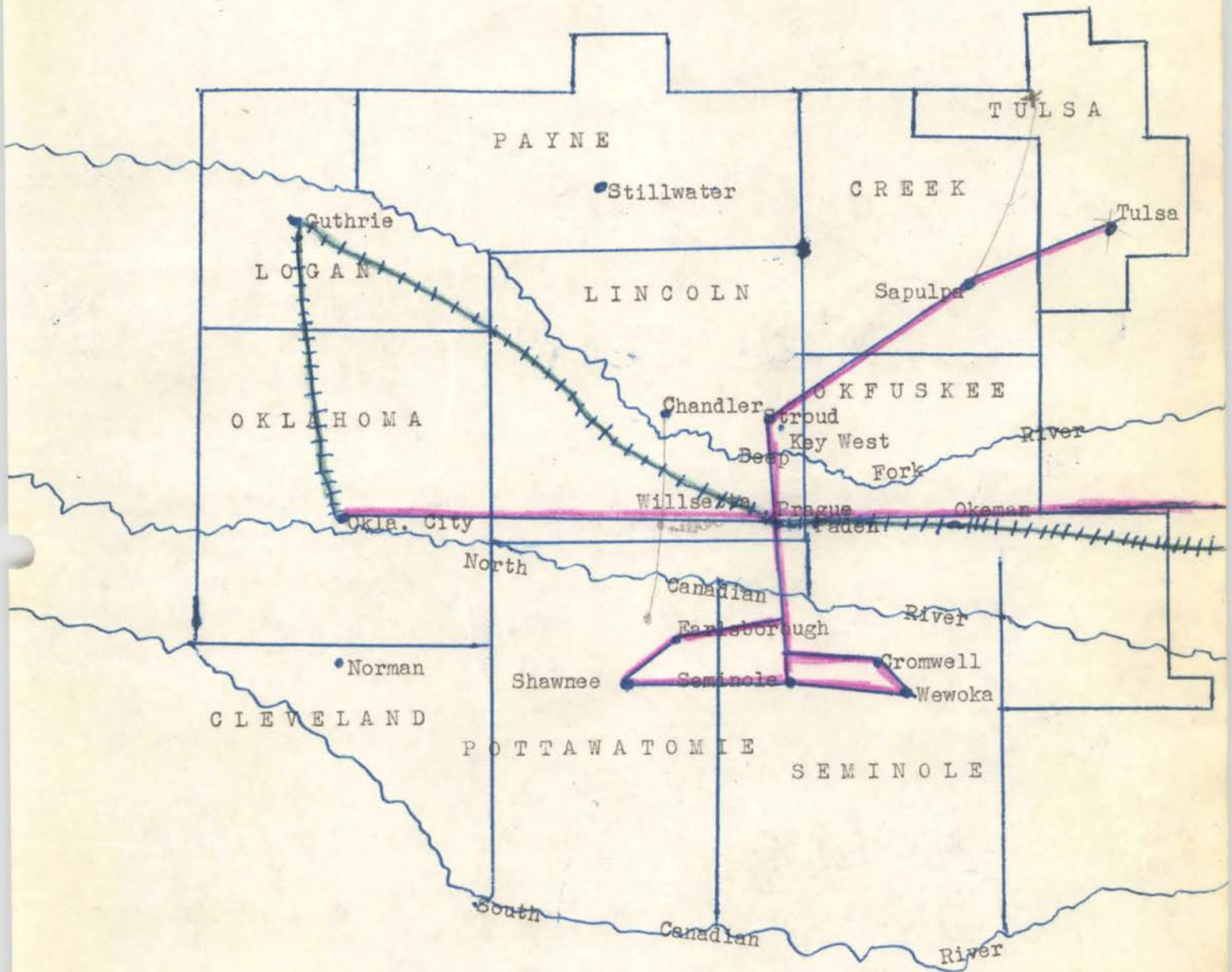
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Ft. Smith and Western Railroad

Highways that connect the oil fields

PREFACE

In this thesis I have tried to present a general history of the town of Prague, Oklahoma, from its founding in 1902 until the present.

The town has a varied and interesting history which I feel in some respects is typical of the beginnings of many of our Oklahoma communities.

The story of Prague is connected with the railroad, with cattle, with agriculture, with oil. Through it all runs a thread of romance produced by the foreign elements, the Czechoslovakian and German inhabitants, that may make the story of this town slightly different from that of the average Oklahoma town.

In gathering my data I am greatly indebted to Mrs. Junia Heath Jones, the editor of the Prague News Record. Her help in furnishing useful notes and making available the back issues of the Prague News Record aided my research very greatly.

I am also indebted to the Prague city officials for making available to me the various reports of the town trustees, maps of the original townsite, financial statements of the city, and other pertinent documents.

To the members of the County Clerk's office in Chandler, Oklahoma, I am indeed grateful for putting at my disposal deeds, maps, and original papers that have helped me to gather the necessary material for this thesis.

To all those pioneer settlers who gave me first hand information concerning the founding and growth of the town,

I am grateful. Among those early settlers interviewed were: Joe Eret, R. T. Tower, W. M. Valasak, W. R. McElvany, Simon Mertes, Tom Nash, George Jepsen, S. A. Woods, Fred Heinzig, M. E. Tope, and E. E. Long.

To the following group of persons, the sons and daughters of the original pioneer settlers, I am appreciative for the help given me in tracing some of the facts which they alone could give. They are: L. P. Wilson, Earnest Blumenthal, Fritz Heinzig, Mrs. Ellen Mobacher, Baxter Davis, Alice Morrison, T. V. Hartman, A. B. Herring, Jerry Suua, Kenneth Copeland, Howard Tope, and Miss Helen Herring.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis attempts to present a general history of the town of Prague, Oklahoma, between the years 1902 and 1948.

This little town was formally laid out by the Ft. Smith and Western Railroad in 1902 as a coaling station for the railroad. The close proximity of the town to Indian Territory, where prohibition was enforced, made of Prague a wide open town with as many as thirteen saloons at one time. Under these conditions law enforcement became a problem. The citizens of Prague tried to solve this problem by importing some of the old frontier town-taming marshals. These frontier marshals did make of Prague a law abiding community, but only after a period of gun-fighting and killing.

The foreign-born element has always played an important part in the life of the Prague community. Approximately one third of the town's population is Bohemian, and at least two thirds of the business houses of Prague are owned and operated by Bohemians. How these Bohemians came to be there, how they named the town, and how they have played such an important part in the life of the town, is an intriguing story.

The German element has done a great deal for the agricultural life of the community, for these Germans brought with them, and introduced, ideas of scientific farming and soil conservation at a time when such ideas were virtually unknown in this part of the country.

The economic life of Prague is built around four great pursuits: cattle, agriculture, railroad, and oil.

The story of how the railroad built the town, the story of gradual economic development based primarily on agriculture and oil, the impact of two World Wars on a small community with a strong foreign element having close ties with the old country, the struggle of the town to grow, and the gradual absorption of all the outlying small towns, provides an interesting and heretofore unrelated chapter in the history of the Southwest's last frontier.

CHAPTER I

THE ORIGIN AND FOUNDING OF THE TOWN

✓ The little town of Prague, Oklahoma, is located in southeastern Lincoln County. Like many other Oklahoma communities, its history goes back only slightly more than fifty years, for it was built on land that was formerly a part of the old Sac and Fox Indian Reservation.¹ ✓

✓ The Cherokee Commission was appointed in 1885 by President Grover Cleveland for the purpose of giving allotments of 160 acres of land to each member of the tribes. The surplus land in the Indian Reserves was to be sold to the government and opened to white settlement.² This commission that had been dealing with the Cherokees in Tahlequah was reorganized in 1890. David Howell Jerome, former Governor of Michigan, and Warren G. Sayer of Indiana were appointed to take the place of former Governor Hortranft of Pennsylvania who was forced to retire because of illness, and of former Governor Fairchild who resigned in 1890.³

This reorganized commission met at Guthrie in May, 1890, to resume its labors. After a short stay in Guthrie, the commission moved to the Sac and Fox Agency to negotiate for the land within that jurisdiction, in what is now Lincoln and

¹Map of Lincoln County - County Court House, Office of the County Clerk, Chandler, Oklahoma, 1947.

²Grant Foreman, History of Oklahoma. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1942. p. 244.

³Idem.

Pottawatomie counties. On June 12, 1890, the Cherokee, or Jerome Commission as it was then called, negotiated with the Sac and Fox Indians for their land.⁴

These tribes owned a tract of land in the eastern half of what is now Lincoln County, made up of 479,667 acres that had been ceded to them in the Treaty of February 18, 1867. Allotments were made by the commission consisting of 160 acre tracts of land to each of 584 Indians, in the total amount of 87,683.64 acres. After deducting 800 acres for school land and agency purposes, 391,184 acres remained for white settlement. The government paid the tribe \$485,000 for these 391,184 acres of land which were opened for white settlement by a run on September 22, 1891.⁵

On May 20, 1890, the commission reached an agreement with the Iowa Indians. This tribe owned 219,464.27 acres of land assigned to them by the executive order of August 15, 1883. These lands comprised approximately the northwest quarter of what is now Lincoln County. The commission allotted 8,685 acres to 108 members of the tribe, leaving two hundred and ten thousand acres for white settlement.⁶

The commission on June 25-26, 1890, made agreements with the Pottawatomie and absentee Shawnee Indians for the land held by them under the Treaty of February 27, 1867, and an

⁴Idem.

⁵Ibid., p. 243.

