

WICHITA, KANSAS, SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 4, 1920.

CONVERT SEDGWICK COUNTY FOREST INTO HO

TIMBER LAND OF BUFFALO BILL IS SHORN OF TREES

Will Sell 15,000 Cords of Wood in Wichita During Coming Winter

AN OLD INDIAN CAMP

Lumber camp activities and saw mills are usually connected in the Kansas mind with scenes in the north, northwest, or south, where virgin forests cover wide expanses, where swift, well-filled rivers wind their way to industrial centers and where sometimes one sees innumerable acres of blackened stumps and tangled underbrush, mute testimony to the tragedy of a forest fire. This is not natural, for no one ever thought of writing a "Blazed Trail" with the scene laid in Kansas where the resounding blows of the axe are rarely heard and the picturesque woodsman never seen.

But there is a tract of woodland in Sedgwick county within four miles of Wichita where the blows of the axe are resounding, where woodsmen are chopping, hewing and sawing, where strong teams are tugging at huge logs and possessing a saw mill capable daily of turning out 6,000 feet of good lumber.

This tract was originally owned by Col. William (Buffalo Bill) Mathewson, who is somewhat generally known as the real and original Buffalo Bill, and is four miles south of Douglas, on Hydraulic. It consisted of 400 acres at the time of the purchase, a good part of it being covered with trees. One hundred and ninety acres of the tract are still covered with trees and it is this part which has furnished 150,000 feet of lumber to the city of Wichita.

Five 1/2 Years

That part of the 400 acres under cultivation has been farmed since Col. Mathewson came into the ownership, but the acres covered with trees have remained idle, returning no revenue to the owner, even to compensate him for the taxes. During his life-time the colonel refused all offers for the timber. He was a great lover of nature, and this bit of wild life on his farm appealed to him.

Recently heirs of Colonel Mathewson have sold the timber on the farm to J. O. Drollinger, of Wichita, and he is at present busily engaged in clearing the farm of all trees and converting them into lumber and firewood.

Mr. Drollinger is a Wichita man, having been born and educated in Sedgwick county. For the past nine years he has been engaged in the automobile business in this city, the latter two years of that time having had the Apperson agency. He has given up all connection with the automobile business, and is now devoting his entire time to clearing the Mathewson farm.

Wood For Fuel

Owing to his activities in this connection Wichitans can rest easier regarding the fuel situation this winter. With Henry Three-Way Doherty warning Kansans and Oklahomans of the impending gas "famine" and with production of coal considerably under normal, it begins to appear that the kind of fuel commonly used here may be difficult to obtain when cold weather comes. But Mr. Drollinger, with his large steam sawmill and his specially constructed saw, will soon be turning out daily 6,000 cords of excellent hard wood, suitable for stoves and fur-

Some Scenes in Sedgwick County Lumber Camp and Wichita Home Built of Product



Upper left: Small section of tree requiring team to pull. Upper right: Stump of massive tree five feet in diameter and 100 feet high. Lower left: Pile of logs waiting to be sawed into lumber. Lower right: Home of Herbert Jones, on College Hill, built of lumber from the Mathewson farm.

nances. By the time the coldest weather has set in, he expects to have 15,000 cords of hard wood ready for the consumption of Wichita residents. There

are approximately that many homes in the city and a cord of good hardwood to supplement the coal and thin supply of gas will help considerably.

Col. William Mathewson The Original "Buffalo Bill"



BY L. W. JOHNSON

Mr. Drollinger is employing about 14 husky men, some of them having had experience as real lumbermen. Just now there is a scarcity of labor owing to the wheat harvest, but the owner manages to keep the work swinging along. He is now centering most of his attention to the business of getting out cordwood for the winter, with a little time taken off now and then to saw up some lumber.

An experienced lumberman recently employed estimated there are 15,000 cords of wood and it is planned to have every stick out in time for cold weather. One hundred and fifty thousand feet of lumber consisting of walnut, oak and cottonwood have already been cut and used in the city.

