

# 300,000 FERTILE ACRES Ripped Up Into Farms

Soash, the Empire Builder, has gone into the heart of the great State of Texas and purchased outright 300,000 acres of the richest and best land in the agricultural belt, and this splendid body of farming land is now on the market at *Low Prices and on Easy Terms*. This land was secured from Col. C. C. Slaughter, the great land and cattle king of Texas, and is known as

## BIG SPRINGS RANCH Located in Martin, Dawson, Howard and Borden Counties

### 300,000 Acres, Every Foot Adapted to Diversified Farming

Buy a home or make an investment on the south plains of Texas. You are making no experiment, for this great country has stood well the tests made on every proposition. Here is an opportunity to make money quickly on but a small cash investment. The chance to acquire your own farm, well stocked, well improved, and with all the advantages of the best estate in any of the older settled sections of the country is open to YOU. Listen! On the South Plains of Texas and on the land which the W. P. SOASH LAND CO. own and offer for sale to you, the soil is of that rich, dark color, free from stones, sand or gravel, and is now producing to the acre: Corn, 25 to 60 bushels; Wheat, 18 to 60 bushels; Oats, 40 to 100 bushels; Milo Maize, 30 to 60 bushels; Kaffir Corn, 30 to 60 bushels; Sorghum, 3 to 6 tons; Cotton ½ to 1 bale; Alfalfa, 3 to 6 tons; Sweet Potatoes, 100 to 300 bushels; Irish Potatoes, 50 to 100 bushels; Hay, 1 to 3 tons; Peanuts, 30 to 150 bushels. Fruits and Vegetables of almost every known variety in almost unlimited quantities. Come and see for yourself.

#### READ THIS!

**Soil.** Where a climate is ideal, but one other basic factor is necessary, and that is soil. The dark chocolate is the kind to own, one free from sand and stone, and that is the kind we are selling. The supreme test of a soil's productivity is not confined wholly to the question of how much of any one thing it will produce, but variety and diversity of crops must be considered. Every country makes extravagant claims regarding soil products, but not all will bear investigation. We invite comparison with any of them and are able to substantiate every claim put forth regarding the soil and climate of the Big Springs country.

**Stock Raising.** For forty years the South Plains of Texas have been known as the greatest cattle country in the world. But a few years ago a severe winter will produce millions of hogs, horses, mules and all other live stock cheaply, successfully, profitably.

#### Just a Word!

We will refund railroad fare to every one who purchases land.

#### Free. Sleeping car berths.

#### Buying a Farm

is an important transaction. When you buy from the W. P. SOASH LAND CO. you get the choice of our large holdings, a warranty deed as safe as a government bond, an abstract of title that will pass muster on a square deal all around.

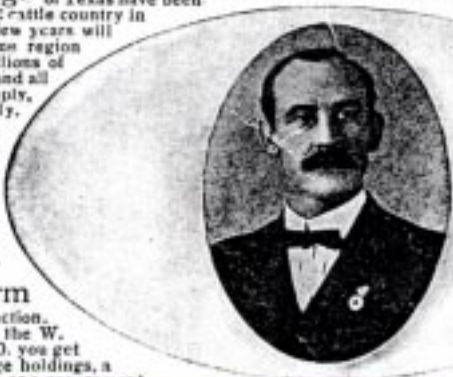
#### READ THIS!

**Climate.** One of the two basic factors for the adaptation of a country to its inhabitants is climate. Wherever man dwells, the first and foremost question is, what kind of a climate do you have? Here is where we can answer you loud and long, for nowhere can you find a climate as really desirable as that of the Big Springs country on the South Plains of Texas. The cruel and merciless blizzard is unknown. The crops never feel the scorching blight of a hot wave. The sudden changes from hot to cold, or vice-versa, so prevalent in other regions, do not occur. Here the seasons are well defined, each devoid of objectionable features, and each recurring year being almost a counterpart of its predecessor.

**Rainfall.** The branch of the government weather bureau maintained at Big Springs shows that the annual rainfall is between 35 and 30 inches, the greatest precipitation taking place during the growing season.

#### Soash Says—

"If your neighbor is well off today, it's a gamble he bought land when it was cheap." "I know my lands because that's my business." "The man that buys land tomorrow loses the profits of today." "I admire the young man who is buying low priced land and farming it. In five years' time he will be independent."



W. P. SOASH The Empire Builder

**'SOASH SPECIAL'** Will leave every Wednesday following excursion date from Kansas City to Big Springs, Texas. Train leaves Union Depot, Kansas City at 10:30 A. M., Wednesday. Purchase tickets, home seekers' rates, C. R. I. & P. to Fort Worth, Texas, and Texas & Pacific Ry. to Big Springs.

