

THE FORT IN THE WILDERNESS

A Bee Man's Visit to Ruins Crumbling at Calhoun.

NEBRASKA'S FIRST OUTPOST OF 1820.

The Officers Who Commanded It—The Difficulties They Encountered and How Well They Battled.

A twenty minutes' ride on the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha or the Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley road drops the traveler at Calhoun, fifteen miles north of Omaha.

The course of the train is not unlike the bulwark of the city which seems to have accompanied the rider to the little town.

When the train has again sped onward and the discordance of its puffing and rattling has died away, the visitor finds himself in a little hamlet the silence of which is disturbed only by the grating of a carpenter's plane.

Here are wide streets, all buildings and all other man's efforts. The few young people one meets are all exceptions to the rule and serve to dispel the idea that Calhoun has been selected as a jumping place into eternity by a large number of the fathers of the land.

There are residences hidden among the beautiful groves which have sheltered a brace of generations, in which children have grown to second childhood, and where they have been nurtured to relinquish the traditions of stone which go with the sustenance of the western hills.

Here on the walls of some of the ruder huts, people gaze with admiration at the faded portraits of Presidents Jackson and Adams, and here you may find traces of men who have since risen to distinction in all parts of this great commonwealth.

The fact that the school is a school, the school, generally of boys, in which some of them were educated, the churches in which they were married, the courts in which they pleaded an ill here, but nearly all alike are silent. The life of other days has departed forever and in its stead has developed that atmosphere of quietude and peace and in the good old days of Sleepy Hollow.

Here resides a distinguished man of former days still strong, energetic and self-reliant, well-versed as regards the politics of the present, unacquainted as to his knowledge of the past, and with sufficient of reverence to crown a honorific of his. This is Lorenzo Croome. After a congressional career and an actively career in the councils of the state he came to Calhoun to farm and little he cared to what the future may contain for him.

Mr. Croome is one of the surviving landmarks. The march of empire and the excitement of foreign countries could not wear him from the place to which he brought his young wife north the hallowed spot on the hill on which he and his wife had their home.

The nobler a structure it is in life the grander is it when in ruins. Of the old fort there is scarcely a stone left upon a stone. And yet, nearly a hundred of military gentlemen and antiquaries visit the place to commune with the spirit of nearly three quarters of a century ago.

Think what a showing wilderness this must have been in 1820. Think also of the daring of the men who penetrated thither, and though but a handful, still they were the wild heroes of the north and west and the avant-couriers of civilization. Those may justly lay claim to have been the first settlers of Nebraska, a claim which not for many years and fewer still sustain.

The fort lies about a mile east of the city and is reached by a walk across the main street which soon leads the antiquary to the road that to the open country beyond. The street is lifted with grass, because a little ravine over which the town has erected only a rustic foot-bridge, divers travel in another direction.

The ravine was once alive with running, laughing water, which, like those who once grazed upon it, has ceased its laughter and speech forever. There were few females in the country in those days. If it had been otherwise, their gallants could not have selected a more beautiful trysting place. But the whistling leaves above lip no tales of love, but rather of the stern and stern of the crowd when he stands in sacred in the memory of those who admire both bravery and fortitude of the pioneers of other days.

Half a mile further on, where the main road, jump a fence, and you are within the enclosure of the fort. Even to the unpracticed eye, the structure of the ancient stronghold appears. They include a piece of ground of about four acres, as level as a dancing floor. The company quarters are on the north, the officers' quarters on the east, the officers' row lies the eastern side, fronting the enclosure.

Nearly all the structures were of logs, though a few were built of brick. One of the latter had a good substantial stone cellar, the latter a luxury not always enjoyed by the soldiers of the pioneer days. The masonry in the main was excellent, though the stone at length shows signs of crumbling. Not so however, is the case with the brick. Some of these are now almost entirely gone, and the weight, but look as if they were made to last through eternity.

They have been taken from the walls, freestone and the sandstone have had with age. It is said that the day was put into large holes and then a herd of young cattle was cramping upon it until it was properly worked. They have submitted to the baking process for nearly three weeks, with the result above stated.

Even at this distance it is evident the purposes to which the different structures were devoted. At the southwestern extremity stood the bakery, the fireplace of which was still in evidence. The officers' quarters were on the north, the officers' row lies the eastern side, fronting the enclosure.

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Their duties are defined as being to keep in maintaining order and prohibiting illegal traffic in liquor on the several Indian reservations. It was the real practical beginning of order among the wild Sioux.

A political movement, to bring about its successful invasion, a number of prominent chiefs who were friendly to the government were given the title and pay of colonel. A few majors and captains were included with minor pay.

As soon as the police organization was fairly under way, the colonels and majors were dropped from the rolls, and the police were placed under one of the white employees as chief of police, made the highest rank. At the large agencies their service is found in the form of a mounted police force, and her police force restored and to be great as officers.

For efficiency the Indian police cannot be excelled having the respect and fear of their people. Intruders upon Indian reservations are promptly brought into the agency by the mounted police, and the white employees have to be careful. At Pine Ridge agency during Dr. McGillicuddy's administration of Red Cloud's people, the most efficient service was rendered by the Indian police, but while on duty were under good discipline. Ten of the fifty were detailed for agency service, while the remainder did their duty at their respective camps.

The chief of police, Donald Brown, now of Rushville, this state, has been a regular army soldier, first sergeant for many years and brought his police up to soldiers. McGillicuddy was proud of his loyal helpers, and his captain and lieutenant were respected as officers of the same rank in our regular army, while the non-commissioned officers and privates are uniformed in neat patterns. They take great pride in their dress and business is one of the principal reminders while on agency duty.

One of the best specimens of the service is Captain George Sward, a full-blooded Indian. Previous to his enlistment as captain of police at Pine Ridge he was a long-haired, painted warrior with a full beard and a full head of hair. He had been in Indian "brave" for eleven years, served in the army as scout for two years, and for the past ten years he has been a faithful and honest policeman. He is a member of the Episcopal church and a leader of the progressive element of his people. He speaks both the English and his own language, which he picked up from his father and grandfather, and is a white man as possible.

During McGillicuddy's reign at that agency many disturbances occurred through Red Cloud's treachery and anger for row with the agent. The police proved true to him, though in one case in which the agent to depose a few whose sympathies were with the old chief. But Captain Sward never shirked the responsibility and he was never kept in the office of a scout. They are entrusted with the keys of silver from the treasury department, having had as high as \$10,000 in their charge at one time. During the days of the Black Hills raid they were several times pursued but no money ever came up.

But the regulation of agency matters is where they do the principal work. The benefit of the police were fully realized in 1882 when Secretary Tilden ordered the abolition of the annual sun dance, with its barbarous and cruel inflictions. The regulation is a religious duty, but it was believed by the government that the continuation of such heathen and uncivilized customs was detrimental to the progress of the Indian. It was only through the aid of Washington to give that order, but it was not easy for an agent among 6,000 savages to force it. The Indian police, however, aided after the first year, and nothing of the kind is now held.

At the smaller agencies like Santee, where the Indians have taken the name of land and arduous jobs of the state, it is considered by the department that the Indian police should no longer be here. Agent Holmes will also accept of the order, and he is glad to see the abolition of the annual sun dance, with its barbarous and cruel inflictions. The regulation is a religious duty, but it was believed by the government that the continuation of such heathen and uncivilized customs was detrimental to the progress of the Indian. It was only through the aid of Washington to give that order, but it was not easy for an agent among 6,000 savages to force it. The Indian police, however, aided after the first year, and nothing of the kind is now held.

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