⁶Idem.

act of Congress of May 23, 1872. This land occupied what is now the major part of Pottawatomie County. Allotments had been made to some of the tribesmen by the Dawes Act or Allotment Act of 1887; and after the execution of the agreement with the Jerome Commission, allotments of 215,679.42 acres were made to 1,498 Pottawatomies, and 70,791.47 acres to 563 absentee Shawnees, or a total of 2,061 allottees, leaving something over two hundred and seventy-five thousand acres of land for white settlement.⁷ ✓

The lands of these ~~four~~ tribes having been divided into counties by the Secretary of Interior, as required by law, the President on September 18, 1891, issued his proclamation opening them to settlement at noon four days later. On September 22, 1891, there ensued another mad dash of people seeking homes in a new land. The land was practically all occupied the first day by twenty thousand people, anxious to pay \$1.25 per acre for the available 7,000, one hundred and sixty acre tracts of land. There was a lively scramble for lots in the townsites of Tecumseh and Chandler, which had been set aside by the government as county seats for the two new counties of Pottawatomie and Lincoln.⁸

The white settlement of the community where Prague now stands dates back to this opening of the Iowa, Pottawatomie, absentee Shawnee, and Sac and Fox Reservations in 1891. The

⁷Idem.

⁸Idem.

closest railroad points to the community where Prague now stands were at Stroud, twenty miles north, and Shawnee, twenty-eight miles southwest.⁹

Many small cross-roads country towns sprang up in the vicinity of where Prague now stands. The larger of this group included Arlington, Keokuk Falls, Bellmont, Dent, and Lambdin.¹⁰

Arlington at its height had two stores, a hotel, an Odd Fellows Hall, a Methodist Church, a blacksmith shop, one saloon, a post office and three doctors, Dr. Frank Isles, Dr. F. N. Norwood, and Dr. S. A. Burklin. All of the doctors and most of the business houses moved to Prague after its founding to be near the railroad. This hamlet is located six miles north of the present site of Prague, and has almost completely disappeared except in name.¹¹

Keokuk Falls was established in 1891 on the North Canadian river at the waterfall that was named for old Chief Keokuk of the Sac and Fox tribe. The power of the waterfall was harnessed and put to use in a grist mill to which the farmers of a large area took their corn to be ground into meal. At its peak it had five general stores, a saloon, a government licensed still, a hotel, a blacksmith shop, and a newspaper, the Keokuk Kall, published in 1899. The population in 1899

⁹R. T. Tower and G. T. Nash, Interview, July 15, 1947.

¹⁰Idem.

¹¹Grant Foreman, Oklahoma Imprints. Norman: University Press, 1942, p. 242.

— Carolyn?

was one hundred and ninety-eight. This town was located seven miles south of where Prague stands today. At the present time nothing remains of this settlement. Even the river has changed its course and there is no waterfall.¹²

Bellmont was also founded in 1891 as a cross-roads farming town. It had four general stores, one hotel, a saloon, a blacksmith shop, a doctor, Dr. Ralph Hanna, with a population totaling fifty to seventy-five persons. Bellmont is located eight miles west of where Prague stands today.¹³

Dent was the smallest of this group of towns having only one store and a saloon. It was founded in 1893 and is located very close to where the present town of Prague now stands.¹⁴

The little cross-roads town of Lambdin was started in 1892. It had a general store, a saloon, a hotel, a post office and a population of perhaps forty persons at its height. This hamlet could have become the permanent townsite of the Ft. Smith and Western Railroad that Prague later became, if it had not been for the short sightedness of the land owners surrounding it. Lambdin was located two miles east of where the present town of Prague stands. The old town has completely disappeared.¹⁵

All of these little hamlets have disappeared except in name or possibly one store in some of them. They were simply

¹²R. T. Tower and G. T. Nash, Interview, July, 1947.

¹³Idem.

¹⁴W. M. Valasak, Interview, July, 1944.

¹⁵Idem.

absorbed by the growing town of Prague that started in 1902.¹⁶

From 1891 to 1902 the population was steadily growing in the area of the four Indian Reservations that had been opened by a run in 1891. On the date of entry some twenty thousand persons rushed in to claim homes. By 1902 the population had almost doubled.¹⁷

In the group that made the run for the Sac and Fox country were a group of young Bohemians. Many of them had been directed into this region by friends living in Oklahoma City who knew that a party of Bohemians were camping on the North Canadian river. These included Frank Barta, Joe Eret, Squire Valasak, Frank Suva, Julius and John Bontty, Wesley and Frank Benes, Frank Mastenia, and Victor Martinet. These Bohemian people did not come from any particular locality or in any one group. They were drawn from all parts of the United States by the well-advertised opening of the Sac and Fox reserve. Once they were settled in this region, they came to love the country in which they made their new home. Letters to friends brought many others to the growing Oklahoma country. Since political conditions in the mother country were bad under the rule of the Austrian Hapsburgs, many families came to the New World to escape the tyranny of Austrian rule. Many were also interested in escaping the long military service required by Austria at

¹⁶R. T. Tower and W. M. Valasak, Interview, July, 1944.

¹⁷Grant Foreman, History of Oklahoma, p. 255.

this time.¹⁸

The community where Prague now stands was settled in part by Bohemians from two widely separated sections of the United States. About one half of them came from Texas, while the rest came from Nebraska.¹⁹

The present town of Prague was built on the farms of two of these early Bohemian farm families. Frank Barta and John Simek sold their farms to the banking firm of Hoffman, Charles, and Conklin of the Sac and Fox agency. This business firm, in turn, gave the Ft. Smith and Western Railroad a right of way to build a coal chute to supply their line. The town of Prague was built on the former Simek and Barta farms.²⁰

*coal
chute*

In 1901 the community around the present town of Prague was thrilled to learn that a railroad was to be built connecting Ft. Smith, Arkansas, with Guthrie, Oklahoma. This railroad line would pass through the southeastern part of Lincoln county and travel northward, passing five miles south of Chandler to Fallis, Oklahoma, and then on to Guthrie.²¹

The banking firm of Hoffman, Charles, and Conklin of the Sac and Fox agency, with Herman Josey, a town promoter and capitalist, had a contract with the Ft. Smith and Western

¹⁸Joe Eret and W. M. Valasak, Interview, July, 1944.

¹⁹Idem.

²⁰Mrs. Junia Heath Jones, Notes on Prague. An unpublished manuscript examined in office of Prague News Record, June 28, 1947.

²¹R. T. Tower and G. T. Nash, Interview, July, 1947.

Railroad to lay out a series of townsites between the western line of the Creek Nation and Guthrie.²²

A coaling station had to be established in southeastern Lincoln county to serve the railroad. People speculated, of course, where it would be placed. Most people favored Lambdin, since it was already an established agricultural center with a post office. The railroad and the banking firm of Conklin, Hoffman, and Charles favored Lambdin because of its level land and ideal location for a townsite. Negotiations were soon under way to purchase a right of way for the coaling station and townsite. The necessary land was owned by Lee Watts, who, not realizing the value of his land if it was divided and sold as town lots, asked a much higher price than the promoters were willing to pay.²³

Because of the high price asked for his land by Watts, the banking firm of Hoffman, Charles, and Conkling with the town promoter Herman Josey and Jay Brunson, the engineer who surveyed the Ft. Smith and Western right of way, closed a deal whereby portions of the northeast and southwest quarters of section twenty eight and thirty were purchased from Messrs. Simek and Barta, two young Bohemian farmers, who lived two miles southwest of the Lambdin community. The site for building the coal chute and the town was changed from Lambdin to what was later to be the town of Prague. This change in location was

²²Tulsa Tribune, September 30, 1928.

²³R. T. Tower and G. T. Nash, Interview, July 10, 1947.

secured by Hoffman, Charles, and Conkling by purchasing the land and promising to give the railroad the land for the coal chute and railroad yards.²⁴

As part of the purchase agreement Mrs. Barta was allowed to name the new town. She, having cherished memories of old Prague in Czechoslovakia, immediately named the town Pra-ha. Squire Valasak, a store keeper at Dent, changed the name to its anglicized form, Prague, in 1902.²⁵

News of the opening of the new town was well publicized. Advertisements were carried for weeks in the Oklahoma City Times-Journal announcing the official sale of lots to begin on May 20, 1902.

Residential lots, at this official opening of the new town, sold from ten dollars to one hundred dollars. Business lots sold from two hundred to seven hundred dollars.²⁶

The new town of Prague soon became an important center for trade because it was the only shipping point for an extensive territory that included parts of Lincoln, Okfuskee, Pottawatomie, and Seminole counties.²⁷

Prague was twenty-eight miles from any town of importance at this time. It was fifty miles east of Oklahoma City on a

²⁴County Clerk's Office - Deeds, also map of the original townsite of Prague. Lincoln County, Chandler, Oklahoma, October 10, 1902.

²⁵Joe Eret and Bill Valasak, Interview, July 10, 1941.

²⁶Shawnee Herald, May 21, 1902.

²⁷Simeon Wertes, Interview, June 20, 1947.

direct line with Ft. Smith, Arkansas.²⁸

The town of Prague became a complete economic unit from the very beginning. The merchants and professional people of the small cross-roads towns moved to Prague to be near the railroad. The town served as a shipping point for a vast trade area that includes the river bottom farms of the North Canadian and the Deep Fork rivers in addition to the farmers occupying the rich land that lies along the creeks that flow into these rivers.²⁹

Inasmuch as Prague did serve as the economic center of a large surrounding area there was great agitation from 1902 through 1920 for a new county to be formed that would include parts of Lincoln, Pottawatomie, Okfuskee, and Seminole counties, with Prague as the county seat. Prague and Chandler became bitter rivals over this issue. With the coming of good roads in the 1920's, the agitation for the proposed county gradually died. However, the people of the surrounding communities look to Prague for leadership today more than they look to their own county seat towns.³⁰

Work of building the railroad attracted many to Prague. Wages were considered high. The base pay for common labor was 17 1/2¢ per hour or \$1.75 per day. The grading camp was near Okemah, the county seat of Okfuskee county, but many workers

²⁸Prague News Record, September 7, 1927.

²⁹R. T. Tower and G. T. Nash, Interview, July, 1947.

