

OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CHOCTAW NATION.

By W. R. D.

The Choctaw Indian Nation, one of the Five Civilized Tribes of the Indian Territory, will shortly be opened to white settlement; that is, a portion of the lands may be purchased from the Indians. Just now the Choctaw Indians are filing upon their homes at the rate of several hundred per day. Each Indian is entitled to 320 acres, of which he must keep 160 acres for a period of 21 years. The rest of the land he can sell, with the approval of the Secretary of the Interior. This land is rich and fertile—that which is not underlaid with coal and other minerals. The land of the Choctaw Nation is classified as follows: 3,755,606 acres of farming land, 254,080 acres of hilly land (this being good for grazing purposes), 1,436,052 acres of mountain pasture land, 512,097 acres of mountain land, 992,097 acres of pine timber land.

The Choctaw Nation is the largest of the Five Tribes, and its citizens are the richest. Many of the citizens are intermarried, and "squaw" men own considerable of the richest mining lands. The mineral lands come under a special clause, however. The "squaw" men have been largely instrumental in the upbuilding of the Nation. Most of its mineral resources are at present undeveloped, and but little of the timber land has been cut. This will open fortune-building opportunities to hundreds and thousands. The time to visit the Choctaw Nation for business purposes is now, while the tribal government is in process of dissolving and the Indians are selling and leasing their lands as rapidly as possible.

The coal mines of the Choctaw Nation reach from north of the Winding Stair Mountains, near Atoka, to the Arkansas line. There are rich coal mines at Poteau, on the Frisco System; Hartshorne, on the Choctaw, Oklahoma & Gulf, and South McAlester.

Experienced miners say that the richest beds are those yet to be uncovered along the Frisco System south of the Boston Mountains. There are a number of rich asphalt mines at Moyer Spur, on the Frisco System. These mines are owned by the Busch family of St. Louis.

Timber lands in the Choctaw Nation lie along the main Texas line of the Frisco System, in the Boston Mountains, and also on the newly opened Arkansas & Choctaw road. Between Hugo, I. T., and Madill, in the Chickasaw Nation, is one vast tract of fine timber land. This timber land may be leased from the Indians at present. By the payment of a royalty of \$1 per one thousand feet, the oak, walnut and pine timber may be hewn and marketed. The usual profit is about \$15 per thousand feet.

Considerable lead, zinc and other ores have been found in the picturesque Boston Mountains along the Frisco System, but the Indians that own this land refuse to work the property until the government has awarded them a title in fee simple. Then there is no danger of losing the mines. Hundreds of car loads of rich prairie hay are shipped from the Choctaw Nation every year and sold by the white men who have leased the land at a small price. Five-year leases can be made, the price of rental ranging from 50 cents to \$3 per annum per acre. These leases are all approved by the Indian agent and cannot be invalidated. Many white farmers are moving into the Choctaw Nation from North Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia and the South to take advantage of these offers. Unimproved land can often be rented free of charge for the first year to do slight improving and makes the property all the more valuable for the Indians.

One of the opportunities now offered to shrewd investors is the purchase of dead Indian claims. Every time a redskin dies

his head right reverts back to the tribe and is offered for sale by the United States at \$1048. The purchase of this head right entitles the owner to select 320 acres of land in the Nation, any place that he may find an opening. Often a head right is found to be worth \$10,000, depending entirely upon the luck one has in getting good or poor land.

