

PRESIDENT ARTHUR.

His Experiences in Kansas and Nebraska Twenty-six Years Ago.

What He Saw of Politics, Business and Adventure in the Young Territories—Flash Times and the Collapse—Graphic Pen Pictures.

Correspondence Leavenworth Times.

WASHINGTON, July 20, 1883.—[Special Letter.] Twenty-six years ago, in the early summer of 1857, a young man of fine promise and modest ambition, who has since become somewhat known to fame, left the city of New York on a prospecting tour through the west, for the purpose of exploring that promising field, with a view to a permanent settlement in some inviting locality. This gentleman was then twenty-seven years of age. He had been nine years from college, where he had graduated at the early age of eighteen. He had been for some time engaged in the practice of law in the city of New York, with reasonable success. But the "great west" was then full of promise, and the advantages offered by that section, and which were persistently heralded, were not without their allurements to an ardent mind, eager for a success achieved more speedily than was then usual in the commercial and professional circles of the east.

After a lapse of a little less than a quarter of a century, that young man, whose life, except as to its climax, has not been fuller of vicissitudes than falls to the lot of many, became president of the United States. The other day the correspondent of The Times had the rare pleasure of sitting in the library of the president's cozy cottage at the Soldiers' Home, and hearing him recount, in a pleasant, unstrained, and sometimes almost gleeful manner, the incidents and experiences of that Western journey. For this privilege he is indebted to the influential mediation of a distinguished citizen of Kansas, upon whose every undertaking merited success seems to wait.

PERMITTED TO PASS THIS BARRIER, but to do so away from the hungry rush and eager waiting of the white horse, where every moment is allotted, and where a welcomed visit, unduly protracted, becomes an intrusion!

As I sat, the other morning, waiting the president's leisure to receive me, I could not wonder at his evident partiality for that charming retreat, so near the great city and yet so delightfully rural in its aspects and surroundings. Through the cottage, which is of ample dimensions, a refreshing breeze was blowing, perfumed with flowers, and through the half-opened lattice vistas of grateful foliage and grateful shade stretched far in the distance. From the southern veranda a noble prospect met the gaze, comprehending a broad sweep of undulating and highly diversified landscape, embellished with noble trees, shrubbery and flowers—a goodly portion of the city beyond—the broad river gently flowing between wooded margins of the sea—and the great white dome of the capitol reflecting the morning sunlight.

Much has been said and written of the president's manner of receiving guests, and loud and universal has been the praise in that respect, nothing has been exaggerated. Without abating a jot, nor for an instant, from the true dignity that comes the great office, the president knows well how to relieve his visitor from the slightest feeling of dread or apprehension that he may entertain, and to make him feel that he is meeting a simple gentleman, whose natural gifts of politeness and cordiality are beyond the reach of art.

A TRIP TO KANSAS IN 1857, and also that he made some investments there, but it falls to your correspondent's lot to first to give the full story of that adventure, just as it was recorded from the adventurer himself. Let there should be some doubt about it let me say that everything said by the president on the occasion referred to was taken down by a competent stenographer, whose manuscript lies before me as I write. If I do not assume to give the writer's precise language, in the order in which it was spoken, it is because the conversation was necessarily fragmentary and disjointed, as incidents of the journey would recur to his recollection, or of their proper order in this narrative. The accuracy of every fact and statement, however, may be implicitly relied upon, and often the president's very language is chosen. The fidelity of the entire report is assured on the highest authority.

As already stated, the future president visited the west for the double purpose of making investments and of establishing a permanent settlement if a fitting locality could be selected. He was accompanied by a Mr. Henry D. Gardner, who afterwards became his law partner, and, who, some sixteen years since, ordered upon that long journey that knows no returning footsteps. The travels of the two extended over some four months, and the president could not recall without access to his papers packed away in his New York house, the names of all the places at which they stopped. By the way it occurs to me that the complete journey of this trip, kept by the principal traveler, would prove a valuable bonanza to the writer fortunate enough to get hold of them.

