

**GUIDE TO  
FORT UNION**



15¢ IF YOU TAKE THIS BOOKLET HOME

**FORT UNION NATIONAL MONUMENT  
NEW MEXICO**

## FORT UNION NATIONAL MONUMENT

Fort Union National Monument was established on April 5, 1956. It was first opened to visitors on June 8, 1956. Fort Union is one of over 230 areas administered by the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior. The Park Service has excavated parts of the Fort, a number of the walls have been stabilized to prevent falling and we are spraying with epoxy resin to prevent further deterioration.

### CONSERVATION — YOU CAN HELP

If you are interested in the work of the National Park Service, and in the cause of conservation in general, you can give active expression of this interest, and lend support by alining yourself with one of the numerous conservation organizations which act as spokesmen for those who wish our scenic and historic heritage to be kept unimpaired "for the enjoyment of future generations."

Names and addresses of conservation organizations may be obtained at the Information Desk.

Cover: Private Neils Larsen, Troop G, 6th Cavalry, was stationed at Fort Union from 1887 through most of 1890. Born in Assens, Denmark in 1861, he enlisted in 1884 and re-enlisted in 1889. Discharged in 1893 with the rank of sergeant, he took up farming in southern Minnesota and died in 1942.

## WELCOME

It is indeed a pleasure to welcome you to Fort Union National Monument. The fort, largest of the United States military posts in the Southwest during the 19th century, served as a base of operations for both military and civilian ventures in New Mexico between 1851 and 1891, turbulent years of trade expansion, Indian uprisings, the Civil War, and the fulfillment of our country's Manifest Destiny.

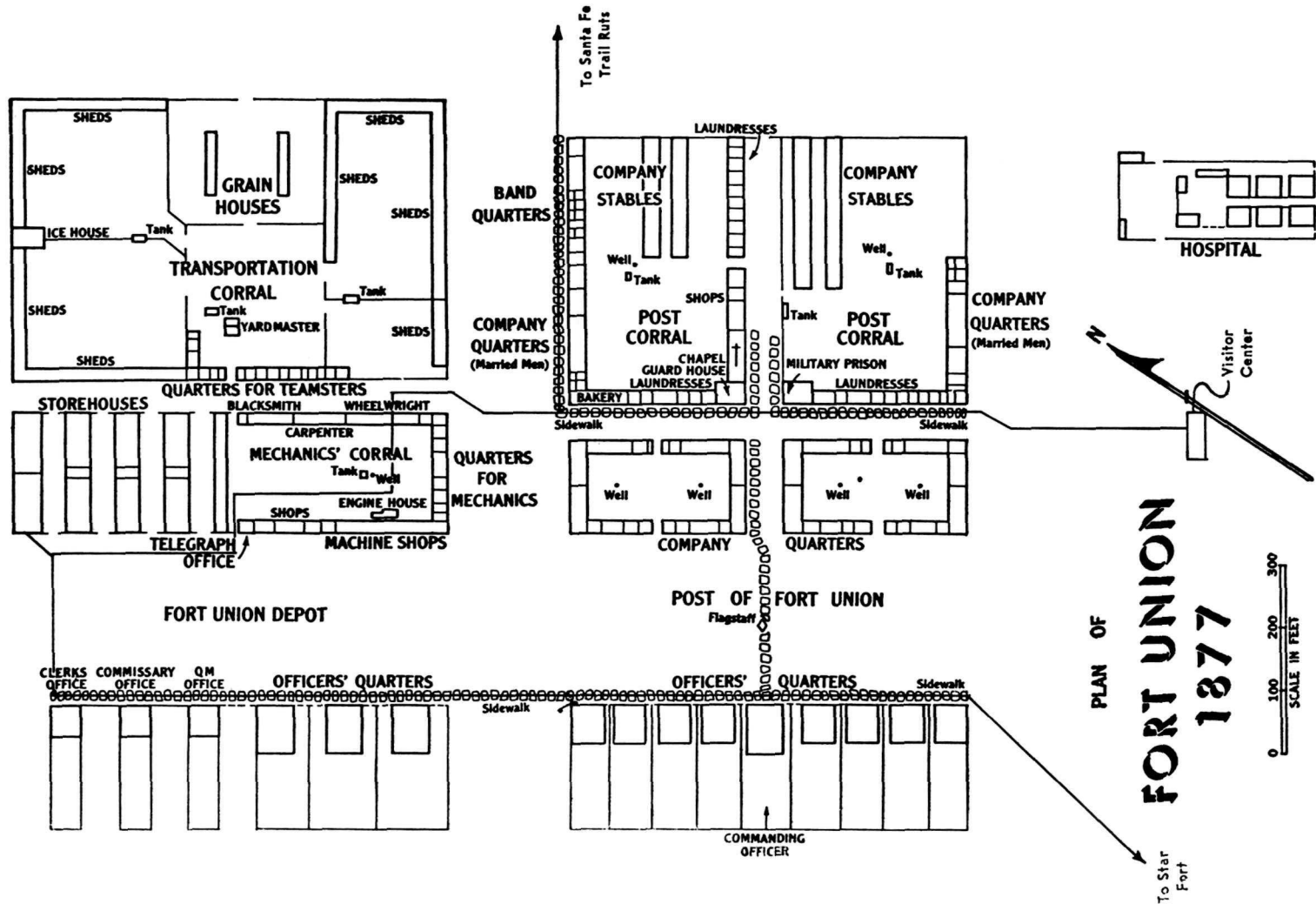
Strategically located near the junction of the Mountain and Cimarron branches of the famous Santa Fe Trail, the fort and the surrounding area are rich in the history and romance of life on the Southwestern frontier.