### THE W. P. SOASH LAND COMPANY, WATERLOO IOWA

An ad run by W. P. Soash inside the front cover of the May, 1909 issue of *The Golden West Magazine*, edited by Sam W. Small and published by W. P. Soash. (Courtesy, W. P. Soash)

Towards the last of his work, the Rock Island brought special trains down from the Northern states, free of charge to the Soash Company when there were as many as 62 passengers on board. The usual number was about 150 and one train, drawn by two engines brought 240 land buyers in fourteen standard sleepers. On all of these trains the Soash Company had its private car, for they owned three. These were necessary for there had to be office, kitchen and sleeping car for the company. A force of clerks was needed to keep the books up to date and this was done in transit.

Land had to be provided. The change in occupational interests aided these colonizers. Railroads had come, bringing in nesters, so the ranches had decided to reduce acreage. Big ranchmen had land to sell. Men like Soash wanted to buy and resell it. People who saw these smooth, lovely acres, wanted to buy land, and so all worked together in harmony.

While trains were swooping down on the Panhandle loaded with eager, avid land seekers, a large force of men was going through the Northern and Midwestern states, telling farmers of the marvelous land of the Panhandle and selling them the idea that they could do better to sell that high-priced land and buy land that was cheaper land and not worn out, land free from stones and underbrush. That was not easy but the sales force did their work in the cornfields and in small towns far from the Panhandle; when they got the prospect to sign up for transportation, the worst was over. The sales force in the train could take over then; usually the land sold itself.

Behind all this preparation there was need for capital. The leader of the party had to have money and lots of it.

Over all this, before a man would drop his hoe and leave his cornfield, before a single wheel would turn, there had to be a man. A man with a mind. A man with a dream. A man who did not see raw land and uninhabited areas, but saw crops growing and towns and farm houses here and there.

All this was necessary for a Home-Seekers Special to be put into action. W. P. Soash had all this and more. So it was that between 1906 and 1912, he brought to the Panhandle 87 train loads of land buyers, coming each first and third Tues-

day in the months. This means that he averaged fourteen train loads a year. On the Tuesdays that he could not assemble a train load, he came with one to four Pullmans full of prospectors. In that six years he brought 10,000 people to the Panhandle.

The Soash Land Company, soon the entire property of W. P. Soash, bought a large tract of land from the XIT Ranch, starting three miles north of Dalhart, and later bought 10,000 acres from R. S. Coon, then a large rancher to the west of Dalhart.

Along in that first decade automobiles were scarce. Teams were used to transport the buyers to the land. If the distance was great, the chance of selling was reduced and so W. P. Soash built and staffed a hotel at the Ware siding above Dalhart, and from that point, he drove out to show the land.

Until this hotel was built, all ate at hotels and slept in the Pullmans. They were kept away as much as possible from local land men who could sell land cheaper than the companies could offer it, for local overhead was less. So the prospects were guarded and entertained. Yet it was an exciting day for Dalhart when a Soash Special rolled into the yards.

Mr. Soash met the leading cattlemen of that section in that day: A. G. Boyce, Henry Boyce, W. B. Slaughter, others. Through them he met Col. C. C. Slaughter of Dallas and this led him to fields farther south. Col. Slaughter sold W. P. Soash his Running Water Ranch, located in Hale, Lamb and Castro Counties in the early part of 1908 and so Soash sold out his Dalhart holdings.

The first trainload of excursionists that was unloaded at Plainview arrived in March, 1908. This was the end of the railroad. Automobiles were more plentiful then and every car that could be rented was put into service. Besides this, teams took the overflow. All these were taken over the Running Water territory.

When Soash bought the Running Water land, there was included a section in Lamb County, No. 35. Soash liked that section for it fitted into a plan he had concocted. A man named Brown was postmaster at Olton, which was mostly a rural office, near this section. When Lamb was organized in 1908, Soash persuaded Brown to move the postoffice to Sec-

Soash bought Slaughter's Lazy S Ranch and began work in a new territory. He set up offices at Big Spring and had planned to bring big money into that town and build there a city such as the West had not dreamed of. He had made money in his big excursion train business and had sold land by the hundreds of thousand acres. He intended to do all this and more for this was to be his permanent home.

His first excursion train came to Big Spring in March 1909, leaving Minneapolis by way of the Rock Island to Ft. Worth, then changing to the Texas Pacific. A definite schedule had been worked out for this special. This was kept to the minute until Big Spring was reached. The train got there five minutes ahead of time.

But Big Spring was ready for it with a big surprise. Citizens flocked down to the station in great numbers and brought out the band to bid the Excursionists welcome.