Michigan was first visited en route to the more western states. They stopped also in Wisconsin, visiting Milwaukee, Madison, Beaver and Janesville. Then they went to Burlington and Keokuk in Iowa, making quite a protracted stay at that state. They also spent some time in St. Louis, and afterwards went to St. Joseph, Missouri, where they remained a month.

The president has a distinct recollection of the "CITY HOTEL" AT ST. JOE, where they stopped, and of many of the men whom they met there. Among these were Atchison, who had been president of the United States senate and acting vice president, Gen. Stringfellow, and John Calhoun, all prominent leaders on the pro-slavery side in the Kansas controversy. Calhoun is better remembered in Kansas by the derisive prefix "Candle Box" than by his proper name—a distinction accorded to him for his abortive effort to suppress, by the aid of a candle box and a convenient wood-pile, the free-state vote cast at a certain election.

With these men and many others of similar views, Mr. Arthur and his friend had frequent and pleasant conversations, and afterwards met some of them in Kansas. Continuing up the river, something of a stop was at Omaha. Settlement had just commenced there, and the place was a very small one. The hotel stopped at was, at a later period, called the "Herridon House," in honor of the memory of Mr. Arthur's wife's father, Captain Wm. L. Herridon, United States navy, who with his ship, was lost at sea in September of that year, the news of which calamity was received on the homeward journey. Omaha, though a small place, was found to be a lively one, but not nearly so far advanced as Leavenworth, which the president learns it has since considerably surpassed in population and commercial importance. He has visited Omaha since, and could hardly realize the vast changes that has taken place.

It should have been stated in the proper connection that the president retains a very agreeable recollection of St. Joseph. He remembers it as a large and busy place, and is not at all surprised at the degree of importance it has since assumed. THE VISIT TO LEAVENWORTH. The future president reached Leavenworth at a time of great political excitement. There were, indeed, strong evidences that the final triumph of the free-state cause could not long be delayed; but the leaders on the other side were not disposed to recognize the situation, or to submit without further struggle to such a result. The question of slavery or anti-slavery for the territory and future state was being everywhere discussed, usually with much heat, and frequently developing into violent and bloody encounters.

The political campaign which resulted in the election of Marcus J. Parrott to congress had just opened. The president was under the impression that Calhoun was the unsuccessful candidate, but admitted his mistake when assured that the gentleman who enjoyed that distinction was named Ransom, and bore the formidable surname of Epuroditus. But Calhoun was very active in the canvass, and made many speeches.

It need not be doubted on what side were the sympathies in that struggle of the eminent gentleman who has since received the suffrages of the great republican party of the country. He had inherited strong anti-slavery convictions from a pious and resolute father, who had been a delegate to the Utica convention where an "Abolitionist" had been mobbed. His father was a great friend of Gerrit Smith, the leading man of that faith in New York, and as a boy he had seen the great philanthropist at his father's house, and had carried into mature life a warm admiration of his zeal and sincerity. Young Arthur himself had been early and prominently enlisted in the cause. As a lawyer in New York he had been counsel for the state in the celebrated Lemon slave case, which at the time of the visit to Kansas was awaiting decision.

The president recollects Parrott very well, and spoke with some enthusiasm of his ability and eloquence as an orator. Not particularly profound in argument, he had a wonderful command of graceful language, was a master of repartee, and, taken all in all, was a dangerous competitor on the stump.