We hope, by guiding you through the fort with this self-guiding booklet, identifying and pointing out features of interest, and by the exhibits on display in the museum section of the visitor center, to convey to you the excitement and history so graphically represented here. If any unanswered questions arise, ask the ranger on duty; he will be more than happy to answer them for you.

Before starting out on the trail we would like to enlist your aid in preserving what is left of the fort for those who will follow you. *Do not remove or disturb anything you see here. Climbing on the walls not only tears them down, but could result in serious injury to yourself and others.* Both you and the fort are important to us!

*Rattlesnakes are not uncommon in the area, especially in spring and summer, so be safe—stay on the trails and out of tall grass, weeds, rubble piles, and the ruins.*

Now, let's step back a little in time when the Indian menace was real, teamsters' whips cracked, and the soldier's life varied between monotony and danger. Picture yourself visiting Fort Union in its heyday, observing the various activities; we are confident you'll find your visit exciting and rewarding. A brief history of Fort Union can be found in the back of this booklet and in the informational leaflet given to you.



## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

As you proceed along the trail you will encounter numbered signs which correspond to numbered paragraphs in this guide. This booklet will describe the feature you are looking at, giving pertinent information to help you visualize the fort and the men who served here. On page 2 is a ground plan, showing the location of all buildings and the trail on which you will travel. Take your time and enjoy yourself. Oh, to answer one question that has probably formed in your mind already, this was not a walled or stockaded fort. Contrary to the Hollywood conception, this feature was not prevalent in Southwestern military posts.

## THE TRAIL THROUGH THE FORT

During Fort Union's forty-year life span, three separate forts were constructed. The first, built in 1851, was located across the valley to your left at the foot of the mesa, where the Arsenal ruins now stand. The second fort, an earthworks built in 1861 to defend this area during the Confederate invasion, is the last stop on the trail before you return to the visitor center. The ruins you are approaching are those of the third fort, begun in 1863, completed in 1867 and abandoned in 1891.

1. COMPANY BARRACKS—CORRAL BEYOND. Here a company, or troop, of cavalry was quartered. Their horses were stabled in sheds within the adjoining corral. These buildings also housed some of the married enlisted men of the post.

2. SIDEWALK. The sandstone slab sidewalk, upon which you are now walking, is one of the fort's originals. At one time, an extensive system of these sidewalks existed throughout the area. Unfortunately great sections were removed before Fort Union became a National Monument.

