

***JAMES
OTIS***



***PHILLIP
OF TEXAS***

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James Otis

Philip of Texas

A Story of Sheep Raising in Texas

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Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info



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BOOKS CONSULTED IN WRITING PHILIP OF TEXAS

JAMES OTIS'S COLONIAL SERIES

AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY

HISTORICAL READERS

By H. A. GUERBER

AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY

JAMES OTIS'S PIONEER SERIES

FOREWORD

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The author of this series of stories for children has endeavored simply to show why and how the descendants of the early colonists fought their way through the wilderness in search of new homes. The several narratives deal with the struggles of those adventurous people who forced their way westward, ever westward, whether in hope of gain or in answer to "the call of the wild," and who, in so doing, wrote their names with their blood across this country of ours from the Ohio to the Columbia.

To excite in the hearts of the young people of this land a desire to know more regarding the building up of this great nation, and at the same time to entertain in such a manner as may stimulate to noble deeds, is the real aim of these stories. In them there is nothing of romance, but only a careful, truthful record of the part played by children in the great battles with those forces, human as well as natural, which, for so long a time, held a vast portion of this broad land against the advance of home seekers.

With the knowledge of what has been done by our own people in our own land, surely there is no reason why one should resort to fiction in order to depict scenes of heroism, daring, and sublime disregard of suffering in nearly every form.

JAMES OTIS.

PHILIP OF TEXAS

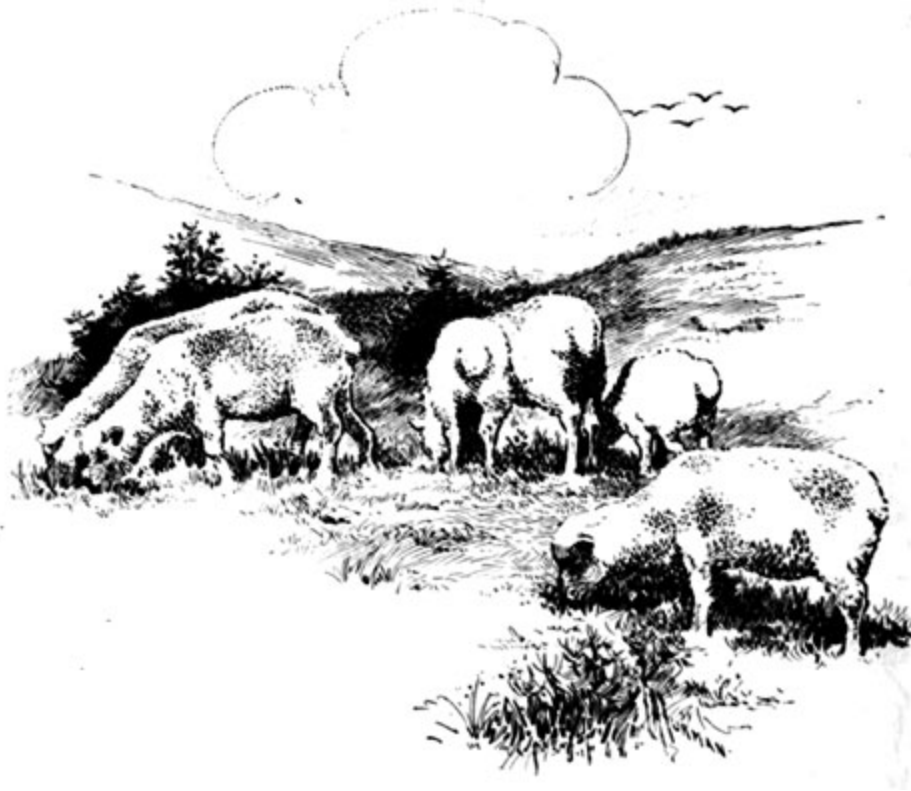
MY DREAMS OF A SHEEP RANCH

The day I was twelve years old, father gave me twelve ewes out of his flock of seventy-two, counting these sheep as payment for the work I had done in tending them. Even at that time I thought myself a good shepherd, for I was able to keep a small flock well together.



With Gyp, our dog, I could have herded five hundred as readily as I did seventy-two, because on our plantation in Mississippi the pastures were fenced. Therefore when father began to talk of moving to Texas and there making a venture in the cattle business, I decided at once that if he did so, it should be my aim to raise sheep. With this idea I gathered from the neighbors roundabout, who had larger

flocks than ours, all the possible information about the business in our own state.



SHEEP RAISING

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A sheep in order to thrive should have not less than two acres of fairly good pasturage in which to roam. Much less than that amount of land would provide a sheep with food in case it was inclosed; but on the range, where the flock is turned out to feed over a large extent of country, the animals are inclined to "bunch," as the herders call it; that is, to keep in close company and wander here or there trampling down the grass without eating it.

