

FORT HAYS ARCHEOLOGY, 1967

by
Thomas P. Barr

During the past summer the writer directed a crew of seven workers in an archeological dig at the site of old Fort Hays. This work was part of the Kansas State Historical Society's interpretative program for the preservation and restoration of that fort site. Old Fort Hays is located on the highway just west of the present day community of Hays, Kansas. The Fort was established in 1867 by the U. S. Army as an outpost for the defense of settlers and railroad campus from Indian attacks in the western part of Kansas. After being in existence for a period of twenty-two years, the fort outlived its usefulness and was abandoned in the year 1889. Since that time the fort buildings have been used by the personnel of Fort Hays Normal School, now Fort Hays State College, and also by various tenants over a period of years. During the first part of this period from 1889 up through the first decade of the twentieth century, a great many of the then existing frame structures were moved to the Kansas State Experimental Station, to the main campus of the college, or sold to private individuals. Only two buildings remained on the fort grounds proper, the blockhouse and the guardhouse, both of which are constructed of the native post rock limestone. During the 1930's with the construction of U. S. Highway 40, a great percentage of the foundations for the enlisted men's quarters were destroyed through construction activity.

Currently, the fort site is occupied by a private golf course utilized by the people of Hays and the surrounding area. The blockhouse is now being restored and the guardhouse serves as a museum housing artifacts reflecting various stages of the fort's history. One of the houses which served as an officers quarters was donated to the state a few years ago and moved back. This two story frame structure lacks the kitchen and dining room complex originally attached to the rear of the house. Soon it is to be restored in its entirety.

During the summer of 1966, a concerted effort was initiated by the Historical Society, and the first series of systematic excavations of the fort was accomplished. The archeological fieldwork centered around one of the civiliam structures known as the sutler's store. Only one feature, a pit toilet, was definitely associated with the officers row complex. This feature was either associated with house number nine or ten located at the end of the row.

From the first week in June through the first week in August, 1967, the Society's crew was actively engaged in the excavation of officers row and its associated features. In 1867, officers row was comprised of seven frame structures. The commanding officers house being situated in the center of the row. Later one additional house was added on the east end of the row and two structures were built on the west. There are only nine foundations in existence at the present time. The first foundation was destroyed during the construction of a black top road from the highway to clubhouse of the golf course.

Methodology consisted of the utilization of an 1879 U. S. Army map of the fort in order to gain a proper perspective concerning the dimensions and approximate locations of the foundations of "officers row." Using this particular map, the first suspected area was subjected to systematic probing. Once the first foundation was located, the western edge of the house served as a reference point from which the first series of measurements could be taken in order to locate the remaining foundations. By using this system of measuring and probing, all of the foundation corners were located. Probing for the foundations was utilized instead of the standard test excavations with a grid system due to the fact that the entire house was not to be uncovered, just the foundation and its associated features.

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The stone for the foundation was encountered at a rather uniform depth of four inches below the actual ground surface. An area measuring approximately thirty-six inches in width was excavated to a depth equal to that of the actual foundation. Once the limits of the stone had been defined, two trenches measuring from eight to twelve inches in width and six inches in depth were excavated on either side of the stone. These trenches served not only as a platform for the foundation, but they provided a drainage area for the limestone.

Three of the four foundations uncovered this season were T-shaped in general outline with the foundation for the commanding officers house resembling that of an inverted "L." The T-shaped house foundations measured 40 by 16 feet for the living area and 32 by 16 feet for the kitchen-dining room complex. The commanding officers foundation measured 40 by 32 in the living room area and 32 by 24 feet for the kitchen-dining room area. The T-shaped and the L-shaped foundations were oriented with the top of the "T" or "L" facing north toward the quadrangle with the back of the house or the kitchen area facing to the south.

The first foundation uncovered belonged to that of the second structure on officers row since the first foundation had been previously destroyed. A single course of post rock limestone constituted the major raw material utilized by the soldiers of the fort in the construction of the foundations. The limestone slabs were bonded together with a horsehair mortar. Low areas along the foundation were raised by plastering the surface of the slabs with mortar to a thickness which ranged from one-quarter of an inch to one-half of an inch in thickness.