3. LAUNDRESSES' QUARTERS. Wives of enlisted personnel, and they had to produce a marriage certificate to prove it,

hand-washed the men's laundry. In this way they supplemented their husbands' \$9 to \$13 a month salaries, and provided a valuable service to the post community. Some of these women and their husbands lived in the small rooms along the right side of this street, and this section became appropriately known as "Suds Row."

The life and living conditions of a soldier's wife, especially an enlisted man's, was hard to say the least.

4. MILITARY PRISON. This was a territorial prison used for holding civilian as well as military prisoners. The stone cell-block, which you see now, was formerly enclosed by a heated adobe outer building. Replace the wooden doors, and this prison would still be virtually escape proof.

5. POST GUARDHOUSE. From here the sergeant and corporals of the guard posted and relieved sentries around the fort. The ceremony of guard mount was held in the street each afternoon, and was attended to with much military pomp.

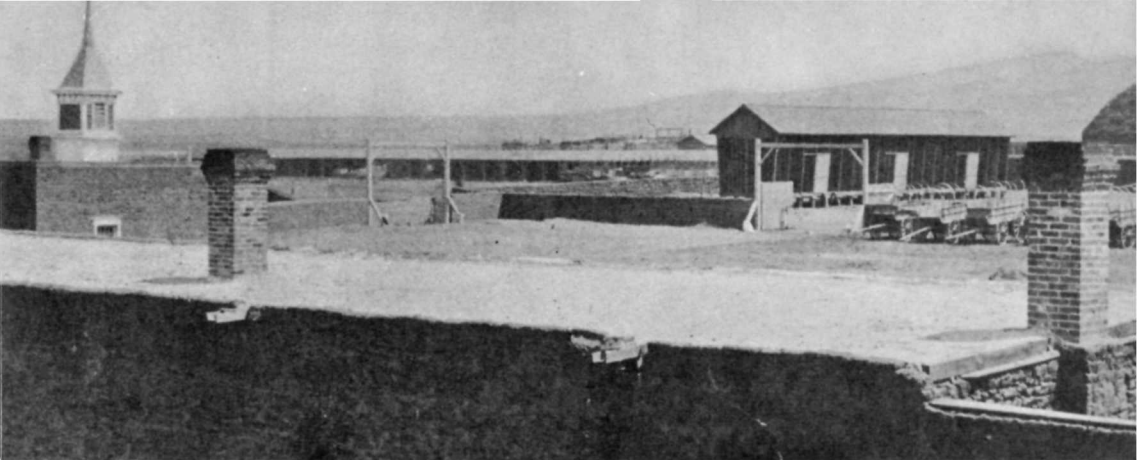
Although mainly the office of the military guard, some prisoners convicted of petty crimes were confined here for short periods. More serious offenders ended up in the military prison.

6. CHAPEL. To attend the religious needs of the post, this room was set aside as a chapel. A more elaborate stone structure was planned, but never constructed.

The four buildings across the street to your left each housed one company of enlisted men. Each barracks had its own mess hall, kitchen, sleeping quarters, arms room, reading room, and well.

7. POST BAKERY. Here you see what remains of a large brick oven. Bread for the garrison was baked here each day. The fire bricks for this oven were hauled from St. Louis over the Santa Fe Trail.

8. SANTA FE TRAIL RUTS. A little beyond the end of the sidewalk on your right, the ruts of the Santa Fe Trail are



*Transportation corral—1876.*

clearly definable. You are welcome to examine them if you wish.

The Santa Fe Trail bore the commerce that first linked New Mexico with the United States; it was the route of the Army of the West that brought New Mexico under our flag; and it served as the lifeline of New Mexico until the coming of the railroad.

The trail, 800 miles long, originated in Missouri and split into two main branches at the Cimarron crossing of the Arkansas River west of Dodge City, Kansas. The Mountain (Raton Pass) Branch, passing over the future site of Fort Union, joined the Cimarron Cut-off near Watrous. After 1851 both branches joined at Fort Union, and a third route between the above two was established; the Fort Leavenworth Road.

A portion of the trade continued south from Santa Fe another 600 miles to Chihuahua and thence to the interior of Mexico.