A few years ago millions of cattle roamed over the Choctaw Nation. The land rented for seven cents an acre four years ago, while ten years ago range was free for the use of it. Now good pasture cannot be had at any price, for the land is all in process of allotment and no cattleman can find a large body in one tract. The herds are simply running here and there, and most of the large herds have been sold. The days of cattle ranching in any of the five Indian tribes are no more, though at one time the Indian Territory was considered the richest cattle country on earth. Some of the largest dealers in cattle were the Wilson Brothers, until recently owning 10,000 head and pasturing their herds in the eastern portion of the Choctaw Nation; J. J. McAlester, who owned 50,000 head and had pastures covering ten miles square; J. H. Miller, whose herds ran in the McGee Valley, and numbered from seven to fifteen thousand; T. W. Hunter of Boswell, who pastured his large herds in Jackson County; J. H. Featherstone, of a town of the same name, who owned 3000 head, and many others. Most of these cattlemen have disposed of their herds and have taken to the raising of fine blooded cattle. G. W. Scott of San Bois and C. O. Overstreet of Cache are well known because of their herds of fine blooded Herefords. In fact, about the only herds one sees in a trip over the country are blooded cattle. The long horns have all been shipped to far western Texas and New Mexico or sold to the packing houses.

The Choctaw Indians are a shrewd element of that country. There are but few full-bloods in this tribe today, and they are far from ignorant. Even the full-blood

can drive a bargain to suit his own notion. I was at a town named Bochito, on the Frisco branch, between Hugo and Madill, recently, when a white man sought to obtain certain information from a full-blood Choctaw. I was riding with a sixteenth-blood Choctaw, who noticed the negotiations as they progressed.

"He can't get that Injun to do anything," remarked my friend, "unless he produces something to please the fancy of our full-blood friend."

And sure enough he did not. The white man came back and sat down in a car seat beside us. He was told that a drink of whisky might do some good.

"But it is against the law to give Indians liquor," the pale face said.

"It is not against the law when no one is looking," the sixteenth-part Indian assured.

The white man then went forward and told the full-blood that his grip contained a bottle of whisky, and that he would like to leave the grip on the rear of the train, and wanted him to guard it to the next station. The Indian did guard it, but he must have taken several sips, for he was good-natured after that and talked very satisfactorily.

Two thousand feet of brick frontage is now in course of construction at Oklahoma City. The Postal Telegraph company is stringing its wires into the city and wending its way across the territory from Texas to Kansas.

Kay County has been the banner wheat county for some time, but Greer County, it is claimed, will offer it a strong fight for that honor next year. Immigrants are going into Greer County very rapidly indeed and overturning the rich, loamy soil.

Oklahoma is making a strong endeavor to have its appropriation for taking a correct report of the crops increased from \$1,800 to at least \$6,000. It is a move in the right direction for the advancement of the territory.

THE FRUIT BELT OF NORTHWEST ARKANSAS.

By W. R. DRAPER.

Two of the greatest fruit-producing counties in the United States are Benton and Washington, in northwest Arkansas. Both counties are penetrated by the Frisco System, and the shipping of fruit from these two counties usually occupies the entire attention of the people during the fall and winter. As a result of the bountiful fruit crops of these two counties, the citizens generally are wealthy, prosperous and contented. This portion of the state is truly the most wonderful fruit section of the Southwest. There are many larger fruit ranches in Missouri, but none more productive.

In Benton County there are 1,870,000 apple trees, and in Washington County 1,550,000. The orchards are owned by the citizens who run them, and as soon as a man has made sufficient money to retire he sells his orchards and moves to town, while his successor proceeds to grow rich in turn. There are no renters in these two counties, despite the fact that land is none too cheap. In the past twenty-five years the northwest Arkansas fruit belt has been increasing in popularity.

In 1901 there were shipped from Rogers 395 cars of apples. The same year forty-six cars of Elberta peaches and thirty-eight cars of strawberries were shipped from the same station. In 1901, from the county of Benton, 2000 cars of apples were shipped, bringing in to the apple-grower \$1,000,000. On an average year it is said that the three thousand fruit-growers of the county realize a net profit of nearly \$1000 per capita from their orchards. Some of the farmers make \$10,000 every season, and never touch their orchards.