³⁰Mrs. Junia Heath Jones, Notes on Prague, p. 2.

spent their time in Prague. The grading contract was held by Dave Griffin of the Griffin Construction Company of Ft. Smith, Arkansas.³¹

Since Prague was only three miles from Indian Territory and prohibition was enforced there, the whites and Indians came to Prague for their alcoholic refreshments. There were thirteen saloons operating in the new town almost immediately, and the enforcement of law and order became a problem for five years.³²

In 1907 Oklahoma was admitted into the union as the forty-sixth state. With the bill of admission came prohibition and the Prague saloons had to go.³³

In 1902, six months after the official opening of the town, the population numbered six hundred. In 1907, five years later, the population was nine hundred and ninety-eight. Thus, in five years the town of Prague had grown from nothing to almost one thousand persons.³⁴

To solve the problem of law and order, the city officials of Prague had to hire marshals that were fearless as well as skillful in the use of a gun. The most colorful of these old frontier town tamers were Frank Miles and Hance Gaylor. Both

³¹Indian Papers, M. S. Vol. II, pp. 140-141, University of Oklahoma Library.

³²Journal of Town Trustees M. S., Vol. I, Dec. 1902, Prague City Hall.

³³R. T. Tower and G. T. Nash, Interview, July 10, 1947.

³⁴L. S. Clover to Mrs. Junia Heath Jones, Prague News Record, July 1, 1927.

of these men possessed the qualities of the greatest of the West's town-taming marshals. It is largely to these two men that Prague owes its early respect for law and order.³⁵

³⁵R. T. Tower and G. T. Wash, Interview, July 10, 1947.

CHAPTER II

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOWN FROM 1902 TO 1929.

Agriculture is the most important industry in the life of the town of Prague. The first thing that attracted settlers to the Prague vicinity was the rich farming land of the region.¹

The location of the town is in the heart of one of the best agricultural regions in the state. Prague is seven miles from the North Canadian River with its thousands of acres of fertile bottom land. The town is ten miles from Deep Fork River, which also has a large extent of bottom land that is considered ideal for the growing of cotton and corn.²

Flowing into these two rivers are three large creeks bordered by many acres of rich bottom land. These are Petaquah Creek, Deer Creek, and Robison Creek. These three streams empty into Deep Fork River and pass through the Prague community.³

The town of Prague is located twenty-eight miles from Shawnee, twenty miles from Stroud and Seminole; thus making it the logical marketing center for all of this agricultural area.⁴

The raising of cotton became the chief occupation of the farmers of the Prague vicinity. During these early years, the

¹Joe Eret, Simon Mertes, and R. T. Tower, Interview, July 28, 1947.

²Mrs. Junia Heath Jones, Notes on Prague, p. 3.

³R. T. Tower and G. T. Nash, Interview, July 12, 1947.

⁴A. B. Herring and L. P. Wilson, Interview, July 20, 1947.

rich river and creek bottom land easily yielded from one to two bales of cotton per acre.⁵

In 1904 the first bale of cotton was brought to Prague by J. B. Hall of the Bellmont community. A gala occasion was made of this event with J. B. Charles, of the First National Bank, auctioning off the bale of cotton to the highest bidder. It was purchased by B. F. Whitmore for 15 3/4 cents per pound, bringing its owner \$81.10. This was considered a remarkable price for cotton at that time and attracted many farmers to the Prague market. In fact the Prague News, a weekly newspaper published at Prague, proudly announced that cotton was being brought to Prague for sale that had been grown within five miles of Shawnee.⁶

On October 22, 1904, two hundred bales of cotton were sold in Prague during a single day. This was a record breaking sale, according to the Prague News.⁷

The year 1904 saw ten thousand bales of cotton marketed in Prague. Six to ten thousand dollars was being paid out daily for cotton. This naturally caused the town to boom, and its fame spread as one of the best cotton markets in central Oklahoma.⁸

Cotton prices held steady through 1905 with a top price

⁵R. T. Tower and G. T. Nash, Interview, July 12, 1947.

⁶The Prague News, October 6, 1904.

⁷Ibid., October 22, 1904.

⁸Ibid., December 18, 1904.

of 7.70 cents per pound being paid for the cotton in the seed.⁹

In October, 1906, three hundred bales of cotton representing \$20,000 were sold in Prague in one day. This was another record breaking sale, and it certainly showed that Prague was rapidly forging to the front as a cotton marketing center.¹⁰

One fourth of the cotton handled by the Ft. Smith and Western Railroad was shipped from Prague, according to a statement sent out by the general manager. This is remarkable in view of the fact that the F. S. and W. was 185 miles long and ran through some of the best cotton land in Oklahoma. Over one million dollars worth of cotton was shipped from Prague in 1906.¹¹

From 1907 through 1924 the community of Prague had bumper cotton crops. There was a steady expansion in cotton farming and a steady increase in the number of bales shipped all through this period. The F. S. and W. was kept busy trying to transport the crop. All through these years we find complaints from the Prague citizenry that the railroad could not haul the cotton away as rapidly as it was brought into Prague. The F. S. and W. had to rent cars from the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas line to handle, as well as they did, the hauling of the tremendous crops.¹² From August 20 to October 1, 1924, the

⁹Ibid., October 10, 1905.

¹⁰Ibid., October 6, 1906.

¹¹Ibid., April 18, 1907.

¹²Prague News Record, December 12, 1925.

cotton gins of Prague had ginned 2,900 bales with one half of the crop still in the field.¹³

By 1927 Prague had three cotton gins in addition to the Union Cotton Oil Company. One of the gins, owned by B. F. Whitmore, was an electric gin. This was considered quite progressive for the time.¹⁴

In 1928 the boll weevil struck the Prague cotton farming region and virtually destroyed the crop. This destruction coupled with the low farm prices which had prevailed from 1921 on caused many Prague farmers to go into bankruptcy.¹⁵ The comparative prices of cotton through the years were as follows. In 1904 the first bale of cotton brought 15 3/4 cents per pound. The average price in 1904 was approximately 10 cents per pound in the lint.¹⁷ From 1916 through 1919 cotton brought as much as 40 cents per pound in the lint. The average price was 33 cents per pound.¹⁸

After the end of World War I, and the collapse of the European market, the average price of cotton fell during 1921 to 12 1/2 cents per pound in the lint, and in the following years dropped as low as six cents per pound. At that rate it is small wonder that many of the Prague cotton farmers were

¹³Ibid., May 15, 1927.

¹⁴Ibid., October 14, 1927.

¹⁵Ibid., March 14, 1928.

¹⁶Prague News, October 5, 1904.

¹⁷Ibid., September 22, 1904.

¹⁸Ibid., December 1, 1919.

forced into bankruptcy. Low prices following World War I, and the destructiveness of the boll weevil brought an end to the community's economic development based on cotton.¹⁹

In view of the location of Prague in the heart of one of the greatest cotton growing districts in the state, Prague's business leaders believed that a factory which would make cottonseed oil, meal, cake and hulls would be profitable to both the cotton growers and those who wished to raise cattle. Herman Josey, the chairman of the townsite company, and a stockholder in the First National Bank, set out to interest capitalists in establishing such a plant.²⁰

Josey found a group that would be interested and the Union Cotton Oil Company was established at Prague with a capital stock of \$40,000. The first directors were W. M. Haws, W. M. Morgan, Jim Monar, all of Norman, Oklahoma, J. W. Dupree of Wynnewood, Oklahoma, and H. C. Chamberlin of Chicago, Illinois.²¹

The business of the new firm grew until by 1920 it had branches in Macauber, Boley, Castle, and Paden in Okfuskee County, besides its home office and gin in Prague, Oklahoma. In 1928 the company was capitalized at \$75,954 and in addition, had a depreciation reserve of \$90,000, and was giving employment to about forty persons. George Jepsen, the original manager of the plant, became its president in 1910, and he and Mrs. Bill

¹⁹Prague News Record, December 10, 1930.

²⁰Prague News, April 9, 1907.

²¹Ibid., September 1, 1907.

Ambrister are its chief stockholders today.²²

The Union Cotton Oil Company is still operating in 1948, although its activities have been handicapped by the decline in cotton production caused by the boll weevil. The firm was also hurt by the loss of the railroad in 1938, but it has shifted its interest to the feeding of cattle and is still fairly prosperous. The mill takes care of most of the cotton still raised in the vicinity of Prague. It feeds its products, cottonseed meal, cake, and hulls, to beef cattle that are sold on the open market. The mill has also purchased many farms since the depression of the thirties and is one of the large scale farm groups of this Prague community.²³

A unique feature of the economic history of the town of Prague, Oklahoma, has been the stability of its banking institutions. Two banks were established shortly after the town was organized in 1902. In fact, the first building to be constructed in the town of Prague was a bank. The first two banks were the First National Bank and the Lincoln County Bank. The First National Bank was established by the Sac and Fox agency banking firm of Charles, Conklin, and Josey. The above named men together with Dr. F. N. Ayres, Prague's first doctor, Frank Chandler, and George Sutton were the chief stockholders. This bank took in \$30,000 in deposits the first day it opened in 1902.²⁴

²²Pulsa Tribune, September 30, 1928.

²³George Jepsen, Interview, July 6, 1947.

²⁴Mrs. Junia Heath Jones, Notes on Prague, p. 4.

In 1904 in a financial statement published in the Prague News the First National Bank listed \$83,905.85 as its total assets at that time.²⁵

The First National Bank's resources had increased from \$123,204.63 in 1905 to \$170,845.15 in 1906. The personnel had also been changed to George Sutton, cashier, George C. Barber, assistant cashier, and Herman Josey, president.²⁶

The First National Bank's resources almost doubled every year after 1902. In 1907 its financial statement read \$206,724.08.²⁷

In 1908 the personnel of the First National Bank changed to J. O. Myer, cashier. George C. Barber, E. L. Conklin, J. E. Gravitt were directors. Its total assets were \$261,136.38.²⁸

The First State Bank was established in Prague in May, 1908. B. F. Whitmore was president, D. J. Furgeson, cashier, George C. Barber and B. F. Whitmore, the directors and chief stockholders. This bank began business in 1904 with assets totaling \$11,735.32.²⁹

This bank did a modest business as a separate institution until 1930, when it combined with the First National Bank for purposes of economy. These two banks had been under the same

²⁵Prague News, January 23, 1904.