SOON AFTER THE ARRIVAL OF MR. ARTHUR and his friend in Leavenworth, a big political meeting was held, which, after a fashion that prevailed then and still prevails in the West, was addressed by speakers of both parties. The pro-slavery side was generally represented by (taken in order of seniority) Messrs. Parrott, Parrott and Calhoun were the principal speakers on the respective sides. The visitors, with other Eastern gentlemen, were escorted to the platform, and, in the language of the president, "participated somewhat in the proceedings." After the meeting had been in progress some time, while Parrott was speaking, some one in the crowd below shouted, "You're a liar!" There was a retort from the stand, and instantly a pistol was fired. The president estimates that in the course of three seconds twenty or thirty shots must have been fired, which had the effect to clear the platform rather precipitately, but apparently did no further damage than the wounding of one man slightly in the arm. The Eastern gentlemen naturally considered this rather a lively introduction to Kansas politics.

but your correspondent could hardly gather from the president's words or manner whether he was more surprised at the facility with which a row could be inaugurated, or at the different marksmanship which made its results so harmless. The president spoke feelingly of Parrott's death, and was pained to learn that that event had been preceded by the almost total wreck of his intellectual faculties.

At Leavenworth Mr. Arthur found several of his college friends. One of them was Edward L. Burdick, an engineer and surveyor, who was at one time city engineer of Leavenworth. He drifted off to Colorado at the outbreak of the gold-mining excitement, and if living is probably there now. There was also Mr. Menlo Deifen-dorf, who, with Burdick, was a classmate of Arthur's. Fox Deifen-dorf, well known to all the early residents of Leavenworth, was in the class below. He also went to Colorado, and I believe died there. Mr. Arthur met several other old friends and schoolmates there, but he does not now recall their names. He remembers Thomas Ewing, who was the well known General Ewing, who was then engaged in the practice of law and recognized him as one of the free state leaders, though he had little, if any personal intercourse with him.

The president does not recollect of having met Dr. R. Anthony in Leavenworth, but he knew his family well. They all lived near Union Village, in Washington county, New York, now the town of Greenwich, when THE PRESIDENT'S FATHER lived from the time he (the president) was ten years of age until he became fifteen. Anthony's sisters and young Arthur attended the same school, and the president spoke of Colonel Anthony as a friend of his elder sister. He also remembers the colonel as one of the older boys in the same school with himself, as well as the entire family, and has no doubt that all their names appear in the journal kept by him during that period. He speaks of the family as of Quaker origin, but expressed no surprise when assured that if the present head of the house had ever shared the rigid non-combatant

principles of his family sect, he had departed widely from his early teachings. Mr. Arthur remained in Leavenworth for some days, and with his friend, purchased a good deal of property there. The residents think they bought two or three hundred lots in all, but he had no means at hand of establishing their identity or fixing their location. He thought at the time that the investment could not fail to turn out a grand success. This was the period of "flash times" all through the territory. Speculation, especially in real estate, ran wild. Great sales of property were being made, with a view to the building of new "cities," and the extension of the sites of such already had an existence. Some extensions were made at this time which have long since fallen under the domain of less aspiring agriculturists.

The president spoke with some amusement of THE EMBROID "CITIES" with which the Missouri bluffs were lined, and the magnificent appearance that they presented on paper. They were mapped out as having long rows of fine houses, with stately public structures from the national flag floated from heavily-laden steamers lying at the busy levees with blooming parks and "laying fountains." On arriving at the place nothing would be found but two or three tumble-down shanties and possibly a primitive blacksmith shop. How accurate that little picture is many a Kansas man of to-day can testify, and many a bitten Eastern investor will sadly corroborate his testimony.

City of Keokuk the president saw one corner lot sold for \$12,000, which he does not believe has ever been worth one-third of that sum since. When he was in Kansas the president fancied from appearances that everybody was either very rich, or in a fair way to become so without much delay. Everything was on a grand scale, and speculation, as has been said, had almost assumed the form of a mania. But there was no substantial basis for it all, and when the panic of that year struck the country the bottom fell out with a crash. Everything was revolutionized after that, and real estate was a drug in the market for years to come.

It follows that the president and his friend did not amass fortunes from their Leavenworth investment. They took their titles home with them, and from time to time disposed of some of the lots, many as presents to their friends, none of whom appear to have realized anything from them. The lots were undoubtedly in due time sold for taxes, and are now, perhaps, the sites of handsome dwellings or profitable business.

