

**a guide to  
FORT  
SMITH  
national  
historic  
site  
arkansas**

## COMMISSARY

From the 1840s thru the 1860s, Fort Smith was a vital link in the supply line to forts farther west. Foodstuffs, clothing, and hardware were sent here from the East, stored in this building, and then issued out as required. This function made Fort Smith truly a "mother post."

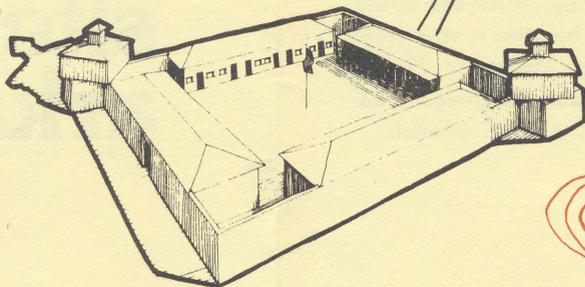


## INITIAL POINT MARKER

This stone, set in 1825, established the boundary between Arkansas Territory and the Choctaw Nation. For some 65 years thereafter, non-Indians were prohibited from settling west of this line. The Indian Territory, as the region was called, served as a buffer between the sharply contrasting cultures of non-Indian settlers in Arkansas and the nomadic plains tribes farther west.