The apple shipments from various stations along the Frisco System, in 1901, were as follows: Rogers, 395; Hiawsec, 37; Bentonville, 160; Cennerton, 239; Decatur, 45; Siloam Springs, 203; Gentry, 207; Grobett, 90; Garfield, 30; Avoca, 91;

Lowell, 95. Considerable of this fruit was dried and evaporated, which lessened the quantity, but increased the income of the growers. Last year the shipments from Rogers alone were as follows: Apples (green), 148 cars; apples (evaporated), 19; peaches, 89 cars; strawberries, 9.

There are five hundred barrels of apples in a car, worth about \$1.50 per barrel, or fifty cents per bushel. The net profit of the fruit growers around Rogers amounts to \$300,000 per annum. The fruit is shipped to all parts of the country, and over three hundred fruit firms are represented at Rogers in the buying season. Six to fifteen cars loads of fruit per day are shipped out via the Frisco System.

That there is a good profit in fruit growing is evidenced by the following: Fifty fruit trees grow on one acre of land. These trees are set from 24 to 30 feet apart. The average yield per acre is fifty barrels, while some trees will grow two or three barrels. However, from the average orchard ten years old, from \$60 to \$100 worth of apples are gathered every year. Such property can be purchased for \$100 to \$125 per acre, with a clear title.

There is plenty of property near the town of Rogers, unimproved, of course, that can be bought for \$3 to \$60 per acre. This land is first-class for the cultivation of fruit. Of a quarter section of this hilly land, lying alongside a mountain range, fully one hundred acres will produce good fruit. Before an orchard will bear good fruit and pay returns, it must be at least five years old. When a tree is six years old it will run from one to two bushels, but when it is ten years old it will produce from one to three barrels, or thrice as much as four years previous to attaining its full growth.

I was talking with R. L. Nance, mayor of Rogers, and a fruit buyer in that town for fifteen years or more, and he says that

in five years he expects to see the fruit business of Rogers more than doubled.

"Instead of shipping out five to fifteen cars of fruit per day in season, I expect to see a whole train load of apples, peaches and berries leave here every day," said Mr. Nance. "Elberta peaches and Ben Davis apples are the principal fruits grown in the counties of Benton and Washington. Benton County has earned the reputation of producing more apples than any other county in the United States. The peach crop in these two counties runs a full crop three years out of five."

Some of the largest fruit growers around Rogers are W. R. Cady, who owns a 190-acre orchard; W. C. Adair, who owns 100 acres; J. O. Wade owns 60 acres, M. Wheatly owns 80 acres and others own smaller farms that pay nearly as large returns as these places. The Wing estate owns 80 acres, which, it is said, money cannot buy, the profits are so large and certain.

One of the richest men in that section is Mr. W. A. Miller, who owns 180 acres, most of it being in fruit. Mr. Miller told me that he was one of the pioneers on Benton County, coming there prior to the railroad, and he has since remained steadfast to its wonderful possibilities. Mr. Miller, after working hard to get a small orchard started, added to it every year, until a few years ago he moved to town to spend the rest of his days in ease. He is worth several hundred thousand dollars, and is identified with all things that tend to build up Benton County and Rogers.

As to some of the instances of fortune-building off the fruit farm, I may relate the personal success of a few Benton County growers. When R. H. Patterson last year sold the fruit off his thirty-acre apple orchard for \$3600, or \$100 per acre, he did not consider the price any too high, and to prove good his assertion the dealers recently rendered a statement to him wherein they profited about \$30 per acre. Major Mayberry of Lowell made a net profit of \$3000 off ten acres two years ago, and sold tips off his grape vines for \$400

additional. In the orchard were apples, grapes, berries, etc. J. S. Miller, living near Rogers, gathered 500 bushels, or 800 crates, off two acres of peach trees last year. He sold the peaches for \$1 per crate. His net profit was 85 cents per crate. The orchard was less than five years old. The peach crop in Benton County is good three years out of five.

The fruit industry is one of the few good reasons why that section is rapidly filling up with settlers. Benton County is a good all-around farming region, aside from its orchards. It is a very healthy locality, being 1500 feet above sea level. The valleys are rich in growing grain fields, while the mountain sides are used for grapes and fruit-growing of all kinds.