From Leavenworth Mr. Arthur went to Lawrence, Kan., and he remembers, with an agreeable recollection, the excellent road upon which the stage ran through the Delaware Indian reservation, and the picturesque country that bordered it. He was a tone less enthusiastic in describing the horrible ride to Weston, along the bluffs and across the Missouri bottom. The stage tipped over more than once, but the travelers hung on to the outside, they had time to notice the catastrophe, and managed to alight in a safe, though generally a soft, place. Then there was the usual prying up of the vehicle with mercy rails, and the long muddy walks in ferocity to the straggling huddles.

It should have been mentioned before that Mr. Arthur visited Fort Leavenworth several times, and he has a fond and tender memory of the fort in his boyhood, when he resided there. He does not recollect who was in command then, though it was not Gen. Harney he was certainly there during the following spring. The president knew Gen. Harney well, but had lost sight of him for some years until he was making his preparations to visit Florida last spring, when he received a letter from the general, inviting him to visit him at Pass Christian, Mississippi, where he is now enjoying a venerable and serene old age.

At Lawrence, Mr. Arthur and his friend stopped at the "American House," which was destroyed by the cut-throat Luntreil in his destructive raid of 1863. Here the president FIRST MET GENERAL JAMES H. LANE, better known to all old Kansans, and still affectionately spoken of by them, as "Jim" or "Old Jim" Lane. Lane introduced himself to the visitors, and the president recollects talking with him a great deal during the next two or three days. Lane also introduced Sam Walker, known to and liked by every man of the old times, as an honest, true, and trust, brave, and most efficient friend of freedom that ever touched the territory. The president himself spoke of him and almost in terms of endearment, styling him the "celebrated Sheriff Walker, very much, indeed." In another connection the president said: "I think that the man who most impressed me of all the men I met and talked with at that time, was Sam Walker."

From these gentlemen, Lane and Walker, the president says he gained quite a clear idea of the political situation in the territory as it existed at that time. One morning Mr. Arthur started with his friend to ride from Lawrence to Leocompton, along or near the Kansas river. They were on horseback, and it was a beautiful sunny morning in August. About half-way between Lawrence and Leocompton they were overtaken by Lane and Walker, who were going up to Leocompton to attend to some business at the land office. Some of the mob at that place had threatened, or it was rumored that they had threatened, to hang Lane if he ever came there. But as he had important business to transact he thought he would risk it, and go over with Walker and attend to it, thinking there was little or no real danger. While the party were discussing the chances of danger SEVERAL MOUNTED MEN APPROACHED, coming from the direction of Leocompton, and seeing Lane they put their heads together and had quite an earnest talk among themselves. In fact, they seemed to be somewhat excited. After a few moments conversation they put spurs to their horses and returned towards Leocompton.

Lane was confident that they had gone back to give notice of his coming, and was very anxious to ascertain if his party were all armed. When he learned that the strangers had no weapons whatever he was greatly amazed. He could understand how a man could come into the territory with one shirt, or none, but how he could be desperate enough to invade Kansas without a brace of revolvers passed his comprehension. Having an extra weapon, Lane insisted on foisting it upon the future president, who finally took it, with some amusement, if not apprehension, and thrust it into his belt, wondering somewhat why he should so soon have been transformed from a peaceful traveler into an armed adventurer.

The president said he did not believe there was any danger, and Walker shared that opinion of the family as of Quaker origin, but expressed no surprise when assured that if the present head of the house had ever shared the rigid non-combatant

Finally the little cavalcade rode into Leocompton, but which, it is worthy of notice, the name of the town was known as "City." Whether village or city, it consisted of a few scattered houses along a straggling street, at the end of which was situated the land office. THE DANGER ALL IN TALK. As they rode along a large crowd of boys, ranging from twelve to sixteen years of age, followed them, yelling, "There goes Jim Lane! Let's hang him!" with other blood-thirsty cries of that nature; but there was nothing at all of the serious character of a mob, and the party rode along without interruption to the land office.

