

Panorama of Desolation Seen In Plane View of Drought Area

*Fields Once Filled With Waving Grain and Teeming Herds of
Cattle Now Resemble Desert Wastes, Devoid of Life
With Rivers Dried to Beds.*

By **RUSSELL B. PORTER.**
Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

KANSAS CITY, Mo., July 31.-
A vivid picture of the devastated drought area is seen as one travels by airplane over the arid plains of the Southwest into this city, now, as in the days of Indians and buffalo, the great trading centre between the Midwest and the Southwest. Coming directly from the well-irrigated valleys below San Francisco and the lush vegetation around Los Angeles, and recalling the fertile fields of the East a fortnight ago, one is deeply impressed by the contrast.

In ordinary times these great plains and prairies stretching from the Missouri Valley down into the Texas Panhandle are the bread basket and meat supply of a large part of the American people. When rainfall is normal, the fields are green and yellow. Ripe with corn and wheat, the ranges are thick with grazing herds of cattle, and the rivers and streams are flowing.

Today the whole landscape is a picture of desolation. For hundreds of miles, over one State after another, the plane roars, and hardly

a drop of water is visible. In many long reaches not a tree is to be seen, not a blade of green grass, not an animal of any kind, not a single living thing.

Below lie the beds of empty rivers and streams, for all the world as if they were caked hard by the scorching sun, and winding across the countryside as if they were impressions in the ground made by some sort of prehistoric serpents.

One sees the empty inverted shells of lakes and ponds, like great saucers and bowls hollowed out of the soil.

In every direction the dry, wasted land extends further than the eye can reach. It makes one think of a stricken giant, stretched out flat upon his back, thirsting for water, staring blindly into the mercilessly hot sun and gasping for breath. Before one's very eyes a whole section of the country lies dying. One cannot help joining the people who live there in a silent prayer for the rain which will bring it back to life.

The first part of the plane trip,

Continued on Page Thirteen.

DROUGHT RAVAGES SEEN FROM PLANE

By RUSSELL B. PORTER.

Continued From Page One.

after leaving Southern California, lies over the always barren desert regions of Nevada, Arizona and New Mexico. Then one comes to the farm lands and cattle ranges of the Panhandle, only to find that the drought and the terrible heat of the past few weeks have dried and scorched them into a state of aridity which is practically a continuation of the desert.

Almost the only visible difference is that the topography of the country further west is varied between table lands and rugged terrain with serrated buttes and mesas, whereas, from the Texas-New Mexico border north and east, it is all flat lands. Beginning about 100 miles west of Amarillo, Texas, the view below is something like that which a vast checkerboard would present, if it were limitless to the eye, if it were laid out in squares, rectangles, triangles and other geometrical forms instead of square sections, and if the sections were painted in different shades of brown and yellow with a very few green, instead of in two colors.

Parched Ranges Absorb Rain.

With adequate rainfall this checkerboard would be green and yellow with pasture land and harvested wheat fields, whereas now the sections are burned to a crisp in seared yellow and brown blotches like potter's clay.

In a few rivers there are muddy trickles of water, but in most there is nothing but yellow, reddish or dirty gray clay at the river bottoms. There has been no wheat crop to speak of in this section.

As the pilot nurses the plane down for the scheduled stop at Amarillo, one notices that even the fields of vegetables near the airport, which seemed green from an altitude, are mere straggling things, streaked through and through with brown marks of the burning sun.

The Amarillo daily paper obtained at the airport features the break in the heat wave, accompanied by showers throughout the Panhandle, which had come the previous night.

"But the parched ranges," the paper says, "were badly in need of moisture and absorbed the precipitation as readily as the farm lands."

On eastward the ship flies over the Texas and Oklahoma plains.

"Frequently," the air traveler reads in the aviation company's pamphlet describing the route at this point, "roaming herds of cattle are seen. Seldom do the herds pay any attention to the plane, as they have grown accustomed to the daily flights and the sound of the powerful motors."