9. LEAVING TROOP AREA—ENTERING SUPPLY AREA. This broad street separates the post garrison area of the fort from the quartermaster depot. The large structure directly in front of you is the mechanics' corral which is described at Station 11.

10. THE TRANSPORTATION CORRAL. This section took up the whole northeast corner of the fort. Horse stables,

wagonsheds, corncribs, haystacks, water troughs, feed-racks, and other equipment necessary to operate the large freighting business carried on by the army were located here. The yardmaster dispatched wagons in both directions on the Santa Fe Trail from his office in the center of this corral. Civilian teamsters, who hauled freight under army contract, lived in the adobe ruins that you see. They had their own mess hall and kitchen.

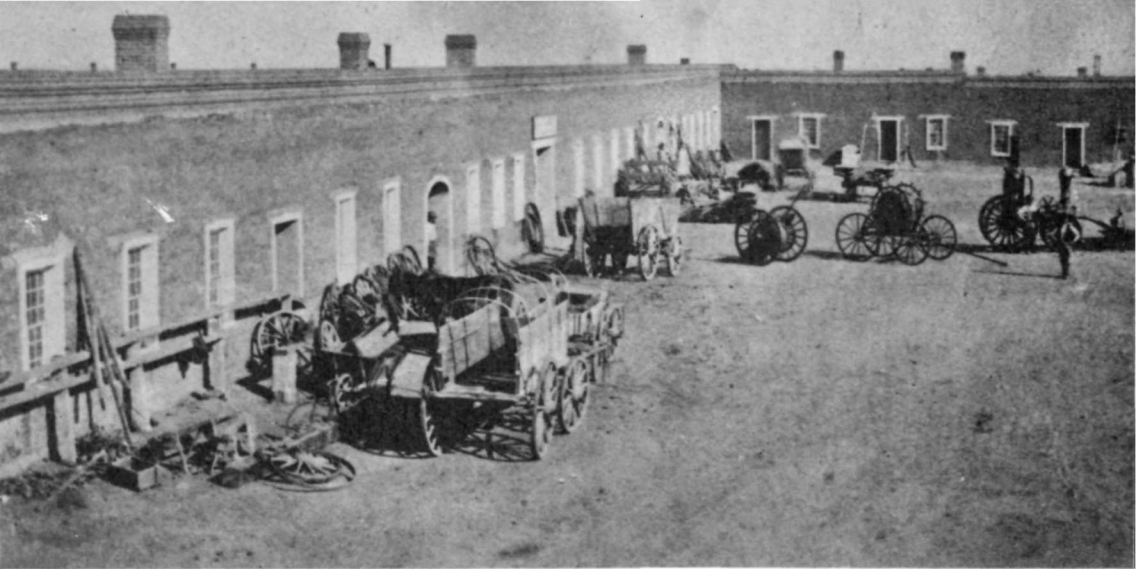
11. **MECHANICS' CORRAL.** Can you imagine the bustling activity that went on here? Wheelwrights, blacksmiths, carpenters, and other skilled craftsmen, their shops lining two sides of this area, toiled to keep the supply wagons in shape to roll. These craftsmen were civilians employed by the quartermaster.

12. **MECHANICS' QUARTERS.** These rooms contained quarters, mess hall, kitchen, and pantry for these employees.

*Mechanics corral—1866.*







*Mechanics corral—1876.*

13. **WATER TANK AND PUMP SITE.** This was the center of the fort's domestic water and fire fighting facilities. In the 1870's underground water lines were installed to most of the buildings in the fort and the depot. A pump near the tank forced water to the various buildings. The original depth of this well is believed to have been 85 feet. There were other wells at various places throughout the fort.

14. **TELEGRAPH OFFICE.** The telegraph line arrived at Fort Union in 1867 and at Santa Fe the following year, thus linking New Mexico's capitol with Denver and cities in the East. Fort Union was the first settlement in New Mexico territory to have telegraph service.

15. **QUARTERMASTER STOREHOUSES.** Here was the nerve center of military supply in the Southwest. These five buildings provided storage for supplies and food, not only for Fort Union but for other posts in the Southwest as well.