"That's just like Big Spring," said W. P. Soash. "You can see why I want to live here."

But Soash did not make Big Spring his headquarters for long. A town named Soash was started north of Big Spring near the corners of the four counties, and no man could resist the pleasure of living in the town that bore his name. He became Soash of Soash. Naturally, also, he did not mean for this to be a hick town. It was to be modern and progressive. He spent about sixty thousand dollars in putting up a hotel, a business block, a bank, a garage, and in furnishing telephone and telegraph service. Soash, the mushroom town, looked like it might rival Big Spring in the future.

But the rising tide of financial success for W. P. Soash turned and ebbed. Everything went wrong with his business. Everything he undertook failed. The chief cause was the drought. For three years that Big Spring country was bone dry and seemed to be dryer with each year. Land could not be sold easily for prospects were discouraging. Everything parched; even the wellspring of hope dried.

Soash brought many excursions and many sales were made in spite of weather, but there was not enough to make the business a success.

One project proposed to him was that he settle German

tion 35 which Soash platted as a townsite, financed the first bank and built the first church.

The town of Olton was started but there was nothing but broad prairies when the Soash party came to look at that land. A big tent was spread for sleeping quarters; a small tent was used as a kitchen and dining room. Some of the land seekers were bedded down at homesteads about the country: H. R. Miller, the first county judge; George T. Galloway, first county clerk; Herb Dickenson, Bob Norfleet, Mr. Cowart, G. A. Hooper, G. E. Phillips, L. S. Kennedy, Charlie Keehan, all good citizens whom Soash proudly declared were his friends, offered their homes to the land seekers.

People today wonder why Olton was located on the west line of the county. At that time a railroad from Hereford to Dimmitt and on through Section 35 had been surveyed and part of the road bed made. Soash had pledged \$10,000 to the builders to insure its passing through Olton and no one doubted that it would, but the road did not build to Olton so Soash did not have to pay. But the town was located on the surveyor's line.

In thirteen months the Soash Company sold more than 100,000 acres in the Olton territory, the tracts usually being 240 acres to a purchaser.

During the Running Water sales campaign, Soash was trying to reach an agreement with Isaac L. Ellwood of De Kalb, Illinois, to sell him the Spade Ranch, joining Running Water, and with Major George Littlefield, of Austin, to sell him the Yellow House Ranch, 3,000,000 acres south of the Running Water. Soash went to Austin and offered Littlefield three million dollars, three hundred thousand cash and the rest on long terms. Littlefield was interested until he learned that some man in the colony might want to pay cash and get title to his little patch of land. Littlefield was not willing to grant possession of a little dab of land; he would sell a ranch outright but not a few acres. The deal was off. Littlefield was no colonizer.

Soash turned back to Col. C. C. Slaughter, discussed development of lands in Cochran and Hockley, but decided this was too far from a railroad at the time. On January 27, 1909

Catholics at a place called Loyola, and start a colony. Though Soash put I. R. Underbrink in charge of the project at Loyola and subscribed five thousand dollars for a church and school, the drought made the plan wither and die.

Soash worked frantically. He had land in many states; he had interests in a coal mine, was president of two banks, was publishing a magazine, *The Golden West*, had Soash Land Companies organized in eight different states with fourteen branch offices scattered about. Drought made life hard for him.

But it took more than a drought to parch W. P. Soash's spirit for progress. When a group of Big Spring men came to see him and asked him to take over the development of a fifty-mile railroad, starting at Big Spring and going northward, hoping that the Santa Fe would build through Lubbock, contact this road, buy it and run trains to Big Spring, Soash made a contract with them. They were to pay him a sum for services, were to furnish a right-of-way one hundred feet wide, besides terminal facilities at Big Spring, and to build through Olton on Section 35 in Lamb County. In order to insure the legality of each step, N. H. Lassiter, of Fort Worth, attorney for Rock Island lines in Texas and Oklahoma, was made the counsel. F. H. Peters, former civil engineer for the Rock Island, was engaged to survey the fifty miles and estimate the total cost per mile, and a Texas charter for the Gulf, Soash and Pacific Railway Company, composed largely of Big Spring men, was secured.

Lamesa defeated this great plan. The proposed road would miss the town a few miles. If the town of Lamesa would move to the right of way, the home owners would be given lots matching the ones they now held, the road would be built and Big Spring would become a division point on the Santa Fe.

Lamesa did not want to move. The railroad was not built since the Santa Fe would not build to meet them. Just why the Santa Fe did not agree is not known. It may be that they had pledged Lamesa.

I once was taken out to look at an old railroad bed in Martin County. A man told me of working on that road and of the great hopes the people had for the country when the