Sixty or seventy men stood around in front of the office, and seemed to be having a parley among themselves, but no one attacked Lane nor was any violence threatened. Several friends came up, however, and had a whispered conversation with him, and advised him not to stay there, as he would certainly be attacked. Mr. Arthur advised him to remain, and Walker, though he said little, did not appear to apprehend danger. The president considerably remarked, in this connection, that Lane and his advisers were more competent than he was at that time to estimate the chances of danger, as their experience had been greater and their knowledge of the character of the opposition was more exact. The result was that Lane received back his pistol, much to his temporary custodian's relief, and returned to Lawrence without transacting his business, Walker accompanying him.

The president remembers one circumstance that probably INDUCED LANE TO GO BACK, and that was that a man named Bailey had been killed the night before, and Lane attributed it to politics, the deceased himself having been an anti-slavery man. It turned out afterward that it was only the result of a drunken brawl, with which politics had nothing whatever to do. The man had been stabbed, and the perpetrator of the crime had not as yet been found. Lane accepted the killing as an evidence that the town was not a favorable one to remain in, and he therefore took his leave at once.

After Lane's departure Mr. Arthur, accompanied by his fellow traveler, went to call on Governor Robert J. Walker, with whom he was acquainted. He had been secretary of the treasury, and his daughter is now the wife of Attorney-General Brewster. Knowing the family well, Mr. Arthur could not but be impressed with the "state" which the governor maintained. This bit of description is literally the president's own.

The building in which he lived was about one-third larger than the room in which we are sitting. [This room appeared to be eighteen or twenty feet long by ten or twelve wide.] It was a story-and-a-half house, with two rooms on the ground floor, and the upper half-story contained a single apartment, with an small ante-room. The stairway was on the outside of the building, after the fashion of the south and southwest. The lower floor was used as the office of the secretary of the territory.

THE GOVERNOR'S QUARTERS. "We went up the outside stairs and through the little ante-room in the rear of the building. In one corner of this room lay an old saddle, and in another a trunk or two. There was a big pile of law books in still another corner, thrown down in the promiscuous manner of corn sacks. There was no carpet on the floor. We passed through into the front room, and there found the governor sitting at a round table covered with green baize. A few law books were on the floor, and nothing else in the room except the chair upon which the governor was sitting, hard at work.

As is well-known, the position of governor of Kansas was a very important and trying one at that time, and the president, as has been mentioned, was much impressed with the surroundings and associations, and naturally thought that they could not be very agreeable. Two two gentlemen remained in conversation with the governor for an hour or two, and then went down to the hotel to dinner.

Another curious, and to the coming president rather a startling incident, occurred at the dinner table. A man who had been sitting next Mr. Arthur's left, and who had been given him with questions, was suddenly dragged out by the deputy sheriff, upon the charge of having killed Bailey on the previous night!

PRESSED TO DEFEND A MURDERER. Learning that his neighbor at the dinner table was a lawyer, the accused, whose name is not remembered, insisted upon retaining him for the defense in the coming examination, which was to occur immediately. Excuses and declinations were of no avail; the man was very much determined that the young lawyer from the east should remain and defend him. Finally, Mr. Arthur agreed to go with him before a magistrate, but upon arriving there succeeded in inducing him to employ other counsel.

The office of the justice was up stairs over the land office. It was a two-story frame building, probably the largest in the town. The president remembers very well the appearance of the justice when they went up into the "court-room" at the time fixed for the examination. He sat there without coat, and his unsocked feet, partially covered with an old pair of carpet slippers, protruded far into the room. The sheriff, or perhaps a deputy, a tall, gaunt fellow, who had to stoop when he walked about the room to avoid colliding with the ceiling, stuck his bushy head out of the window, and with the immortal formula of "Oyez, oyez," etc., etc., announced that the court was about to open!