Doubtless that was true when written, but not a steer or a cow is seen on the present trip. In

Texas alone, 60,000 head of cattle have been shot because their owners could not feed or water them.

Cimarron Country Is Arid.

Throughout the drought area millions of head of cattle are being purchased by the Federal Government, and shipped to the Kansas City and Wichita stockyards for processing by the packers into canned meats or reshipment to pasture lands in Georgia, Tennessee and other Southern States.

There are still cattle in Texas and other drought States, but they are back in the valleys, where a little water is still to be found.

Now on past Canadian, Texas, an agricultural and cattle centre, and Fargo, Okla., surrounded by an erstwhile fertile farm area. In both places the picture is a repetition of what has gone before.

The plane flies over the Cimarron River and across the Cimarron country, once known as the Cherokee strip, scene of one of the most famous land rushes in American history. Still the picture is the same. Only now and then is there even a trickle of water in a river bed, or a small supply in a lake or pool.

Across the Kansas border flies the plane, and over the agricultural sections around Clearwater, Viola and Conway Springs, now the sun, which has shone hot and steady all day against the clear blue sky and fleecy white clouds, is setting in a red ball of fire.

The landscape is still all desolation, misery and despair, except that there is a little more green to be seen and now at least a few people and automobiles are to be observed moving on the roads below. It is not the "home of the dead" which the land further to the southwest has seemed.

One stops at Wichita overnight so as to be able to fly over Kansas in daylight next morning. No one is talking about anything but the drought and the scorching heat of the past few weeks. The heat wave is now broken, but some people are still sleeping outdoors on mattresses laid flat on their lawns, on porches or across chairs placed together.

A local newspaper editor tells one that the Kansas corn crop is ruined, with the livestock suffering terribly from lack of water and feed, but that a fair wheat yield has saved the district around Wichita from utter ruin.

On for Kansas City in the cool morning, a great relief after all the heat. The Arkansas River can be seen, lower than in years but not dry, a big help in maintaining some fertility in the district around Wichita.

The situation in Kansas is spotty. The rivers and lakes have a little more water in them than further to the southwest, and underground streams are flowing to a considerable extent, and not all of the soil has that brown and reddish burned and cracked look characteristic of the Texas and Oklahoma plains under the drought.

Cattle ranges in Southern Kansas are parched. Some of the wheat in

West and Central Kansas fields, where a crop has already been harvested, seems in fair condition. All through the State most of the corn fields, which should be green with ripening grain at this time, are brown or dark yellow with dead or dying stalks.

From the historic El Dorado oil field up to Emporia, the plane crosses the famous old Flint Hills, where normally the blue-stem grass makes for 200,000 head of "thin cattle," from the Far Southwest in need of fattening every year wonderful grazing ground. Part of this is green with rich pasture land, but other parts are seared yellow and brown from the sun and lack of moisture.

Between Emporia and Kansas City, one flies over what normally is one of the richest parts of Kansas, the great rolling plains of the corn fields. They form a wide and long patch quilt of green, yellow and brown, and there are relatively many trees and much water in sight, but the patches of green are few, while the yellow and brown tell the story of the combined heat and drought which have ruined the Kansas corn crop.

Finally a landing here, after flying over the Missouri and Kansas Rivers, which come together at this city and which are low, but not dangerously so here.

Here, as in Wichita, nobody can talk or think of anything except the drought and heat. The scene in the great Kansas City stockyards is like that in Wichita on a larger scale.

Farmers are hauling water from the city hydrants miles back to their farms, to water their stock, and are cutting down trees on their land to let the cattle eat the leaves.

People are pulling themselves together, trying to think what they should do to overcome the effects of the drought. A week ago they were unable to do anything. The terrific heat, which ran between 100 and 110 degrees and sometimes more every day for a solid month, had prostrated everybody.

Now that it has been broken and that there have been some showers the psychology of the people has changed. They are beginning to say that they can survive a drought just as they have lived through droughts in the past, as well as floods, plagues, pestilences and depressions.

They have faith that it will rain hard soon. They also have faith in their land.

The Southwest is down, but it is not out.