

Cowboy Hall Should Remain in City

THE National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center was located in Oklahoma City in 1955 because trustees decided this was the most desirable site available. No strings were attached.

The trustees exercised good judgment, because Oklahoma and Oklahoma City have contributed greatly to help make this museum an international success. Talk of moving it ought to be stopped.

Chester A. Reynolds of Kansas City originated the idea of a hall of fame to honor all great cowboys after he visited the Will Rogers Memorial at Claremore. He persuaded governors of 17 western states to appoint trustees to establish such a shrine.

After screening scores of bids the site committee recommended Dodge City, Kan., Colorado Springs and Oklahoma City as top choices. A meeting of trustees was held in Denver to make the final selection.

Former Gov. Roy J. Turner was chairman of the Oklahoma delegation to make the final presentation. Then-Gov. Raymond Gary was co-chairman. Other members were Glenn W. Faris, of the Oklahoma

City Chamber of Commerce, Roy P. Stewart, O.C. Brown and myself. Turner and Brown are now deceased.

Despite an effort by one trustee to "auction the location," the Oklahoma delegation only promised to do its part toward raising funds to erect a suitable building to house the Cowboy Hall of Fame. Reports were published that Oklahoma City outbid other places with "a blank check" but they were false rumors.

The Oklahoma organization conducted two successful campaigns to raise \$1 million each and Oklahomans made many other contributions.

Statements that the Cowboy Hall of Fame had to buy its site are misleading. The first 25 acres belonged to Oklahoma City and William H. Gill Jr., then city manager, persuaded the council to make it available for the purpose. An adjoining 12 acres was purchased with funds raised by the Oklahoma Association for the Cowboy Hall of Fame.

Promises may have been made on other matters from time to time by city councilmen or other individuals. Only those that were confirmed

by official action may be regarded as valid commitments of the city.

Nevertheless, there are problems connected with the Cowboy Hall of Fame and they must be resolved. A Blue Ribbon committee has been named to accomplish this and the committee is at work.

This writer was a member of the committee which recommended Dean Krakel for the position of director of the Cowboy Hall of Fame 20 years ago. Krakel has exceptional ability as a museum director and he has done a notable piece of work in developing the Cowboy Hall of Fame, but he does not own it.

It is unfortunate that Krakel has tactlessly chosen to stir up trustees with illusions the institution might be moved to one of their states. Such tactics are detrimental to the Hall of Fame, to Oklahoma City, and ultimately maybe to Krakel himself.

The pioneer west has largely disappeared, but the spirit of early settlers remains strong in Oklahoma and Oklahoma City. People will do what they can to resolve the problems. Unless solutions are found and harmony is restored, this great museum may disappear also.