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THE LAWTON NEWS.

## Wichita Mountains.

The Wichita mountains are attracting world wide attention at the present time. Metropolitan papers that have been suppressing news of rich discoveries, no doubt believing that reports sent in were fake and for advertising purposes only, have discovered the error of their way and today the press is giving recognition to the wealth of Comanche county's big hills.

These mountains are young in the geographical history of the United States. It was as late as 1852 that Captain Marcey and Captain George B. McClellan made the first official explorations and surveys and definitely fixed the sources of the two forks of Red River and selected the south fork as the main river.

Contention between the United States and the republic of Texas had existed long prior to that date, however. Major Shively of the United States army disarmed a company of Texas rangers in Greer county in 1842, this matter was finally settled by the payment of \$30,000 to Texas. In 1884 a military force was sent from Ft. Sill to expel the settlers from Greer county. In 1859, Earl Van Dorn, then a brevet major, commanded an expedition from Fort Arbuckle, established Camp Radzinski, at the south slope of the Wichita Mountains. He had a battle with the Comanche Indians, in which he reports

"killing wounding or capturing 90 or 100, forty-nine were dead on the field. One private was killed and Lieutenant Fitzhugh Lee and several privates wounded."

Earlier than this, in 1834, General Leavenworth, with the Dragoon Regiment, of which Phil Kearney was Lieutenant Colonel, passed through this country. His adjutant reports the Wichita mountains as exceedingly rough and rising at least 1,500 feet above the level of the country. He says:

"A few miles before reaching our halting place for the night the character of the country changed; the secondary formation gave place entirely to primitive rock mountains of granite entirely without soil. Upon one spot I noticed a shining spot, apparently a waterfall glistening in the sunlight. An old woodman astonished us by informing us that it was a mass of salt. These mountains are impassable for artillery or wagon trains. Immense blocks of granite piled on each other from 500 to 1,000 feet in height."

In 1611 the Spaniards sent expeditions from Santa Fe, eastward, and found the Sierra Jauman, as they named the Wichita Mountains. Between that date and 1629, Father Juan de Salas and others worked as missionaries in that locality.

In 1650, Diego del Castillo, with a

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military expedition, remained in the country six months searching for minerals and found many pearls which he sent to the governor of New Mexico.

In 1804, the Lewis and Clark exploring expedition located the "Sinking Spring" in the Wichitas.

In 1805 Sibley's exploring expedition made a report to the president of the United States which contains the following statement:

"I obtained the following curious story from Mr. Brevel—who was born in the Caddo towns—and wrote it down from his own lips."

"About forty years ago I set off on

foot—this was about 1760—from the Panis nation in company with a party of young Indians, with whom I had been partly raised, on a hunting trip, and to procure horses. \* \* \*

After traveling several days the hills became more broken, rising into high mountains, among which we saw a great deal of rock salt and ore which the Indians said was my, (meaning white people's treasure), which I afterwards learned was silver, and that among these mountains of mines was often heard a noise like the explosion of cannons or distant thunder, which the Indians said was the spirit of the white

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people working in the mines, which I was afterwards informed was the blowing of the mines, as it is called, which common in all parts of Spanish America where mines exist."

When the Spaniards abandoned the country all their old workings were filled in and covered and no traces of them remain except the ruins of some old smelting works and very uncertain traces of small villages. Bancroft records the building of some of these towns about 75 miles south and possibly east of the present site of Ft. Sill. In

the "Greer County" case, W. F. Cummins, in the service of the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, testifies that in 1802 he made searches for these towns and located one between the western end of the Wichita Mountains and the north fork of the Red River. There were old traditions concerning it and the growth of timber and other natural occurrence would fix its date as being of the last century. Bancroft's history says:

"Silver mines existed about the headwaters of the Wichita, more particular-