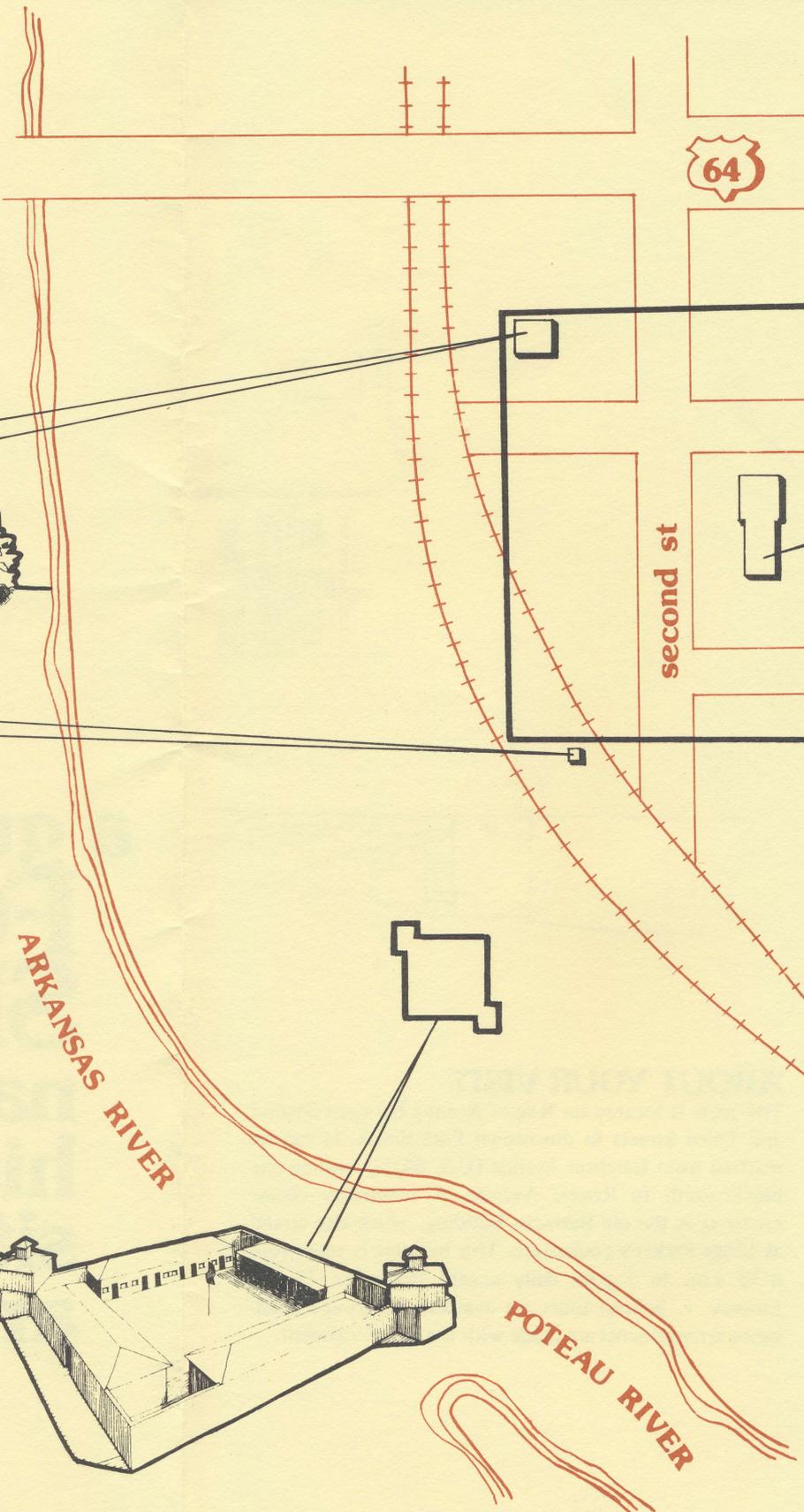
## FIRST FORT

The small log stockaded fort, started on this site in 1817, was established to bring peace between the warring Osage and Cherokee tribes. A lonely and isolated station it was only 132 feet square and had two blockhouses. The Army garrison, always too small for the task, never numbered more than about 130 men. This first Fort Smith was abandoned in 1824 when the center of hostilities moved farther west.



ARKANSAS RIVER

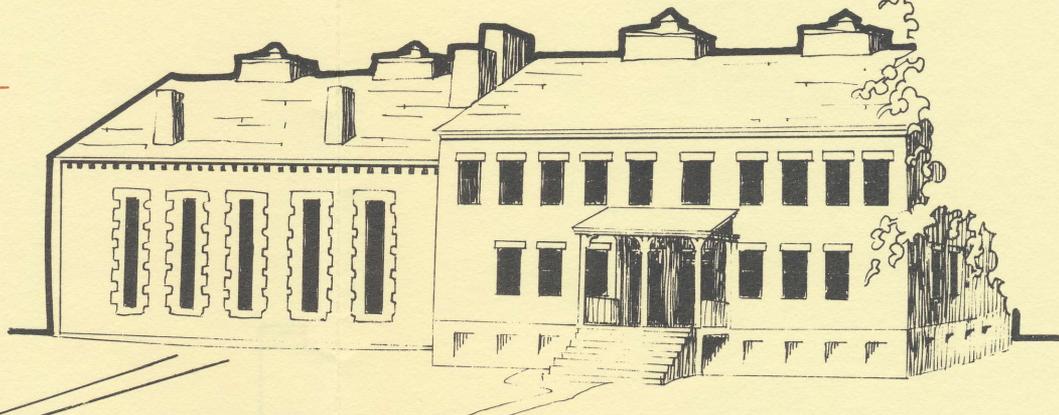
POTEAU RIVER



**garrison ave**

**rogers ave**

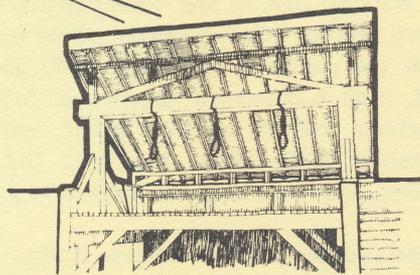
**third st**



### **COURTHOUSE / JAIL**

In this building, Judge Isaac C. Parker presided over some 13,000 cases between 1875 and 1896. As the only non-Indian court having jurisdiction over Indian Territory, Parker's court was always busy. He often employed as many as 200

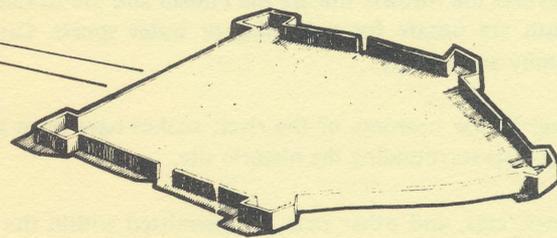
U.S. deputy marshalls to patrol this vast region. When law-breakers were captured and brought here for trial, they were locked up in the basement prison. Conditions were somewhat improved when the new south wing jail was completed in 1888.