²⁶Ibid., January 4, 1906.

²⁷Ibid., January 10, 1907.

²⁸Ibid., January 5, 1908.

²⁹Ibid., March 15, 1908.

management since 1915 when J. O. Myer purchased the controlling interest from B. F. Whitmore and George C. Barber. J. O. Myer together with George Sutton bought the controlling interest of the First National Bank. These two men operated the two banks as separate units, but with a common policy until 1930. George Sutton acted as president of the First National Bank and J. O. Myer served as president of the First State Bank until they merged. In 1932 Sutton's interest was purchased by L. P. Wilson, and he, along with Myer's heirs, control the bank today. The First National Bank is considered today to be one of the strongest and safest banks in central Oklahoma.³⁰

The Lincoln County Bank was also established in 1902 with H. I. Kingsbury and A. G. Rogers as the chief stockholders. A. P. Slover was cashier. The total assets of this bank in 1902 were \$40,672.28.³¹

By 1907 the name of the Lincoln County Bank had been changed to the Prague National Bank and its total assets were \$114,540.55.³²

The following year the Prague National Bank acquired new directors. C. C. Bush, R. G. Casey and R. H. Manseur became the directors, having purchased the controlling stock from H. I. Kingsbury and A. G. Rogers. The bank's assets in 1908

³⁰L. P. Wilson, Interview, July 15, 1947.

³¹Prague News, January 4, 1904.

³²Ibid., January 7, 1907.

were \$161,136.38.³³

This bank is still in operation and has prospered under the guiding hand of A. P. Slover, who became its president in 1915, C. C. Bush who succeeded him, and finally T. G. Hinson who is the present president of the bank.³⁴

Another bank appeared in Prague for a time called the Farmers and Merchants State Bank. It was established in 1909 with W. G. Botts as president and E. L. Garnett as cashier. Its total assets in 1909 were \$36,228.08. This bank operated in Prague until 1915 when its stock was absorbed by the First National Bank.³⁵

The stability of these banking institutions during the years of depression and booms, and during the trying days of the twenties and early thirties reflect the conservative and fine management of the institutions. The stability of the banks did much to foster the whole economic development of the community.

As Prague served a large agricultural community, it became a major business center from the beginning. In 1902, shortly after the official opening of the townsite, Prague already had a number of places of business. The first two drug stores were owned by F. N. Troutman and T. L. Briggs, and T. C. Hatcher. The first restaurant was established by

³³Ibid., January 8, 1908.

³⁴R. T. Tower, Interview, July 12, 1947.

³⁵Prague News, May 5, 1919.

Bill Fowler. There were three hotels: The Barta, Thomas, and Arlington, all located where the present hotels stand. The first drygoods store was owned by M. Blumenthal, a Jewish peddler who came to the Prague vicinity in 1901. The first hardware store was owned by Dick Bond and Bob Carew. The first lumber yard was operated by George Dixon and the Boboy Bros. The banks, as previously mentioned, were established by Conklin, Josey, Charles, Hoffman, Sutton, H. I. Kingsbury, and A. G. Rogers. The first residence was built by Frank Chandler, one of the stockholders of the First National Bank. The first exclusive home furnishing store was established by T. S. Irving.³⁶

Two years later, in 1904, a list of the business houses included: Prague saddle shop; Hancock Bros. livery and feed; livery, feed, and wagon yard, E. E. Long, proprietor; Totten and Monard, painters; second hand store, P. M. Thrasher; Kentucky Club Saloon, A. Marks, proprietor; veterinary, S. A. Thompson; Dr. F. N. Norwood, physician and surgeon; Star restaurant, J. A. McConell; John Davis, attorney; J. M. Sandelin, attorney; J. R. Dobery, lumber company; Prague hardware and implements; Blue Front restaurant, Bill Fowler, proprietor; Pastusek Bros., drygoods and groceries; The Leodore, dry goods, M. Blumenthal; barber shop, E. H. Sneeling; J. W. Huffman, dentist; Emmet O'Kane, drygoods; First National Bank; Lincoln County Bank; N. S. Smith, auctioneer; Prague Brick Co., H. G.

³⁶Mrs. Junia Heath Jones, Notes on Prague, 1947, p. 6.

Reel, proprietor; Wade-Branch Hardware Company; Kentucky Liquor House, J. J. Klabzuba, proprietor; Fair, drygoods store, J. A. Fine; B. F. Whitmore, drygoods and groceries; Star Barn, Hancock Bros.; T. L. Scoville, contractor and builder; Prague Furniture Company, P. W. Water; Grimes & Co., drygoods and groceries; Wes Klobzubo, auctioneer; John Z. Maz, physician and surgeon; F. O. Kucera, real estate and lawyer; O'Rourke and Huggets, grocery and market; Myer and Son, groceries; City Barber Shop, Joe Eret, proprietor; The Rocket store, C. B. Harrington, proprietor; Mertes and Heatly, hardware; L. B. Hampton, drygoods; Goodmans Department Store; C.O.D. Grocery and Market; Biggs Drug Store; Shumater, photos; Merrit Grocery; Dr. Hanna, an eye specialist; Dosey and Roberts Saloon, later bought by Lee Watts; Cottage Hotel, T. C. Haley, proprietor; Broyles Hotel.³⁷

Twelve years later in 1916 the list of the leading business firms was as follows: The First National Bank; First State Bank; Prague National Bank; New York Bargain Store, The Leader, Sol Whites, (all these were drygoods stores); Frank Kucera, Busy Bee Cafe; Charles Good and Frank Svoboda, blacksmithing and woodwork; The Long Bell and Prague Lumber companies; C. M. Sodlo, tailor; P. S. Mertes, Parks Bros., O. R. Blumel and Wade-Branch hardware companies; John Vana, tinsmith; John Ceruany, real estate; Whitmore's Gin, Union Cotton Oil Company; Prague News, Prague Patriot, newspapers; Thomas, Arlington,

³⁷Prague News, December 10, 1904.

Barta, hotels; City Barber Shop; Doctors F. H. Norwood, S. W. Burkland, Dr. Isles, Dr. Hanna, Dr. Cossey, Dr. Davis, Dr. Kerfoot; J. D. Grimes, J. J. Klabzuba, Pastusek Bros., W. M. Valasak, Turners, V. G. Soika, F. R. Valasak, all had grocery stores; Frank Sekora was a leathersmith; E. E. Long Confectionery and real estate; Foster Drug Company. A town of some fifteen hundred people, Prague was growing and prospering.³⁸

The history of Prague is closely associated with the history of the Ft. Smith and Western Railroad. This railroad was built by Andrew Mellon and the Fitch brothers during the railroad building era of our country. It was laid out across eastern Oklahoma from Ft. Smith, Arkansas to Guthrie, Oklahoma, a distance of one hundred and eighty-five miles. It crossed eight Oklahoma counties and touched twenty-two towns. The leading towns on its route were Spiro, Bokoshoe, Quinton, Dustin, Weleetka, Okemah, Prague, Wellston, Fallis, and Guthrie. From Fallis it ran trains over the M. K. and T. lines to Oklahoma City. It also ran trains over the K. C. S. lines into Ft. Smith, Arkansas, from Spiro on the eastern end of the line.³⁹

The road was organized in 1889, and for twelve years after its completion the road prospered. In 1915 it slipped into receivership for eight years, and then it emerged for eight more years. In 1923 it slipped into receivership again for

³⁸Mrs. Junia Heath Jones, Notes on Prague, p. 8, 1947.

³⁹Tulsa World, May 28, 1929.

the rest of its life.⁴⁰

The F. S. and W. operated small passenger trains until 1927. It operated freight and passenger trains mixed until its demise in 1939.⁴¹

The road played an important part in the life of the Prague community during its early days. It was an outlet for the great cotton crops that were grown in the Prague vicinity. It ran special weekly excursion trains on Sundays, charging a special low fare. These trains were enjoyed very much by the people all up and down the line, for there were no good roads, and the automobile had not yet made its appearance.⁴²

Financially, the road presented a sorry picture. It showed a profit during only twelve years of its life. It lost money in seven of its last eight years, and broke even in the other, but it paid no interest to its stockholders in the last ten years of its life.⁴³

On January 16, 1939, the M. K. & T. ordered the line to quit using its tracks from Fallis to Oklahoma City because it owed \$90,000 in back rent. The K. C. S. followed the same policy as the organization also owed \$50,000 back rent to her. In addition, the road owed the state \$100,000 for back taxes. The sum of its major debts was more than twice its assessed

⁴⁰Idem.

⁴¹Idem.

⁴²Mrs. Junia Heath Jones, Notes on Prague, 1947, p. 8.

⁴³Tulsa World, May 28, 1929.

valuation of \$106,000 as set by the Oklahoma Tax Commission in 1929.⁴⁴

Governor Leon C. Phillips and Mac Q. Williamson, attorney general, tried hard to save the railroad but failed. Many concerns and investment groups were contacted in an attempt to get them to buy and operate the road, but all to no avail. The road went under the hammer, May 31, 1939, and its property and stock was sold for scrap. About fifteen Prague families were affected by the abandonment of the road as Prague was a division point for the line.⁴⁵

The loss of the railroad has greatly handicapped the growth of the community. It seemed for a short time that the town might be seriously injured, but it has continued to grow and prosper despite this handicap.⁴⁶

The oil industry has also influenced greatly the economic history of Prague. Though the town is situated in a rich agricultural district and depends chiefly on agriculture for support, it is also surrounded by several oil fields of considerable size.⁴⁷

The first oil boom came to the Prague community in 1915 with the discovery of the Paden field. The little neighboring town was flourishing under typical early day oil boom conditions.

⁴⁴Idem.

⁴⁵Idem.

⁴⁶H. W. Hartman, Interview, July 15, 1947.