A sheep will yield about five pounds of wool each year, and you can count that each animal in a herd will give you

one dollar's worth of its fleece annually. Of course there is considerable expense, if one is obliged to pay for shearing, or for dipping, in case that disease known as "scab" comes among the flock. I have known a sheep raiser to pay four cents a head to the Mexican shepherds simply for dipping the flock; that is to say, for giving each animal a bath in a certain mixture in order to drive out distemper which, in sheep, is like the mange that comes upon dogs.

Then it is pretty certain that during the year there will be as many lambs born as there are sheep in the flock, and if a sheep is worth five dollars, you can reckon the lamb at three, for it will be a yearling in twelve months, and a full-grown sheep a year later. So one can say that every sheep worth five dollars will bring in a profit of four dollars each year, less the expense of keeping.

HERDING SHEEP

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Suppose you have a flock of five hundred sheep. They will "herd," as sheepmen say, which means, keep nearly together, within a space around which a man can ordinarily walk two or three times a day, to prevent the wilder ones from straying.

When the flock is driven out on the range from the pens, they are kept moving a mile or two, while the shepherd walks around the flock, talking to them, so that they may hear his voice; the animals pick up mouthfuls of grass now and then, even while being driven.

In rainy or cold weather, sheep walk much more rapidly than they do when it is warm; therefore the shepherd has more work to do. In very hot, dry weather, they will often not feed in the daytime, but continue eating until late in the night, and then the herder has his work cut out, for those are long days from sunrise until nine or ten o'clock.

But think of the profit of five hundred sheep in one year! Suppose they cost you for herding, shearing, and dipping, in case you cannot manage the flock yourself, three hundred dollars. You get two thousand dollars for the wool and the increase in the flock, and pay out three hundred. This leaves seventeen hundred dollars clear profit in one year from five hundred sheep, and that is not a large flock.

Of course if the scab gets among the sheep, or the Indians kill many, or the wolves can't be kept away, there will be more or less loss which must come out of the seventeen hundred dollars; but take it all in all, unless one has very hard luck, it seems to me he should be able to count on at least a thousand dollars profit from five hundred sheep.



Now it might seem as if this matter of raising sheep, and the profit to be had from them, could have no influence in deciding my going from the state of Mississippi to the republic of Texas, and yet if it had not been for my hope of one day owning a big sheep ranch, I would not have been so delighted when father began to talk of making a new home in that country which had so lately separated from Mexico.

SOMETHING ABOUT TEXAS

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One might suppose that my father was a shiftless sort of man to make a change of homes after he had a boy twelve years old; but that is not the fact, as you will understand when I tell you why we sold the plantation in Mississippi,

where we were raising fairly good crops of cotton, to embark in the cattle business in Texas.

Of course, it is not necessary for me to relate that the people in Texas declared themselves independent of Mexico in the year 1836, as in 1776 the colonists determined to be free men in a free country, and so broke away from England and England's king.

No doubt you already know that it was on the twenty-second day of April in the year 1836, the day after the battle of San Jacinto, that General Houston captured the Mexican general, Santa Anna; a treaty was then made between Texas and Mexico, which allowed the Texans to become an independent nation. You are also acquainted with the troubles in Texas, when, in the year 1840, the Comanches overran the country, and you have heard of the capture of the town of San Antonio by the Mexicans in September of the year 1842.

LAND GRANTS

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All this has little to do with what I am going to tell in regard to my going into the sheep business; yet if all those things had not happened, then President Lamar and President Houston might not have been able to make grants of land to people who were willing to come into the country and build homes.

There were a number of men who succeeded in getting so-called grants from the Texan government. Among these there was a certain Mr. Peters,—I never knew his first name,

—who had obtained a grant of an exceedingly large tract of land in the northern part. It was, so father had been told, the best land in Texas; and in order to gain settlers, Mr. Peters agreed to give outright to the head of every family six hundred and forty acres of land, and to each single man three hundred and twenty acres.

Now, of course, my father was the head of a family, although mother and I were the only other members of it; nevertheless he would receive just as many acres of land as though he had a dozen children.

When the matter was first talked about among our neighbors in Mississippi, I hoped I might be counted as a single man; but I was very soon made to understand that a lad of twelve years was mistaken when he reckoned himself of sufficient age to have given him three hundred and twenty acres of land simply for going into a country and living there.

THE "TEXAS FEVER"

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Because of this offer by Mr. Peters, the people around us, whose plantations were not particularly valuable, were highly excited, for all had heard how rich was the land in the republic of Texas, and how well it was adapted for cattle raising.