RECONSTRUCTED GALLOWES EXHIBIT

### **GALLOWES**

Judge Parker's reputation as "The Hanging Judge" was largely undeserved. Of the 344 defendants tried for capital offenses, only 79 were actually hanged. "It was not I who hung them," said Parker. "I never hung a man. It is the law." Statutes of the period specifically commanded that anyone convicted of murder or rape was to be put to death. Parker always remained in awe of our system of government and was dedicated to his belief that, "laws are worthless to protect the rights of the people unless they are executed."



### **SECOND FORT**

When President Andrew Jackson's "Great Experiment" forced thousands of eastern Indians to move west, Arkansas settlers feared that there would be trouble. Although these fears were groundless, the Army returned to construct a new fort, one which would be used mainly to supply other posts in the Indian country. Begun in 1838, work continued intermittently until the eve of the Mexican War in 1846 when General Zachary Taylor stopped construction. The new fort, enclosed by a stone wall, consisted of two officers' quarters, two barracks, storehouses, and stables.

## FOR A SAFE VISIT

Fort Smith National Historic Site is located in a downtown area; there is much traffic on the streets within the park. Please be careful when walking or crossing these streets.

When going to the Belle Point area, be very careful as you cross the two sets of railroad tracks.

Beyond the historic site are the Poteau and the Arkansas Rivers. Both are unsafe for swimming or water sports. Caution your family accordingly.

Due to the nearness of the river, snakes have been seen in the tall grass surrounding the historic site.

Dogs, cats, and other pets are permitted within the site, but they must be on leashes or otherwise physically restrained.

Restoration or archeological work may be in process. Please use extreme caution in these areas, especially with children.

have a SUPER visit

Safely  
Use  
Preserve and  
Enjoy these  
Resources

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

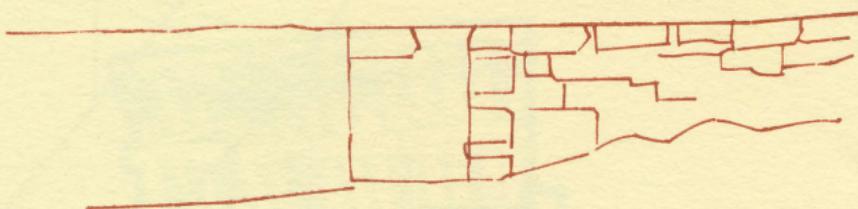
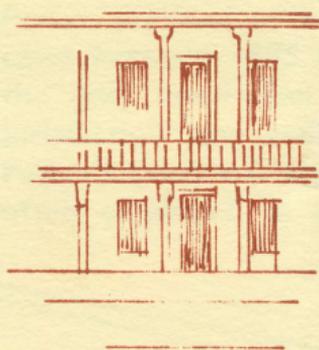
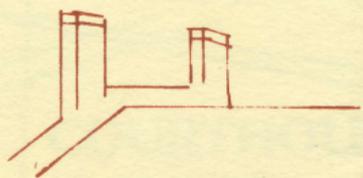


## ADMINISTRATION

Fort Smith National Historic Site is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. To establish the park, the city donated 11 acres of public land, local businessmen contributed funds to purchase private interests on Belle Point, and both Public Historical Restorations, Inc., and Old Fort Museum relinquished sites they had occupied for many years.

A superintendent, whose address is Box 1406, Fort Smith, AR 72901, is in immediate charge of the site.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.



## **ABOUT YOUR VISIT**

The park is located on Rogers Avenue between Second and Third Streets in downtown Fort Smith. It can be reached from Garrison Avenue (U.S. 64) by turning one block south to Rogers Avenue. A temporary visitor center is in the old Barracks Building, which also served as Judge Parker's courtroom. This building is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily except December 25 and January 1. Special tours are available to groups if advance arrangements are made with the superintendent.