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EDITORIALS AND NOTES

Historic Fort Gibson

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

For many reasons Fort Gibson is the most important and interesting spot historically within the State of Oklahoma. It had a profound influence on the civilization of this state and many of the developments enjoyed by the present generation can be traced to influences having their origin in the existence and activity of this old fort. Fort Gibson did not merely affect the country immediately surrounding it but operated over a wide scope of territory. When Andrew Jackson ordered the troops up the Arkansas River that established Fort Smith and later Fort Gibson it was for the immediate purpose of curbing hostilities between the Cherokees and Osage Indians but it was not long until the strategic location of Fort Gibson was employed to aid in the civilization of the whole southwest. At this point was garrisoned the largest collection of United States troops on the western frontier who were employed on far flung military expeditions all over Oklahoma.

The most important expedition in the annals of Oklahoma outside of the Civil War operations was what was known as the Dragoon Expedition in 1834 that traveled from Fort Gibson southwest to the Wichita Mountains in order to make contact with the Comanche and Kiowa Indians and establish peace in what is now western Oklahoma. And to make this expedition a success Gen. Henry Leavenworth accompanied it and gave up his life near the Washita River.

At Fort Gibson were located Indian agents and commissions and through the military operations out of that post they were able to negotiate important treaties with the Indians in what is

now western Oklahoma that had a profound influence on the civilization and settlement of this western country. This was the most important military post on the western frontier during its days of greatest usefulness until changed conditions and the advancing of the frontier led to its abandonment before the Civil War.

During that war Fort Gibson was reoccupied first by the Confederate and then by the Federal troops and thus sheltered the forces of both the North and South during those tragic years. As the war progressed it was developed into a modern fortification garrisoned by over six thousand men at one time and became the most important military post within what is now Oklahoma.

After the war this post continued its life of usefulness and for many years served as a point for the departure of supplies and officers traveling to Fort Sill and other western posts within western Oklahoma. When it was abandoned the fort contained a large number of substantial structures that were reminiscent of the busy career and military service of this post. It is a matter of great regret that when plans were being made for the sale of town lots and the allotment of lands within the Cherokee Nation no provision was made by the federal government for preserving these buildings and the site of the fort for their historical associations. However, within the life of this historical society there were a number of these buildings in a good state of preservation that might have been saved if efforts had been made to that end. Less than a year ago there was standing in good condition the frame house that enclosed a great oven in which bread was cooked for the soldiers and thousands of refugees around Fort Gibson during the Civil War. In that time vandals have chopped and carried away pieces of the building until a few weeks ago the building collapsed on the oven, and

Whereas, the constitution of the Oklahoma Historical Society announces its purpose to preserve and perpetuate the history of Oklahoma and its people and to stimulate popular interest in historical study and research and to promote historical knowledge generally, and

Whereas, there is no field in which the society can be better employed and in which greater interest in our history can be stimulated than in the preservation for posterity of the relics of

a place of such outstanding importance to the history of this state as Fort Gibson, and

Whereas, the Oklahoma Historical Society has accomplished nothing to preserve any of the relics of this most historic spot in Oklahoma,

Therefore, Be It Resolved that the Board of Directors of the Oklahoma Historical Society note with regret and dismay the dissolution of the structures and relics of this most historic fort and announce their determination to take steps to save what may yet be saved of this fort.

G. F.