⁴⁷R. T. Tower and G. T. Nash, Interview, July 10, 1947.

In anticipation of expanded activities, excitement ran high in Prague; even the Prague News became a daily.⁴⁸

From 1915 to 1923 there was a great deal of leasing of desirable land by oil companies around Prague, but no new fields were discovered. In 1923 Prague had its second oil boom, with the discovery of oil on the Leader Ranch, fifteen miles north of Prague. The ranch was owned by M. Blumenthal, owner of Prague's leading drygoods store.⁴⁹

The big Wewoka oil field came in in 1923. This field is forty miles from Prague but it was connected to the Stroud field by a highway that ran through Prague and caused the town to share in the activity.⁵⁰

The development of the Earlsborough oil field reached its peak in 1926 and was the next boom to affect the little town of Prague. Earlsborough is thirty miles from Prague, but again the traffic from the booming field came through Prague bringing its golden harvest.⁵¹

The Cromwell-Seminole oil fields were brought in in 1927. As a result, one of the largest fields in the state was approximately twenty miles straight south of Prague. Again, the oil fever ran high in the little town, but still no oil was discovered in the immediate vicinity of Prague.⁵²

⁴⁸The Prague News, October 15, 1915.

⁴⁹Prague News Record, May 10, 1923.

⁵⁰Ibid., May 23, 1923.

⁵¹Ibid., May 30, 1926.

⁵²Ibid., July 20, 1927.

The location of the Stroud-Key West oil field twenty miles to the north, Paden, nine miles to the east, Cromwell-Seminole pool, twenty miles south, and Willsetta, ten miles to the west, gives Prague an excellent location for trade with the booming fields without experiencing the worst features of an oil boom.⁵³

The last oil development to affect Prague vitally came in 1931 during the depression days and eased the impact of unemployment on this community. This field is the closest of all the fields to Prague as it lies just outside the southern city limits. Thus Prague has benefitted greatly from oil but has never had a first class boom of its own.⁵⁴

⁵³Ibid., August 1, 1925.

⁵⁴R. T. Tower, Interview, July 15, 1947.

CHAPTER III
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRAGUE
COMMUNITY FROM 1929 TO 1948

The depression of 1929 to 1935 dealt the Prague farmer a much heavier blow than the Prague business men and laborers. The small oil field opened south of town in 1931 eased the business strain and furnished unexpected jobs for unemployed laborers, but virtually nothing would help the low prices of agricultural products, and many farmers were forced into bankruptcy and lost their farms.¹

The town tried to ease the pressure of the depression and encourage agriculture by introducing vocational agriculture into the high school in 1930. Prague had its first fair, July 11, 1929, and opened the district fair on September 30 of the following year.²

The severity of the agricultural depression was best evidenced by the number of mortgage foreclosures and the voluntary sale of many small farms. The Union Cotton Oil Company bought a great deal of land from bankrupt and discouraged farmers; as did J. J. Klabzuba and Parks Brothers Hardware Company. These thrifty and community-minded citizens knew that much of the business activity of Prague depended upon agriculture, so they were determined to save the agricultural wealth for the town.³

¹Prague News Record, March 14, 1934.

²Ibid., September 1, 1930.

³R. T. Tower, Interview, September 1, 1930.

With the depression the small farm and farmer largely disappeared around Prague and in their place came the large ranch.⁴

L. P. Wilson of the First National Bank now owns a fifteen thousand acre ranch south of Prague that was once small farms. Roy Parks, president of Parks Brothers Hardware Store and Funeral Home, owns a twenty thousand acre ranch east of Prague. The Union Cotton Oil Company owns ten thousand acres in farm land, while J. J. Klabzuba Estates owns twelve thousand acres of farm land. Other Prague business men own lesser amounts of land, but their holdings are still large. The latest scientific methods are used on these large farms in raising crops. All of them raise large herds of pure bred cattle, and utilize strip cropping, contour plowing, cover crops, land testing, commercial fertilizer, green fertilizer and terracing of all land, including pasture lands. So once again agriculture is a profitable business around Prague.

Peanuts have been substituted for cotton as a major crop. The growing and harvesting of pecans, a native wild product, has greatly added to the income; but the basic crop under the new farm program is cattle. The boll weevil menace was never beaten, and cotton production has fallen off until it is no longer a major industry in the Prague community in 1948.⁵

⁴The appearance of the boll weevil and low farm prices brought this about. R. T. Tower and Roy Parks, Interview, July 22, 1947.

⁵L. P. Wilson, George Jepsen, and R. T. Tower, Interview, July 25, 1947.

The oil business around Prague remained static from 1931 to 1946. There was, however, some wildcat drilling going on all of the time. Seismographic geological surveys were being made of the land practically every year. Some new leasing was going on, and most of the old leases were kept up, but there was no great oil activity during this entire period. The leasing, for example, in the 1920's before the depression was seldom below \$12 per acre. It ranged from that figure to \$100 per acre for five year leases on land for oil purposes. From 1930 to 1946 the average lease price was \$5 per acre for old leases, and very few new leases were being taken.⁶

In 1946 a new field was discovered southeast of Prague some three and a half miles. This field has produced some gushers and is gradually spreading north and northwest from the original discovery well. Leasing activity has increased and leases now range from \$5 to \$75 per acre depending on the location from the new field.⁷

The town of Prague has started a new building period since 1946 partly because of the returning veterans from World War II and partly from the new oil boom.⁸

A comparison of Prague's business establishments in 1928 and 1948 will give some idea of this business increase. In 1928 Prague had the following business houses: three cotton

⁶E. E. Long, Interview, August 1, 1947.

⁷R. T. Tower, Interview, June 5, 1948.

⁸Idem.

gins; Union Cotton Oil Company; a modern ice plant; three banks; four hotels; one hospital; one grist mill; two theaters; a bottling works; telephone plant; one wholesale grocery; two lumber yards. The city owns and operates its own water and light plant. It also owns a sewer system with a disposal plant large enough for a city of five thousand inhabitants. Water wells furnish water from a depth of five hundred feet. The city owns a modern motorized fire department. It also maintains a municipal and tourist park. The town has twenty-one blocks of paved streets and six blocks of white way lighting.⁹

In 1948 Prague has the following lineup of business houses: six large modern grocery and markets; two banks; one movie theater; eight garages and motor car establishment; seven filling stations besides the garages; three wholesale gasoline dealers; one wholesale grocery company; the Union Cotton Oil Company; two cotton gins; three drygoods stores; two variety stores; a leather smith; two shoe shops; two modern auto-tourist courts; two large help-your-self laundries; two grist mills; one modern food locker plant; Greer's Office Building, modern, air conditioned; three hardware and furniture stores all large, well equipped; one modern funeral home; one novelty manufacturing plant; one wreath manufacturing plant; two drug stores; two wholesale automobile parts establishments; four new residential additions; eight churches; two school buildings; one community building; one modern city hall and jail; a photo

⁹Prague News Record, August 28, 1928.

studio; one modern eight bed hospital; modern ice plant; three farm produce houses; five cafes; one cleaning and pressing establishment; seven homes of the \$30,000 variety; seventy-five homes of the \$5,000 and above variety; 40 blocks of paved streets; 6 blocks of white way lighting; a municipal library; a municipally owned park and golf course. A new air field and swimming pool are in the making in 1948.¹⁰

¹⁰Howard Tope, Interview, June 10, 1948.

CHAPTER IV
CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE
TOWN OF PRAGUE FROM 1902 TO 1948

To be progressive a town must have good schools and Prague feels that it has the best to offer in this department. The first school Prague had was located in the old Bohemian Hall in the south part of Prague.¹

In 1904 the land was given to the school district of Prague by Herman Josey, agent for the townsite company, for a school building. The building was started in 1904 and was built directly across the street from where the grade school stands today.²

Two hundred and thirty pupils were enrolled in Prague school in 1905. They were under the leadership of H. C. ^{A. S. [unclear]} Linchide, the present president of East Central State Teachers College at Ada, Oklahoma, as principal. M. A. Shotwell was the superintendent of schools. The faculty was made up of Mrs. J. Scudler, Miss Elsie Vaughn, Miss Mamie Lowe, and Miss Cora Kennedy.³

Prague entered the first Lincoln County track, field, and fine arts meet at Chandler, Oklahoma in 1905. Otto Weathers ran the one hundred yard dash but was defeated. He was the only athletic entry from Prague that year. In the meet Chandler

¹Ellen Whitmore Mobacher, Interview, August 5, 1945.

²Prague News, February 4, 1904.

³Prague News, September 18, 1905.

won first, Carney was second, and Agra, third. In the fine arts division Edna Kennedy won the recitation division. Her reading was: "It Takes a Man to be Brave." Cora Casey won the division in debating. The debate topic was: "Resolve that the 15th Amendment to the Constitution of the U. S. is fair and just." Both these girls were very capable in their fields according to the Prague News.⁴

Fourteen pupils graduated from the eighth grade in 1905. They were Howard Riddle, Ensley Barbour, Grace Kennedy, Edna Kennedy, Avis Barbour, Robert and Jes Harris, Earl Dawkins, Ollie Parkhurst, Ellen Whitmore, Carl Shannon, and Herman Grimes.⁵

A high school was started in 1906.⁶ Mr. Linch^e and Mr. Shotwell served Prague's school from the date of its first organization in 1902 to 1909 when they were succeeded by A. H. Burris.⁷

The first year Prague schools were ever able to offer work covering a full twelve year's program, with sixteen credits offered for graduation, was in 1909.⁸

The following curriculum was offered in the high school in 1909:

⁴Prague News, April 6, 1905.

⁵Ibid., June 1, 1905.

⁶Ibid., August 9, 1906.

⁷Ibid., August 12, 1909.

⁸Idem.