A still more amusing and impressive circumstance, which THE PRESIDENT RECALLED WITH TWINKLING EYES, and an infectious laugh, was that the sheriff had in this room in which the magistrate sat all the prisoners under his charge. The jail was so insecure that he was obliged to take his prisoners with him, and he had them all herded up in the room where the examination was held. The president remembers a little red-headed fellow, apparently about sixteen years of age, who had been arrested for killing his own cousin in a quarrel over a game of cards. There was some half-dozen other prisoners, all crowded into the corner and surrounded with a kind of paling.

The examination of the alleged murderer continued for a day or two, and the president believes he was finally discharged; but in the meantime he and his friend had returned to Lawrence. Again recurring to his recollections of Sam Walker, the president said: "I was more particularly impressed with"

SHERIFF WALKER. I think, than with any man I met out there. I talked with him a great deal at Lawrence, and I have no doubt but that I still remember our ride over to Leocompton." Who can doubt it? The president recollects visiting one or

two other places in the territory, but cannot now recall the particulars. He did not go up to Topeka, then scarcely more than a new settlement, as he was informed, but which he now knows to be a large and flourishing city. But for the panic of 1857, and its far-reaching consequences, the president feels persuaded that he would have settled in the west. In that event the probable career, and the influence that it may have had upon the fortunes of the country, open up a field of interesting but hopeless conjecture.

SUMMARIZING THE RECOLLECTIONS of his memorable trip, the president suggested that they were entirely novel and very exciting to him. The excitement at the political meeting in Leavenworth, and his sudden dismissal by the shooting; the sitting at the dinner table in friendly conversation with a man dragged out a few minutes later to answer to the charge of murder committed the night before; the incidents of stage riding over the roads both excellent and execrable; the ride to Leocompton and the peculiar experiences of the visit there—all these incidents not unusual to people in a western territory, were entirely novel and somewhat exciting to a man reared in and fresh from the orderly society and finished civilization of New York.

It may be added that the president spoke depreciatingly of THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS EPISODE in his personal history, as of scarcely enough consequence, in fact, to justify publication; but the writer ventures to dispute the president's judgment in this respect, and to believe that the experiences which he has kindly recounted for the special benefit of the people of Kansas will be found of peculiar interest to those yet among us, who, in the early days, amid trials, discouragements and dangers, securely laid the foundations of a strong and enduring commonwealth. The cordial and winning manner of the president has already been touched upon. This was maintained to the last, despite the strain upon his patience, occasioned by the correspondent's perhaps too boldly expressed, but certainly sincerely entertained opinion, that if the president could personally meet all the people of the country there would be few other than Arthur men. W. B.

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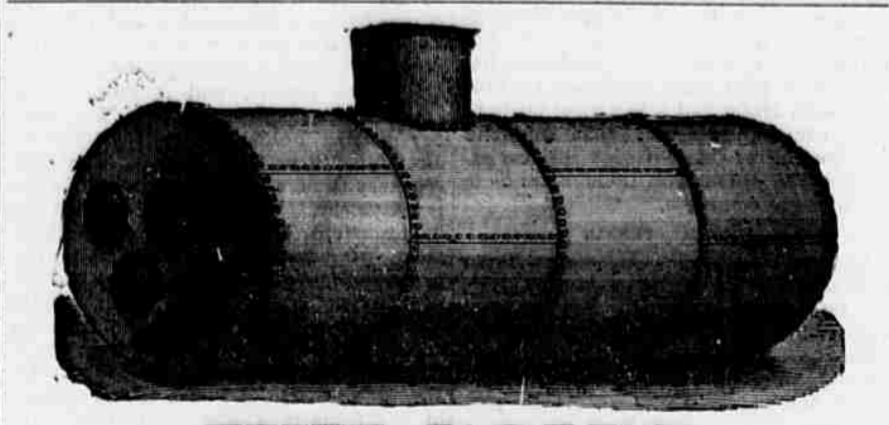
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