Monster Trees

Some excellent lumber has been obtained and several stately trees have been felled. The pride of the small forest was a monster oak over 100 feet tall and five feet in diameter at its base. When trimmed of its branches the felled log was almost as high as a man's shoulders. A true estimate of its age was arrived at when 127 rings were counted from center to circumference. These rings gave a record of the lean years and of the years of plenty for some of the concentric additions to the trunk are broad bespeaking much nourishment while others are so thin as to be barely discernable.

The entire 150,000 feet of oak, walnut and cottonwood lumber has been sold to Wichita parties for use here. The Board of Education purchased 6,000 feet of it and a local furniture

factory placed a large order for oak and walnut.

There are two tiny homes on College Hill just being completed and all the lumber used was sawed from the Sedgwick county trees. These houses belong to Herbert C. Jones of 3612 East Second street. One is just being built on South Leffrine while the Jones family has just moved into the home on East Second. Both houses are constructed of the cottonwood lumber, "Kansas poplar" as it is called by Mr. Jones, and the interior woodwork is all of black walnut. The appearance of the houses is as good as any of their neighbors.

Lumber Exhausted

The lumber supply of the tract, however, is practically exhausted, Mr. Drollinger states, for the present at least. Some of the larger trees are being spared for a few years when they will be of sufficient size to warrant sawing into boards.

The original tract of 400 acres came into the possession of Colonel William Mathewson in 1872. He purchased the land for what would today be considered an extremely cheap price, although the exact amount is not remembered by his son, William Mathewson, oil broker of 301 Hoyt building. It was not a money transaction, Mr. Mathewson recalls, his father trading a bunch of cattle for the land. That was the only time the tract changed hands, the first owners having received title direct from Uncle Sam. Upon Col. Mathewson's death, the land passed to his heirs who still own it.

The colonel steadfastly refused to allow any of the timber to be cut, reserving the place for a hunting and trapping ground for himself and friends. For many years after it came into the original Buffalo Bill's hands there was good beaver trapping, the animals building their dams in the Arkansas river and in a small creek also running through the tract. The colonel spent much of his time engaged in this diversion. When the beaver sought more wild climes than Kansas afforded, minks took their places and still the trapping sport continued.

Indians Camped There

During the time when Indians held sway in Kansas, the Mathewson tract was a camping place for the redskins.



J. O. DROLLINGER

This fact is attested to by the many stomp arrow heads which have been picked up on the tract, mounds remain-

MASSIVE TREE FELLED IN



ers of a settlement of differences between tribal braves or of skilled aborigine marksmen drawing bow for game.

The Indians continued to make it a camping place after the white man conquered Kansas and drove the red man to sequestered areas. Often parties could be found with camp pitched in the Mathewson timber and traps of set along the streams. They drifted in from nearby reservations for a taste of the old time life of freedom.

For years after this the woodland remained undisturbed, save by an occasional hunting or trapping party. It still kept its virgin state long after the death of Col. Mathewson, the first change being the sale of 140 acres to the Standard Oil company for the building of a refinery. The land sold for around \$400 per acre.

Finally the heirs became dissatisfied with paying taxes on the timber land without receiving financial returns, and the decision was made to sell the timber and place the entire farm under cultivation. The clearing process was begun by Mr. Drollinger about six months ago. It is hardly probable that all the land will be ready for a crop next summer.

The original richness of the river bottom soil has been added to by the fallen vegetation which has been decaying through the years and has added to the properties of the soil. When placed under cultivation, it will be as fine farm land as can be found anywhere.

Mr. Drollinger plans to use two trucks to haul his retail orders of cord wood to Wichita and deliver them to customers. Many orders have already been placed and he will keep two trucks busy making four trips each, per day during the remainder of the winter.

If the fuel shortage this winter becomes critical, wood may be sold to local coal yards and placed there in quantities so that Wichita families may have easy access.