As to climate, the northwest section of Arkansas cannot be excelled anywhere. The county was settled years before the war, and some of these old mansions are yet found in the heart of the woodland. Cotton plantations owned by men of the old South are here found, some of the fields yet being tended by the descendants of the negroes who refused their freedom, when it was tendered them.

I am told by an old-timer in Benton County that the days never grow warmer than ninety degrees, and the high elevation always affords a good breeze. Certain it is that no finer water can be found anywhere, and the trees that grow along the mountain sides can be hewn and sold at good prices. Some pine and white oak are found, and considerable red oak timber may be bought cheap. The timber land sells at \$5 per acre, and yields timber worth as much, while after the land has once been cleared it is worth \$15 an acre to the owner. The average rainfall is about forty inches, and there are no crop failures. The two fruit failures in the past quarter century were due entirely to the cold weather of late spring: But as a rule the evenness of temperature, both winter and summer, makes Benton County a delightful spot to call one's home. It is a fact that the climate here is that of the North and South combined, while the old

inhabitants have just enough of the southern hospitality to make one's visit there worth while and cause you to wish that you were remaining always. Owing to the mountain spurs running into the country there are springs of pure water everywhere. There is scarcely a farm that does not have a pure spring of water upon it. The water is noted for its many cures, principal among the cures effected being rheumatism, asthma, kidney trouble and liver complaint.

There are thousands of acres of government land in the counties of Benton and Washington. This land may be settled upon under the homestead act, and paid for at the end of five years. The bottom lands and the fruit lands may be had cheaply, while ranches for cattle and sheep are found in abundance.

As the fruit industry grows in Benton and Washington counties so do other enterprises. A fruit evaporator has just

been placed in operation at Rogers, and handles 1200 bushels of apples per day. The cost of the plant was \$4000. Fruit is taken to this place and run through several different machines, first the peeler, then the bleacher, then the slicer, and later tossed into a large drying room, where, by a dry heat process, the fruit is evaporated in sixteen hours. The industry of shipping dried apples is quite a gigantic one, and is carried on at Rogers and Springdale, after a wholesale fashion. Dried fruit is much more compact and brings a higher price. Apples at the evaporator sell at about twenty cents per bushel. There is an opening for plants of this kind at several points along the Frisco System, in Benton County. At Bentonville there is a peach brandy distillery, said to be the largest in the United States. The Elberta peach makes fine brandy, hence peaches and grapes are used in large quantities for brandy and wine-making throughout northwest Arkansas.

THE OSAGE INDIAN RESERVATION TO OPEN.

The Osage Indians, the richest redskins of the West, are soon to become citizens of Oklahoma and voters under the flag. Their lands will be thrown open to white settlement—that is, the residue lands—for the Indians have agreed that the reservation shall be allotted to them. The 1,500,000 acres of land in the reservation are rich in agricultural and mining resources, while the woods abound with game and the streams are filled with fish.

The greater portion of the Osage country is now leased to the cattlemen at low rates. The Indians secure about \$40,000 per annum from 25 cattlemen who control the grazing leases. The Indians also have several million dollars on deposit at the treasury in Washington, and every man, woman and child of the tribe draws \$50 interest money every three months.

The Osages are the least industrious and

civilized of any of the Southwestern tribes. They work but little, although they are advancing slowly and assuming more and more the manner of their neighbors. For several years the government has been taking more and more of the power away from these Indians, as administered through their tribal council, and in this way placing them in contact with pale-face methods.

Bird McGuire, delegate to Congress from Oklahoma, has interested himself in the opening of the Osage reservation, as well as the government pasture reserve in southern Oklahoma, and he will petition Congress this winter to take action and open both reservations. Oklahoma has reached that stage in her development where these Indian lands must be thrown open to allow the farmers to have full power over the soil.