

The Old Sod Fort On The So. Solomon

(By Carl Kobler)

"The Old Sod Fort" was a temporary outpost of the U. S. Army, built by them about 1858. It was located near the center of the southeast quarter of Sec. 13-8-24, five miles west and one mile south of Hill City, Kansas.

The original enclosure was about 80 feet wide and 150 feet long, large enough for a hundred head of cattle or horses. It was built of materials obtained locally. The walls were all of sod. There was a post at each exposed corner. I suppose this was to protect the walls from destruction by animals. The roof of the blockhouse was made with a center ridge log and smaller poles were used for rafters and then a sheathing of willows, then a covering of grass, with flats of sod on top and finished with some clay soil.

When I first saw this place twenty one years later, the walls were in fair condition, but part of the roof of the block house was gone. The walls were good enough to be used as a corral. This place is about a quarter mile north of the South Solomon river, and was used for a time by herdsmen, as a sort of stop over, while moving their herds northward.

I remember one time in particular, when some wranglers had brought a herd of mustangs from the southwest. They had a public sale. They also did some trading. There were plenty of bucking broncos. There were a hundred or more wild horses corralled. One beautiful gray stallion cleared that seven foot wall and was free.

A rider would go into the lot, lasso the desired horse, bring him out, and then snub him to a big post, haltered, either saddled or harnessed and then taken away. Two fellows drove in a buckboard, swapped their team for a team of the wild ones, changed the harness, hitched up again and were gone. The last we saw of them was as they passed over the hill to the west, the team on the dead run, and they hanging on to the buckboard.

The ground where this old fort was, has been in a field for half a century. I myself leveled the re-

mains of the fort.

This information is from memory. There is some historical data to be had with necessary expense. There may have been some burials, of which, I have been uninformed. The place is not marked, but I know the exact spot. It is about 200 yards north of the U. P. R. R. track and operated by Ollie Paxson C. L. Kobler, formerly at Penokee, and now living in Hays.