Freshmen

1. Latin I
2. Algebra I
3. Physical Geography
4. Modern History I
5. Rhetoric
6. Arithmetic
7. Grammar

Sophomores

1. Caesar
2. Algebra II
3. Plane Geometry
4. Modern History I
5. Arithmetic
6. Grammar

Junior-Senior Together

1. Cicero
2. Composite Algebra
3. Solid Geometry
4. American History
5. English History
6. Rhetoric

9

Prague High School began to play football in 1915 and fielded its finest team in 1917. This team was undefeated in regular season play and lost only to Norman in an unofficial state championship playoff game. The town has always been strong for athletics, but has been football conscious since 1917.¹⁰

The town of Prague had an organized sandlot baseball team as early as 1902. It continued to field a ball team until 1930 which enjoyed the continued support of the town and community.¹¹

Prague's most illustrious athlete was Jim Thorpe, the old Carlisle Indian School great. Thorpe, considered by many experts to be the greatest athlete of all time, got his start in the Prague community. He was born and reared on the Thorpe

⁹Idem.

¹⁰Baxter Davis, a member of 1917 team, Interview, July 15, 1945.

¹¹Newspaper Files of Prague News and Prague News Record, 1902-1930.

allotment eight miles south of Prague. He attended the Sac and Fox Indian School at the agency fifteen miles north of Prague until he went to Carlisle Indian School where he won his fame. Thorpe at Carlisle ran the 100 yard dash in 10 seconds flat, high jumped 6 feet 3 inch, put the shot 42 feet, and threw the discus 125 feet. He was also good enough to play professional baseball; he later played with the New York Giants. Football was Thorpe's greatest game. He was named on Walter Camp's All-American teams in 1911 and 1912. In the 1912 Olympic Games he won both the pentathlon and decathlon events. After doing this, the Amateur Athletic Union accused Thorpe of being a professional athlete because he had played summer baseball for \$25 per month. This ruined his amateur standing and his medals were taken from him. A. H. Whislander, a Swedish athlete, who had run second to Thorpe in the 1912 Olympic Games was given his medals. This fine Swedish athlete refused to take Thorpe's medals, saying that they belonged to a better man.¹²

The Prague schools have been strong in the fine arts ever since their founding. The Bohemians in the town love music, singing, and dancing. The Prague schools have always had a strong music curriculum both in instrumental and vocal music. Contributing greatly to the musical training of the town have been Mr. and Mrs. George Eret, operators of Prague's music store and private teachers of stringed instruments. For years

¹²Shawnee News, December 16, 1943.

Eret was the director of the Prague Town Band, an institution that was started in 1904 and continued until 1935.¹³

George and Emily Sadlo, the son and daughter of C. M. Sadlo, a tailor in Prague since 1906 and originally from Prague, Czechoslovakia, have won fame for themselves in teaching of music in the public schools of Oklahoma.¹⁴

Mrs. V. B. Haws in 1926 introduced the Czechoslovakian folk dances into the school. From 1926 through 1930 under Mrs. C. O. Moore, the Prague folk dancers built up the reputation of being the best in the state, in Czech folk dances.¹⁵

In the field of art, a Prague girl, Miss Olinky Hardy, is considered one of the best interior decorators in the mid west.¹⁶

A. H. Burris served as superintendent of the Prague schools from 1909 to 1915. He was succeeded by B. F. Thompson who served from 1915 through 1917. R. C. Marshall was superintendent from 1918 through 1920. F. H. Snyder served during 1921 and 1922. He was succeeded by R. C. Marshall again in 1923, and he in turn was succeeded by V. B. Hawes in 1924. From 1924 to 27 Mr. Hawes served as superintendent. He was succeeded by M. E. Burk in 1927. In 1928 C. O. Moore became superintendent and remained in this office until he was suc-

¹³A. B. Herring and George Eret, Interview, July 10, 1947.

¹⁴Prague News Record, May 10, 1929.

¹⁵Prague News Record, May 10, 1921.

¹⁶Idem.

ceeded by A. B. Herring in 1930. Mr. Herring served the Prague schools from 1930 to 1943 when he was succeeded by Walter Fields who is still superintendent in 1948.¹⁷

The Prague Grade School building was built in 1907 and is still in use. The Prague High School building was built in 1915. It was declared unsafe in 1927, and school was held in the churches of the town for five months.¹⁸

The top story of the old high school was torn down in 1928 and a new south wing was added to the building. This structure still serves as the present high school building.¹⁹

In 1932 the people of Prague built their first gymnasium. It was built by the town and is used and spoken of as a community building. This greatly aided the school's physical education program.²⁰

In 1935 Prague began to operate school busses. The number of students in High School increased from 100 in 1934 to 250 in 1935. The number of teachers in High School increased from four to nine. The system operated three school busses. One was owned by the district; the other two were privately owned and worked on a contract.²¹

¹⁷A. B. Herring, Ellen Mobacher, and Francis Patton, Interview, April 6, 1944.

¹⁸Prague News Record, November 5, 1927.

¹⁹A. B. Herring, Interview, July 10, 1947.

²⁰Prague News Record, October 10, 1932.

²¹Annual Statistical Report of Prague Public Schools, 1941-42.

The curriculum has been expanded to include typing, shorthand, bookkeeping, band, vocational agriculture, vocational home economics, and public speaking.²²

In 1944 a junior high school was started in connection with the senior high school. This gives the Prague school system a modern six, three, three division of public schools.²³

The churches of Prague have an interesting history. The first church services were held in Prague by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in 1903 in the old school house.²⁴

The first church built in Prague was on "A" avenue east of the Arlington hotel. It was a Methodist Episcopal church, South, but with rare generosity it was agreed all denominations could use the building for worship. The church was built in 1904, and Rev. J. A. Pool was appointed pastor of the church on a half-time basis, with Okemah, by the Annual Conference of the Methodist Church, South, January 23, 1904.²⁵

The Catholic congregation built the second church building in the Prague community. The church was completed March 9, 1905.²⁶ This building served as a house of worship until 1918 when a tornado completely destroyed it. A second building, still in use, was erected in 1919. A parsonage to house a

²²Application for Accrediting, Prague High School, 1942, Dept. of Education, Capitol Building, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

²³Walter Fields, Interview, September 1, 1944.

²⁴Mrs. Junia Heath Jones, Notes on Prague, 1947, p. 4.

²⁵Idem.

²⁶Prague News, March 15, 1905.

resident priest was added in 1925. Under the leadership of Rev. Eric Beevers this church has become one of the leading religious forces in Prague. Its membership is largely made up of Bohemian groups which comprise approximately thirty percent of the town's population.²⁷

The Methodist Episcopal Church, North, extended its activities to Prague in 1905. Rev. M. E. Riley was appointed pastor on a part-time basis. He held services two Sundays each month at Prague, and two services each month at Choctaw, Oklahoma. The Northern and Southern Methodists used the same building for a number of years and finally united their congregations in 1912.²⁸

In 1928 the Methodist Episcopal Church began the construction of a beautiful new brick building on the corner of "A" Avenue. This church, of latest design, was completed under the guidance of Rev. J. A. Pennington. This is the same building that is in use today.²⁹

A pipe organ was donated by the Barbour estate to the Methodist Episcopal church in 1944. This makes the Methodist Episcopal church one of the largest and best equipped churches in Prague.³⁰

The Methodist Protestant church moved to Prague in 1926

²⁷Jerry Suva, Interview, September 1, 1944.

²⁸Rev. W. R. McElvany, Interview, June 10, 1930.

²⁹Prague News Record, May 1, 1928.

³⁰R. T. Tower, Interview, July 10, 1947.

from the country where it had previously been active as a rural church at a place called Shady Grove, some two miles north of Prague. This group was first organized by Rev. W. R. McElvany, a pioneer Methodist minister, at Rocky Point School house in 1902. The church held services at Rocky Point until 1915 when it moved and built a building at Shady Grove. In 1926 the congregation decided to move to Prague and purchased the building owned by the Presbyterian church. This congregation operated as a separate unit of Methodism until 1944 when it was united with the Methodist Episcopal church.³¹

The Presbyterians organized and built a church on "A" avenue, one block east of the present site of Rollins Hospital, in 1906. George C. Barbour, stockholder in both the First National and First State Banks, was the driving force behind this program. Various ministers of the Presbyterian church conducted services in Prague from 1906 to 1920 when it was finally decided to disband because of the small and declining membership of this group. Their building was sold to the Methodist Protestant church in 1926.³²

The supporters of the Baptist faith built their first church home on Brunson Avenue in 1906. The congregation originally was quite small, but the membership has grown until at the present time theirs is the third largest church in Prague. The Baptists completed a beautiful brick building

³¹W. R. McElvany, Interview, June 2, 1930.

³²Mrs. Hattie Cheek, Interview, April 5, 1940.

in 1942 and bought a parsonage in 1946. They are one of Prague's most active denominations.³³

The Christian church group was organized, and the first services held in a frame building on Broadway in 1915. This group has played an active part in the town's religious life ever since. The congregation has always been small, but the church has always maintained a pastor, even if only on a part-time basis. The members of this church completed an annex to their house of worship in 1936 and now have a nice frame building adequate for the church's needs.³⁴

The Nazarene church was established in Prague in 1928. Its growth was steady, and the present house of worship was built on "A" avenue in 1942.³⁵

The present edifice of the Church of Christ was built in 1941 on "A" avenue just across the street from the Methodist Protestant church.³⁶

The Pentecostal Holiness Church was launched in 1945 in its present home in the west part of Prague and is steadily growing.³⁷

As is the case with many small American communities, the churches play a vital role in the moral life of the community.

³³E. E. Long, Interview, July 12, 1947

³⁴Bruce Duncan, Interview, July 11, 1947.

³⁵R. T. Tower, Interview, July 10, 1947.

³⁶F. M. Schubert, Interview, August 1, 1947.

³⁷R. T. Tower, Interview, July 10, 1947.