Most of the goods—food, clothing, arms and ammunition, tools and building materials—arrived over the Santa Fe Trail, at first from Missouri, and later, with the advance of the railroads, from railheads in Kansas and Colorado. A few items, like feed for livestock, which because of its bulk was costly to freight, were obtained locally.

The civilian staff of the quartermaster often outnumbered the military personnel of the post, and the quartermaster himself as often as not outranked the post commander. The army did little of its own hauling, virtually all being done under contract by civilian companies.

16. CONDUIT. An emergency water supply was obtained by catching rainwater from the roofs and directing it to a cistern via the conduit you see exposed alongside the trail.

17. COMMISSARY STOREHOUSE. This building contains a large, stone-lined cellar, presumably used for the storage of perishables such as lard, bacon, and molasses. Records show numerous wagonloads of bacon were auctioned off at Fort Union just after the Civil War—perhaps from this very basement.

18. PARADE GROUND. As you face the visitor center, you see the parade ground where such famous soldiers as Kit Carson, Henry H. Sibley, and James H. Carleton reviewed the troops during tours of duty as commanding officers at Fort Union.

19. CISTERN. Runoff water from the roofs of the storehouses was stored in this cistern, mainly to provide an emergency supply for fire fighting. This brick and plaster structure was originally covered by a domed brick roof, and is 17 feet across and was 16 feet deep.

20. ADOBE FIELDS. In the distance, beyond the boundary fence, lies an extensive area where adobe bricks were made. From this clay soil came most of the building material used in the construction of the post and depot. These diggings are rather difficult to see from here, but are clearly discernible on aerial photographs.

21. CLERKS' QUARTERS. This building was evidently a dormitory for civilian or military personnel of the depot. The maintaining of numerous records and correspondence fell to the clerks. Since no cooking facilities are apparent

here, they probably took meals in one of the company mess halls.

22. **COMMISSARY OFFICE.** The commissary officer was charged with the responsibility of seeing that the troops were fed, not only here at Fort Union but for other posts in the Southwest as well.

23. **QUARTERMASTER'S OFFICE.** This was the administrative and record-keeping center of the supply depot. The large volume of work required a number of clerks and assistants, who had quarters in a building down the row.

24. **QUARTERMASTER OFFICERS' QUARTERS.** These next three duplex buildings housed the officers of the supply depot and their families. The Quartermaster, being the commanding officer of the supply depot, had the most elegant house.

25. **SUTLER'S STORE.** The standing walls behind the building you have just passed are the remains of the Sutler's Store—the predecessor of today's post exchange (P.X.). Near it was the entertainment center of the fort, the saloon, pool and billiards hall, restaurant, etc.

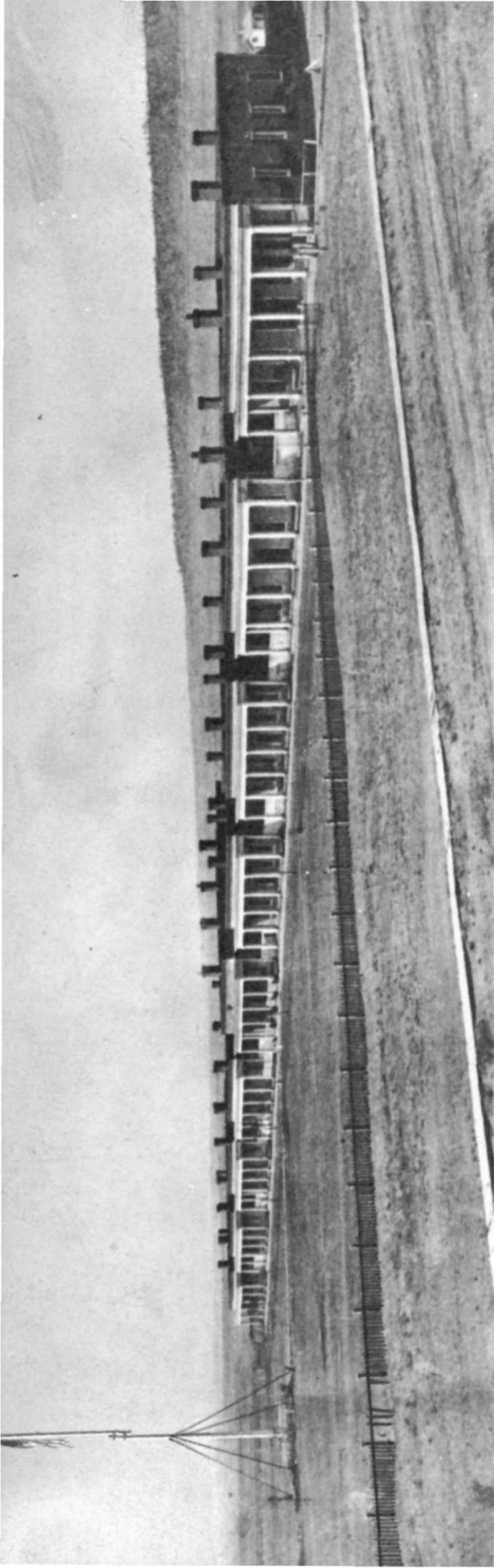
The sutler sold staple goods used by military personnel and their families; such as shoes, yard goods, liquor, all types of hardware, and almost anything a frontier family might use.

