

REMINISCENCES OF HARRY BRICE

Gray County, Kansas

Written by Juanita Trebilcock

Told by Harry Brice, Cimarron, Kansas, Age 75 years

** Additional information added about Harry Brice*



Henry T. W. "Harry" Brice

The following is the interview I had with Mr. Harry Brice of Cimarron, told nearly in his own words as possible. Mr. Brice has lived in Gray County for fifty-four years and has seen changes in the county.

"I was born in Manchester, England, in 1861. (*Cemetery records give 1860*) Manchester was a town with a population of about 308,000. I lived there until I was twenty-one years old, at which time I sailed for America.

Upon reaching America, I came straight to Cimarron, Kansas. I had relatives here. I took out a homestead a short time after my arrival, in what is now Finney County. I arrived here on March 4th in 1882 and Gray County was not yet organized.

One brother had come to America before me and had settled in Texas. Afterward, three more brothers came. Two of them settled in Texas, and the other one settled in

Hutchinson, Kansas.

Cimarron was about eight years old when I got here. It was founded in 1874 and located on a tract of ground overlooking the Arkansas River, and was sufficiently rolling to afford perfect drainage.

Gray County was organized in 1887, five years after I came here, and the territory was taken from Ford, Finney, and Hodgeman Counties. It was named in honor of Alfred Gray, Ex-Secretary of the State Board of Agriculture.

The climate of Gray County was excellent. The weather seldom got extremely hot or cold, and the nights were cool and pleasant even in the warmest weather. The lowlands' soil was rich and dark, varying in depth from four to eight feet. The upland soil was the same color but with a little mixture of sand. Altogether the land was adaptable to all kinds of crops.

Gray County was a wonderful cattle-producing country, but the long-horn has disappeared with the passing years. The dairy is now a more critical factor in the county than the ranch.

Irrigation has played a large part in the development of Gray County. The great Eureka Canal, a million-dollar ditch, ninety miles long, at one time watered thousands of acres of valley lands. It took its water from the Arkansas River west of Ingalls. The Eureka Irrigation Ditch is not used now, but several smaller canals have been built and used.

Gray County was one of the twenty-five counties in Kansas to have a booth at the International Dry Farming Congress in Wichita during October in 1914. The twenty-five counties were from every corner of Kansas, and the "dry farm" part of it meant "good farming" regardless of average rainfall. It was a world exhibit, and people were in Wichita from all over the globe. Gray County was then advertised as never before.

I believe the most outstanding event of my life in Gray County, Kansas was the county seat fight in 1889 after the county seat election. I received a letter today from one of the participants of that fight, and he mentioned it in his letter. His name is George Boles, and he was a county surveyor at that time. He had received buck shots in his heels and the back of his head. Both towns hired gunmen in preparation for the fight.

Singer and Brown were two of the gunmen hired by Cimarron. Jim Masterson, a brother to Bat Masterson, was one of Ingall's hired gunfighters. Ingalls men came to Cimarron in the forenoon of 13 Jan 1889 to get the county records. If Cimarron hadn't been prepared for them, probably several Cimarron men would have been killed. A man named "English" from Cimarron was killed, and there were several others who had very narrow escapes. We could never prove just who killed Mr. English. However, one man was suspected because his gun was the only one of that

make and model in the county, and it was a bullet from a similar gun that killed Mr. English.

I took part in the fight as much as possible. However, only one man in Cimarron had a gun, besides the hired gunmen, and though he shot a good deal, he never managed to hit anyone. If I had had his gun, I would have killed someone, so maybe it is a good thing I did not have one.

Most of my work in Gray County was done in an office, so I did not have the opportunity to mingle with people. My profession was law and abstract business. For nearly fifty years, I have conducted an abstract business here, and for many of those years, I had the only set of abstract books in the county. I have practiced law in Gray and adjoining counties for more than forty years. I have practiced in all the courts of the state.

At one time, I was County Commissioner, and at another time, I served six years continuously as County Attorney of Gray County. It was while I was in office that all of the saloons in the county were closed.

The people of Gray County have been very friendly and helpful. Their cooperation, especially when I was in office, has been very much appreciated.”

Mr. Brice told the above story to me, and I have tried to rewrite it in the manner in which he gave it to me. Although he was born and raised to young manhood in England, he does not have any trace of an English accent. Mr. Brice received a small part of his legal training in England. He received the rest of it here. There is none more worthy of mention among the legal fraternity in Cimarron, than he is. He has always enjoyed the trust and confidence of the people and performed his duty well. This year he is running for election for County Attorney of Gray County on the Democrat ticket. He has proven by experience and training that he is fit for the office and will do his utmost to please.

Additional Information

HENRY T. W. "HARRY" BRICE

HARRY BRICE was the son of Edward Charles Brice (1823-1880) and Mary Anne Nash (1825-1883). In 1889, he married JESSIE ADA FOUGHTY, daughter of George W. Foughty (1834-1915) and Rosetta Miranda Trask (1843-1880). Eight children were born in this marriage: EDWARD BRICE, HARRY EUGENE BRICE, GERTRUDE BRICE, GLEN ROGER BRICE, THEODORE BRICE, KENNETH BRICE, MILDRED BRICE, and JESSIE BLANCH BRICE. After the death of his wife in 1904, Harry Brice married GOLDENDINE "GOLDIE" BAKER (1880-1961) in 1905. (*The name Goldendine was sometimes spelled Goldendin.*) Her parents were John Wesley Baker (1836-1912) and Sarah Emily Hull (1846-1931). Mr. Brice died on 21 Jun 1943 in Cimarron, Gray County, Kansas. Burial for Harry was at the Cimarron Cemetery, next to his second wife, Goldendine.



THE HARRY BRICE FARMSTEAD IN CIMARRON, KANSAS

*Photographs provided by Sara McFarland,
Research Librarian at the Cimarron (Kansas) City Library*

CIMARRON CEMETERY,
Cimarron, Gray County, Kansas



Burial Place for
HARRY BRICE & HIS SECOND WIFE, GOLDENDINE (BAKER) BRICE