To be progressive, a town must have a good newspaper and Prague is no exception. The first newspaper was printed July 24, 1902, virtually as soon as the town was founded. The name of the newspaper was the Prague News and it was edited at first by F. N. Newhouse. It was a twelve column, four page paper, Republican in politics, and it served to bind the town and community together.³⁸

In 1903 a rival newspaper came into being. It was called the Prague Patriot, and was owned by F. N. Mullen. It was also a twelve column, four page paper and declared itself as independent in politics. In 1905 Mullen gave this paper to his son-in-law, W. S. Overstreet. After a few struggling years of lean business, Mr. Overstreet sold the paper to B. S. Edwards, and the latter continued to publish the paper until 1909. In this year a great pioneer newspaper man, Frank Nipper, came to Prague and bought the Prague Patriot. Mr. Nipper almost immediately changed the name of the paper to the Prague Record. Mr. Nipper bought out his rival, F. N. Newhouse, and the Prague News in 1914, and the two papers were combined under the name of the Prague Record. Mr. Nipper continued to publish the paper through 1919. During this period the paper was printed weekly except for a brief period in 1915, at the height of Prague's first oil boom. At that time the hopes of the town's future ran high, and the paper was printed daily. In 1919 Nipper sold his paper to De Wald and Falkenstine of

³⁸Mrs. Junia Heath Jones, Interview, July 27, 1947. She is editor of the Prague News Record.

Hennessey, Oklahoma. Mrs. Junia Heath Jones bought the paper from them in 1920 and has been the editor and publisher ever since. Mrs. Jones changed the name of the paper to the Prague News Record in honor of the two pioneer papers. The Prague News Record is a six page, twelve column newspaper, Republican in politics.³⁹ It is considered by many as one of the finest small town newspapers in Oklahoma today.

³⁹Idem.

CHAPTER V

CITY ORGANIZATION AND GENERAL DEVELOPMENT

The town of Prague officially organized its government on the commission plan November 28, 1902. As a result of the elections held, the first city officials selected were as follows: F. W. Troutman, B. F. Whitmore, and D. J. Bond, trustees; F. N. Newhouse, city clerk; J. E. Johnson, treasurer; C. L. Claybourn, marshal, and F. B. Spring, police commissioner.¹

After the election held in the fall of 1904 the city officials were: Jake Mertes, J. W. Huffman, and R. M. Crow, trustees; George Dixon, city clerk; J. M. Pastusek, treasurer; Sherman McNabb, marshal; A. F. Wood, police commissioner; and Frank Leader, city assessor.²

The most notable fact about the early political history of Prague was the great turnover in personnel of the municipal government. During this period virtually no official served more than one term, and each election brought to office a new group of administrators. Not one of the old group of officials was re-elected in 1909. The new officials were: Ed Gilroy, Matt Thisen, B. F. Whitmore, trustees; D. J. Ferguson, city clerk; C. E. Kensey, assessor; A. P. Slover, treasurer; James Harris, justice; Frank Miles, marshal. These city offices are all elective. Early elections in the town brought lively

¹Journal of the Town Trustees M.S., No. I, December 12, 1902, City Hall, Prague, Oklahoma.

²Prague News, July 10, 1905.

controversy among the citizens of Prague. The degree of heat generated in these elections is strikingly shown in the Prague News. Many of its issues are filled with political advertising and speeches which reflected the active campaigning for city offices.³

Prague continued to adhere to the commission plan of city government until 1927 when the mayor-council type of city government was adopted.⁴

Much of the credit for the political stability and progress of the town can be given to the capable leadership of two men. The first was the pioneer merchant and trustee, B. F. Whitmore; the second was Prague's first mayor, the railroader and banker, H. W. Hartman. The careful and capable guidance of these men aided greatly the development of Prague into the beautiful, thrifty, little community that it is today.⁵

From January 5, 1903 to June 18, 1906, the town of Prague grew very rapidly. The census report for 1907 shows the population of Prague to be 998.⁶ This is an increase of 398 persons over the census report of 1902 which gave the Prague population as 600 people.⁷

³Prague News, February 18, 1907.

⁴Prague News Record, February 6, 1927.

⁵Prague News Record, April 14, 1927.

⁶Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910. Population, Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, IV Volumes 1913-14. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1913.

⁷Idem.

In 1916 Prague had developed into a town of 1498 persons.⁸

According to official census returns, Prague's population remained near the 1916 figure until comparatively recent times. However, the population has varied from time to time according to unofficial counts and estimates. In 1920 the official population was still 1489 but the unofficial population, according to the Prague News Record, was over 2000 persons. This figure remained virtually constant until 1946 when Prague developed its post-war boom. The unofficial population figure in 1947 was quoted at 3,500 persons.⁹

Prague in 1923 was in the midst of a campaign for good roads. This trend has been paramount during the entire history of the town. The town cooperated with its old rival, Chandler, and succeeded in having the Ozark Trail, one of the first good roads connecting Oklahoma City and Tulsa, routed through Prague in September, 1923.¹⁰

The good roads fight carried over into 1924 when Prague and Chandler were trying to float a \$990,000 bond issue to improve the local roads in Lincoln County. On two different occasions during this year the measure was submitted to the people. On both occasions it failed, although Prague voted

⁸Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920. Population, Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, IV Volumes 1921-23. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1922.

⁹Mrs. Junia Heath Jones, Interview, June 20, 1948.

¹⁰Prague News Record, September 23, 1923.

favorably for the issue both times.¹¹

A newly constructed bridge over the North Canadian River was opened to traffic in 1924. This greatly increased Prague's trade territory for it made it the closest shipping and trading point for the farmers of a large area south of the Canadian River.¹²

Prague began the first organized movement to become modernized in 1925 when the town was asked to assume \$30,000 in bonds to put in a new water system and a sewage disposal plant. The water bonds carried in the first election, but the sewer bonds lost.¹³ The sewer bonds carried in the second election, and Prague built its modern sewer system and disposal plant in 1926.¹⁴

The main street of Prague was paved in 1926 as part of the modernization program.¹⁵

The north-south road was rebuilt and widened at this time. However, it did not have a hard surface until 1932. This is the road that connects the Seminole and Stroud oil fields that were booming at this time.¹⁶

Prague continued its modernization program in 1927 when

¹¹Ibid., July 24, 1924.

¹²Ibid., August 10, 1924.

¹³Ibid., January 15, 1925.

¹⁴Ibid., August 18, 1926.

¹⁵Ibid., December 1, 1926.

¹⁶Ibid., January 5, 1927.

the city built its first white way lighting system. At the same time, the town was also piped for the use of natural gas. This made Prague a completely modern little city, as far as public improvements and public services were concerned.¹⁷

Interested citizens of Prague also started a cemetery beautification program. This program was carried on until Prague has what is thought by many to be one of the most beautiful cemeteries of any small town in the state.¹⁸

Civic activity has always played an important part in the life of the town since its first commercial club was formed in 1907. In 1927 a Junior Chamber of Commerce was formed with one hundred members. This body has become one of the most active groups for the betterment of the community.¹⁹

Barta Avenue was paved in 1927 from the east side of Prague to the railroad underpass west of town. This gave the city twenty-one blocks of paved streets.²⁰

Dr. J. S. Rollins moved to Prague from Paden in 1927 and established Rollins Hospital. This is Prague's only hospital. It is claimed that Rollins Hospital is one of the best small hospitals in the state.²¹

A wholesale grocery business came to Prague in 1928. This business was moved to Prague from Okemah, the county seat of

¹⁷Ibid., January 5, 1927.

¹⁸Daily Oklahoman, September 11, 1935.

¹⁹Prague News Record, April 13, 1927.

²⁰Ibid., May 18, 1927.

²¹Ibid., June 22, 1927.

Okfuskee County, by Sam Gray and the Streetman brothers. This business grew until it has become one of Prague's largest business concerns.²²

The man who guided Prague through all this improvement period and encouraged and directed the modernization and beautification program was H. W. Hartman. Mr. Hartman came to Prague from Ft. Smith, Arkansas. He was connected with the Ft. Smith and Western Railroad. A public spirited citizen, he served the community in several official capacities. He first served the city as a trustee and later as mayor, after the city had adopted the mayor council plan of city government in 1927. His vision, foresight, and sound business judgment brought Prague out of what looked like hopeless indebtedness and guided her through her modernization period so competently that she managed to emerge both improved and debt free.²³

One of the major problems facing the city fathers, including Hartman, was the matter of providing adequate public utilities. Prague's water and light plant burned in 1918 and the city was left without electricity for an entire year. Large expenditures were necessary to rebuild the plant. In 1918 the city voted \$45,000 in bonds for this purpose. A short time later a contract was made with the Oklahoma Power and Transmission Company of Bing, Oklahoma, whereby Prague was to purchase at wholesale prices electricity for its use. This service

²²Ibid., August 29, 1928.

²³R. T. Tower, Interview, July 5, 1947.

was started January 19, 1922.²⁴

In 1927 the Oklahoma Gas and Electric Company of Harrah, Oklahoma, purchased the properties of the Oklahoma Power and Transmission Company, and built their lines to Lambdin, two miles east of Prague. Mr. Hartman and other city officials reached an agreement with O. G. and E. that has proved satisfactory in every respect. They were able to furnish the city with the desired electric power at reasonable rates. The city agreed to buy all its electricity and gas from this company, giving the latter exclusive rights in supplying the town with electric power and gas. Both parties have been well satisfied with the agreement. The O. G. and E., because of this monopoly right, sold to the city at reasonable rates all of the power and gas it could use. From this arrangement the city has saved enough money to pay all its debts, and no city tax is levied. The city owns its own distributing plant valued at \$50,000. The rates charged have been so reasonable that the consumer has felt free to use all of these commodities that he needed. From the profits the city has accumulated a surplus of \$42,000.²⁵

²⁴Journal of the Town Trustees M. S., Vol. II, 1917 to 1923, Prague City Hall.

²⁵Financial Statement of the Town of Prague, 1942, Minutes of the Town Trustees, 1942, City Hall, Prague, Oklahoma.

