

Prosper History

(By Juanice Stanton for 1972 homecoming) 10-29-72

...In order to lay the basis for Prosper's birth, we have to go clear back to 1859, when the state of Texas appropriated lands for the education system of the state. County courts in 1876 ordered small tracts of land be established so that it could readily be sold. Most of the land sold for \$3.50 per acre, with the tracts being approximately 160 acres. Dr. A. T. Bryant of McKinney purchased one of these tracts of land and it was that tract of land that formed the nucleus of our community, Prosper.

A group of outsiders, who had inside information on the route the Frisco line would take, bought up farms near locations of stations-to-be and formed townsite companies. However, Dr. Bryant kept a tract of land just east of the townsite. That tract was on high ground and gave a commanding view of the surrounding countryside.

Citizens shunned the lots of the townsite company and bought lots on the high ground. Eventually, the townsite company became made and took action. They built a four-strand barbed wire fence between the highlanders and the business district of the town, as it was forming at that time. The first night after the fence went up it was cut to bits. The townsite company build another fence. It met the same fate. The company gave up and adhered to the desires of the people to settle on high ground and keep the flats for farmland and for business houses. Most of Prosper's residences today are on the high ground, although some are on old highway 289. The approximate route of the old Preston Road that ran north from Dallas to the Preston Bend of Red River is about one mile east of Prosper.

In the 1880's a common school district was started about a mile north of the present location and was called Richland. When Richland was designated for a post office, it was found that it would have to change its name because another Richland, Texas, existed in Navarro County. Postmaster L. A. Adamson asked for suggestions from a group of citizens. J. C. Slaughter came up with the name of Prosper, because as he noted, it appeared there was to be a prosperous crop that year.

With the coming of the railroad, Prosper was moved, lock, stock and barrel to its present site, which dates back to 19902. The little town of Rockhill, which was two miles south of present day Prosper, threw in its lot with Prosper. All

that remains of Rockhill, today, is a building that formerly contained a filling station, grocery store and living quarters. That building is to be dismantled in the near future. Drude Talkington and wife, Mary Jane, have built a new home on the tract of land where the Rockhill store premises stood for many, many years.

What happened at Prosper also happened all along the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad line. New Towns sprung up along the right of way. Churches, schools, businesses and homes moved to the new towns. The Post Office which had been established at Crickett Corners moved to the present business district in Prosper in 1902. B. J. Naugle became postmaster after the post office was established in the present Prosper.

In the fall of 1902, a frame two story school was built on the site of the old school campus. The student body was moved from the Richland site to the Prosper district's new site during the 1902-03 term of school. J. B. Henderson was principal.

The Masons from Rhea Mills community built a two story, frame lodge hall under the name of Lee Lodge in 1902. A portion of that building still stands after a fire destroyed the upper floor of the building about four years ago.

Prosper's first store, on the present townsite, was built on 1902 by J. J. Maxey, the same year the Frisco Railroad was completed through western Collin County. The first mill under the name of farmer's cooperative mill was operated near the railroad tracks until it burned in 1912. Beanland and Martin built a new mill in the same general area and operated as a flour, corn meal and feed mill until 1939. C. E. Beanland was manager of the mill until Kimbell Milling Company purchased it in 1939, at which time it ceased to operate as a mill and became a grain elevator with Roy Skelton as operator. Fred Field was employed with the business for about forty years, until his retirement a few years ago. The business now operates under the name of Chickasha Cotton Oil Company and operates in agriculture products. Charles Webb has been with the business for many years now and is presently still with the firm.

The first gin was built by Jim and Joe Taylor on the site of the present co-op gin. Later the drug store at Rockhill was moved to Prosper, as well as a number of houses. Churches formed an important part of the community's life. The Methodist church at Rock Hill was known as Smith's Chapel and was later moved to Prosper, facing east on the lot near the present bus garage. In 1924, the building was wrecked and the material was used to help construct

the present brick veneer building. The Baptist church was moved from Rockhill and located on the general area of the present pastor's home. The deed from Dr. & Mrs. Bryant was dated April 12, 1902, and revealed a purchase price of \$50 for two lots. The Presbyterian church was not at Rockhill but was on the Bell farm, known in recent years as the Gibson Caldwell farm. It was located near at the top of the hill on what is now state highway 380 and for a time was called Bell Chapel. It was later known as Rock Hill Cumberland Presbyterian Church and was located on the present church lot. However, it was moved farther to the west on the lot in the 1930's and was placed over a basement that had been dug out for it. The steeple was removed and the exterior of the building was brick veneered. It is now called the Presbyterian Church, USA....

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From the beginning of the operation of the first school in 1902, where Mrs. C. E. Beanland, the former Anna Keen, and Mrs. Glen Sneed, the former, Leta Higginbotham and J. B. Henderson were teachers and the school had one hundred students enrolled. The original building was sold in 1910 and was moved to Ma Webb's corner, where it became a hotel. A two story red brick building was constructed on the campus and two more teachers were added. That building was destroyed by fire in 1923. Another two story brick building with nine classrooms and a large auditorium was built to replace the burned out building.

Later years saw the consolidation or detachment of several other schools into the Prosper district. Among these were White Elephant, Good Hope, Richland, Walnut Grove, Rheas Mill, Pleasant Valley, Possum Trot and Rock Hill. After 40 years, a new school building was built on a ten acre tract of land, two blocks northeast of the old school campus.