Two interior chimney foundations were uncovered in the living room area, one on the east and one on the west end. One brick flue support was associated with each of the chimney foundations. These were essentially square in general outline with an open end facing the interior of the house. The second house foundation also exhibited a cross-member which separated the living room area from the kitchen. This was possibly for additional support as the other T-shaped houses lacked this particular architectural feature. The fourth house foundation was essentially the same as the first, but without the cross-member.

On the foundation for house number three rests the replaced officers house. The excavation there was to determine the size of the missing kitchen addition for restoration purposes. A grid system consisting of twelve squares measuring five feet by five feet were superimposed over that area. The squares were excavated in arbitrary six inch levels with the foundation being encountered at a depth of four inches in the central area. Several limestone rocks and decomposed mortar were the only materials that suggested the location of the foundation. The foundation fell within the range for the kitchen and dining room complexes for house number two and house number four being 32 feet in length and 16 feet in width.

The commanding officer's house, the fifth house on the row, was the last foundation to be uncovered during the course of the 1967 field season. The front section of the foundation was well preserved, whereas the rear of the house was in poor condition. Contributing factors which led to this poor state of preservation are two-fold. The first being since the commanding officer's house contained a large cellar located beneath the kitchen and dining room complex, it became a favored area for relic hunters to gather materials. Secondly, with the resulting depth, people in the vicinity of the fort grounds used this convenient depression for a dumping ground. Soft fired brick footings were located on the south and east sides of the cellar at a depth of 36 inches. These bricks were arranged in a single course with one edge of the brick being placed in a mortar base. An outside entrance to the cellar was uncovered on the east side of the feature. The entrance was also manufactured from soft fired clay bricks. Only the outside brick retainers remained with

no indication for either wood or brick steps. Five chimney foundations were also uncovered. Three were situated on the east side and two on the west.

Ten pit toilets and two burn pits constitute the remaining features that were excavated during the 1967 field season. The pit toilets were of two types: nine were rectangular in general outline and served as single compartment toilets with the tenth toilet having three compartments. This particular toilet having the three compartments was associated with commanding officer's house foundation. Each of the three compartments had one by eight pieces of wood sheeting on the walls and the floor of each compartment was also lined with wood. The two burn pits were also rectangular in general outline and basin-shaped in vertical cross-section with the pits being considerably larger than the pit toilets.

The majority of the historic materials were recovered from the pit toilets and burn pits with very small amounts of cultural debris being recovered from the house foundations. The artifacts from the pit toilets were found at either the northern end or in zones which ranged in depth from three to seven feet below the present ground surface. Approximately 3,500 artifacts were recovered from the toilet pits. Of this total, over 500 complete bottles were recovered accompanied by many restorable items consisting of cups, saucers, plates, chamber pots, and water pitchers. Military accoutrements comprised a small sample when compared to the total number of artifacts, and they were restricted to such items as cartridge case, buttons, and two sabers.

All of the pit toilets and burn pits were backfilled; however, the foundations were left open and they are now in the process of being stabilized for an open exhibit. The summer of 1968 will see a continuation and completion of the remaining foundations and their associated features on officers row.

Kansas State Historical Society
Topeka, Kansas

BOOK REVIEW

Lost Heritage of Alaska. Polly and Leon Grodon Miller, pp. 289 + XV. The World Publishing Company, Cleveland and New York. 1967. \$15.00

In 1741 the sailors of Vitus Bering, shipwrecked in the Aleutians, were able to kill sea otters with clubs. One hundred fifty years later these fur bearers were all but extinct, the herds of fur seal existed only because of close government supervision and today the survival of such species as the caribou, musk or and polar bear is threatened. But there have been other losses as well. The early explorers, Bering and Cook, and the fur traders who followed them, found the coastal Indians of the northwest possessed of an unique art style expressed in the carving of stone, bone, antler, and particularly of wood, as well as in the weaving of cloaks and blankets. It is the loss of these art objects to Alaska and, even more, the loss of the ability and the will to create new ones that concern the authors and give this book its title.

The contents of this work are best described in its subtitle: The Adventure and Art of the Alaskan Coastal Indians, for it is not a study of Alaska in general,

but of the coastal area south of Sitka. It begins with the discovery and early exploration of the region and moves on into the era of the fur trade and the coming of the "Boston men", one of whom named the great river of the Northwest, the Columbia, after his ship. Particularly interesting is the chapter devoted to the Russian traders and to Baranov who ruled Alaska from 1791 until he was recalled in 1817. The names of John Smith and Miles Standish are familiar to every schoolboy while that of Alexander Baranov is virtually unknown, yet this remarkable man furnished the momentum that kept Russian rule alive in Alaska for fifty years after his departure.