CHAPTER VI

PRAGUE IN WORLD WAR I AND II

The town of Prague has been intensely active in both World Wars. There are some five hundred Czechs, Moravians, Bohemians, and Slavs residing in the vicinity of Prague and their animosity toward Germany and Austria has been and is still intense.¹

These foreign born people that others in Prague refer to simply as "Czechs" are so close to the old country and its problems that any flare-up of bitterness and strife in Europe is reflected in Prague. This is understandable when we remember that many of these people are just a few years away from their homeland, and many of them still have near relatives living there. As an example of the close ties, one could point to the following persons and how they can divide public opinion in a community.

C. M. Sadlo came to Oklahoma in 1889 from Bohemia to escape twelve years of military service under the Austrian Hapsburgs. He has a sister living near Prague, Czechoslovakia, today. Mr. Sadlo was a leader of Prague (Oklahoma) Bohemians in both World Wars.²

Mike Mitacek came to Prague, Oklahoma in 1910 from Bohemia and started in the town as a shoemaker. He has a blind and aged mother in the Sudetenland. This mother and her family

¹Prague News Record, April 5, 1938.

²Idem.

have suffered greatly first under Austria, then Germany.³

O. R. Blumel came to Prague from Austria in 1905. He set up a harness shop in Prague when he was nineteen years old. His relatives are all in Austria. His sympathies are naturally with Austria.⁴

Fred Heinzig came to America in 1905 from Germany and bought a farm in the old Sac and Fox Indian Reserve. He was the head of a German colony that settled on the rich farming land north of Prague. All his relatives are in Germany; and consequently his interest is in the German people.⁵

With this cross section of feeling in the Prague community feeling naturally ran high in Prague during 1916-18. The Czechs outnumbered the Germans about ten to one so the general trend of feeling was in support of the Allies. The German sympathizers were very confident of the success of Germany in the early part of World War I. Fist fights and near riots, caused by bitterness of feeling among foreign-born residents, were common in Prague.⁶

As the War moved on into 1917, the Irish and English groups around Prague gradually became more active supporters of the war against Germany. It became increasingly dangerous to voice pro-German sympathies. There were two cases of near

³Idem.

⁴Oklahoma City Times, December 24, 1944.

⁵Fritz Heinzig, Interview, July 10, 1943.

⁶R. T. Tower and Fritz Heinzig, Interview, July 10, 1945.

lynching in the Prague community over the expression of sentiment favorable to the cause of the Central Powers. After these incidents the pro-German groups were more reserved in their public utterance, knowing they were hopelessly outnumbered in the community.⁷

There was intense patriotism on the part of the Bohemians, Irish, and English groups around Prague after the United States entered the war in April, 1917. The little community sent one hundred and eleven men to serve in the armed forces in World War I.⁸

Of the one hundred and eleven men in service, only one was killed in action. He was Edward Walla, a young Bohemian farm boy. He was killed by shrapnel in the Battle of the Meuse-Argonne Forest when a shell exploded directly over him. His remains were sent home in 1920 for Prague's only World War I Military funeral. Since he was the only Prague boy killed in action, the American Legion Post was named for him. It is called the Edward Walla Post Number 11.⁹

A memorial service in honor of all the war dead is held each year. It is conducted with military ceremony by the American Legion Post and has become a major occasion in the community. There have been as many as four thousand persons gathered at the Prague cemetery for one of these services.¹⁰

⁷R. T. Tower, Interview, July 21, 1947.

⁸Prague News Record, December 28, 1918.

⁹Prague News Record, December 15, 1923.

¹⁰Idem.

The Red Cross and Salvation Army were active in Prague during World War I. The ladies of the community formed sewing and knitting groups to work for the men in uniform. The churches held many special services and prayer meetings for the boys overseas. The town over-subscribed every war loan. The residents bought Liberty Bonds, and observed wheatless and meatless days. Looking at the community as a whole during World War I, there was a general feeling of both patriotism and sadness coupled with bitter hatred against the Germans and Austrians in Prague.¹¹

A higher degree of patriotism prevailed in the Prague community during the second World War. With it went a unity of public opinion that was not noticeable during World War I. If any Prague citizen harbored pro-German sympathies he kept them strictly to himself. There was no wild shouting, flag waving, or fist fighting such as had characterized World War I in Prague. There was rather a grimness of determination to complete a necessary but unpleasant task.¹²

Feeling ran high among the Czech population of Prague in 1938 on the occasion of the Germans' invasion of Czechoslovakia. The Prague Czechs hoped that their relations in central Europe would fight Germany. They denounced Germany and also criticized Great Britain for trying to appease Hitler. Both Czech lodges, the Z.C.B.J. and the Sokol groups sent protests to the

¹¹R. T. Tower, Interview, July 30, 1947.

¹²Idem.

British government denouncing their desertion of Czechoslovakia.¹³

C. M. Sadlo, the head of the Sokol Club, a national gymnastic organization, was particularly open and bitter in his denunciation of Hitler for taking over his homeland. He was equally critical of Great Britain for abandoning Czechoslovakia.¹⁴

Frank Kucera, head of the Z.C.B.J. Lodge, a fraternal insurance organization, was equally critical of both Hitler and Britain. These two Prague Czech leaders hoped that the United States would intervene to save their homeland in 1938.¹⁵

When war came to this country in 1941 every phase of life in Prague reflected an intense loyalty. Red Cross sewing and knitting groups met each Monday afternoon and worked far into the night all during the war. Another group met daily from 1943 until the end of the war to roll bandages and pack medical supplies for the Red Cross. The local U.S.O. furnished each draftee or enlisted man with a kit of helpful articles.¹⁶

The town of Prague, as in the first war, over-subscribed ✓ in every war bond drive during the conflict. Stamps were sold in the school, and the entire school system was actively engaged in helping the war effort. The town also went over the top in all scrap metal, scrap rubber, and paper drives made

¹³Pulsa Tribune, March 20, 1939.

¹⁴Idem.

¹⁵Idem.

¹⁶Mrs. Junia Heath Jones, Notes, 1947. p. 5.

during the war. Fats were saved religiously during the entire period. There was little quarreling or complaining in Prague over war shortages. Everyone seemed to think these were necessary inconveniences in the grim fight against the totalitarian powers. Seventy people from the Prague community at one time were working for the Douglas Aircraft Company in Oklahoma City. These people continued to reside in Prague and drove daily to the aircraft plant. This factory built the famous C-47 transport plane, and later the A-26 fighter bomber. Forty more Prague workers found employment at Tinker Field near Oklahoma City. This field was a base for overhauling the war-weary planes, especially B-29 bombers, before returning them to combat service.¹⁷

In addition to these activities Prague and the surrounding community had some five hundred men and women in the military forces during World War II. Of this group A. B. Herring, Jr., Ed Krotual, and Frank Mastena were killed in action. James Trent, Jr., and Carl Cooper were seriously wounded but recovered.¹⁸

Looking back upon the years of strife, Prague should be, and is, justly proud of her war record. She has nothing but praise and reverence in her thoughts for those who gave their lives for their country.¹⁹

¹⁷Lee Easily, Interview, June 6, 1944.

¹⁸R. T. Tower, Interview, July 15, 1947.

¹⁹Lloyd Oplinger, Interview, June 1, 1948.

CHAPTER VII
THE STATUS OF PRAGUE TODAY

The present city of Prague, Oklahoma, has experienced a steady growth since its founding. The town first depended primarily upon cotton farming for its basic activity. This period continued until 1928 when the boll weevil destroyed the cotton industry. Oil played a minor part in the growth of the community as did the railroad, but the main factor contributing to the growth of the Prague community has been the civic-mindedness and foresight of its leaders. As long as Prague leaders continue to be unselfish in their efforts to make the town better, Prague should continue to grow.¹

It is true that the town faces many major problems. One, if not two of them, have been met and conquered. The loss of the cotton growing industry was a major blow to the economic prosperity of the town. In fact, it had provided for years the life blood of the community. This difficulty has been met and overcome with the shift from small cotton farms to large bonanza farms or ranches, and the shift from cotton to peanuts, pecans, and cattle as a basic crop. This economic change carried with it a major social change also, but the community has met and overcome this very great obstacle. The second great handicap has only been partially solved. This was the loss of the railroad. Prague was dealt a major blow with the loss of the Ft. Smith and Western Railroad. Trans-

¹H. W. Hartman, Interview, June 12, 1945.

portation was, and is, difficult. Of course, passenger traffic is well taken care of by private automobiles and busses. However, the freighting problem is more difficult to solve. Truck lines are taking care of the freighting business, to be sure, but trucks do not yet handle freight, particularly heavy, bulky commodities, as cheaply as did the railroad. Because this is true, the cost of living is higher in Prague than in towns that are on the railroad. The transportation of heavy loads for any industry is a major difficulty for Prague.²

If a modern community is to prosper, some type of industry must be attracted to the town to furnish employment for the members of the community. If jobs are not available, the youth is forced to leave the community to find employment elsewhere. This will lead to the eventual death of a community. Without a railroad it is increasingly hard to induce even small industry to move into a town. Prague has the Union Cotton Oil Company, The Novelty Manufacturing shop, and a Wreath Manufacturing Plant, but this is not enough to induce more people to move into the town. Prague definitely needs more industry to develop a balanced economy. If she can attract it or start it herself she will continue to grow. If not, she may decline and gradually assume the status of a small inland country village.³

A more progressive attitude seems to be needed as far as

²Idem.

³Idem.

the matter of improvements is concerned. It is notable that the civic leaders during recent years have not fought too strenuously to force certain badly needed improvements. Prague needs more recreational facilities for its young people. The community needs a swimming pool, a municipally owned park, tennis courts, a well-equipped and attractive softball field, a larger public library with a reading room, and an active recreational program that will take care of the entire community, the youth, and the adult as well. Prague probably needs an air field with concrete runways, and a modern, attractive air depot. Small industries should be sought and their owners sold on the possibilities of locating in Prague. If the civic leaders of the town see this need and do something about it, Prague will continue to grow and prosper. If not, she is likely to slip backward and become a small country village.⁴

⁴Idem.

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