A single chapter covers the period between 1867 when Alaska became a United States territory and the discovery of gold in 1897. Another covers the period between the gold rush and statehood. Not the least fascinating chapter is that devoted to the collectors who early began to accumulate thousands of Indian art objects, masks, chests, dishes, blankets and even totem poles and canoes, the bulk of which eventually found their way into various museums around the world.

The book is a handsome one with its simulated walnut wood-grain binding, its large pages with generous margins and clear printing. Last, but far from least, it has a good index. The junior author is a well known industrial designer with a long background in researching and studying the customs of the Northwest Indians and the history of the area. Polly Miller is a photographer and former newspaper columnist who shares her husband's enthusiasm and interests. In their writing they have shown an unusual ability to mold their own interpretations with liberal quotes from primary sources into a vivid and accurate history of southwestern Alaska. Well written though it is, it need not be read to be appreciated for the more than 200 well chosen illustrations will delight anyone. It can be recommended to the specialist in the history and the art of the region as well as to the interested layman as well worth the price.

George Metcalf, Museum Specialist
Smithsonian Office of Anthropology

October 1967 Minutes

KANSA CHAPTER OF K.A.A.

The monthly meeting of Kansa Chapter was held at the KP&L building on Friday, October 20. Eleven members and guests were present.

Fr. Felix of St. Benedict's College spoke on the relationship of archeology to the other sciences, or atoms to Adam. He told us that geology is the gateway to all the sciences, and is a unifier. There is one world--mineral, vegetable and animal--with man as the climax. Very fine slides were used to illustrate his remarks.

Robert Jacobson, vice president of the Atchison County Historical Society showed us photographs and souvenir booklets of the Atchison Corn Carnivals from 1898 to 1912.

Artifacts were displayed by Fr. Felix, Ralph Hefty, Scott Smith, Harry Kew and Art Howe.

Milton Reichart, Sec.-Treas. Kansa Chapter
Atchison, Kansas

KANSAS ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

Site No.

County

Site No.

1. Map reference 2. Type of site

3. Cultural affiliation

4. Location

Sec. T R

5. Owner and address

6. Previous owners

7. Tenant

8. Informants

9. Previous designations for site

10. Site description

11. Position of site and surroundings

12. Area of occupation

13. Character of soil

14. Present condition

15. Previous excavations

16. Material collected

17. Material observed

18. Material reported and owner

19. Recommendations for further work

20. Photograph numbers

21. Maps of site

Recorded by

Date

Site No.

Mapped by

Date

INFORMATION FOR K.A.A. MEMBERSHIP

The objects and purposes of this association are: to unite individuals who are interested in the Indian history and prehistory of the State of Kansas; preservation and display of Indian remains within the State; the scientific study, investigation and interpretation of archeological remains and ethnological materials; the publication and distribution of information concerning Kansas archaeology and ethnology; the development and promotion of greater public interest and appreciation for the cultural heritage of the State.

Types of memberships and dues:

Active	\$3.00	Contributing	\$10.00
Student	\$1.00	Sustaining	\$25.00
Institutional	\$5.00	Life	\$100.00

Application for membership and dues should be addressed to the Secretary-Treasurer of the Kansas Anthropological Association as the address appears on the title page of the Newsletter. A membership year begins on September 1st and annual dues are payable at that time.

PUBLICATIONS

Members will receive the Newsletter nine times a year. Printed from September to May the Newsletter contains reports of archaeological and ethnological work in the state as well as activities of the K.A.A. members. All members and interested individuals, professional or amateur, are invited to submit material to the K.A.A. editor for use in the Newsletter. Ten reprints will be provided free to the author for each article accepted. Additional reprints or reprints of back numbers, if available, may be ordered for 35 cents each from the Secretary-Treasurer.

The Association also publishes bulletins on specific subjects as the material becomes available. Currently in print is Bulletin No. 1, Coal Oil-Canyon, by Peter W. Bowman, \$2.25. Bulletins may be ordered from the editor.

MEETINGS

Association meetings are held one or two times a year. The 1968 Spring meeting will be held in Hays, April 20, 1968 at the Memorial Union, Fort Hays College campus.

22. Approach to site

23. Remarks

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