26. **SITE OF THE OLD FORT.** (Across the valley.) The first fort was an assortment of log buildings begun in 1851. Its purpose was to protect travelers on the Santa Fe Trail and local residents from Indian attacks as well as to establish a headquarters for the Ninth Military Department.

The ruins seen today are those of an arsenal which was the headquarters of the District Ordnance Department. It

*Quartermaster storehouses—1866.*





stored munitions intended for distribution to forts throughout the district.

#### 27. OFFICERS' QUARTERS.

The officers of the post garrison and their families lived in the nine houses in this row. The center building, slightly larger than the others, was the post commander's home. The others were of duplex construction and could house two families when necessary.

Each house had a fireplace in every room—indicating the complete reliance on fireplaces for heat. In the late 1870's, the fireplaces were bricked in and replaced with iron stoves. You may have noticed the stovepipe holes in chimneys.

These houses with high ceilings, cool front porches, flat roofs, and decorative brick copings were quite elegant in their day. This design, known as New Mexico Territorial style architecture, is widely seen throughout the State today.

28. HYDRANT BASE. In the 1870's water lines and hydrant construction were laid throughout the fort, but the hydrants were removed before Ft. Union became a National Monument.

#### 29. REPLICA FLAGPOLE.

Photographs of Fort Union taken in 1876 show a tall flag-

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Left: *Officers quarters—1876.*

pole at this site. This was a 2-section pole rigged like a ship's mast.

It was customary at military installations to bury a box containing papers and other contemporary articles at the base of the flagpole. No evidence has been found of such action here.

30. THE COMMANDING OFFICER'S QUARTERS had four bedrooms, reception hall, office, parlor, servant's room, and kitchen. Among early occupants was Lydia Spencer Lane, who wrote of her frontier life in *I Married a Soldier*, published in 1892.

31. TO STAR FORT. The path leads about 200 yards to the remains of the second Fort Union, an earthworks resembling an eight-pointed star. Designed to house about 600 men, the fort was hurriedly constructed in 1861 for defense against Confederate troops commanded by Brig. General H. H. Sibley, advancing up the Rio Grande toward Colorado.

Yellow discs mark the points of the inner square, an earthworks with gun emplacements along each wall. Within the square were five buildings partially underground, one a powder magazine, the other a two-company barracks. Blue discs mark the outer four points. Two long buildings, partially buried, formed each V-shaped outer point. One building housed a company of troops, the other was for storerooms.

*Star Fort—August 1957.*



## THE STORY OF FORT UNION

### *The first Years.*

Fort Union's history covers 40 years from 1851 to 1891. The first fort was built across the valley at the foot of the mesa, where you see the ruins of the arsenal today. It was a collection of log buildings and served for a short time as headquarters of the military department. During the decade from 1851 to 1861, troops from Fort Union patrolled the Santa Fe Trail, escorted mail coaches, and skirmished with hostile Ute and Apache warriors who raided the isolated settlements of northern New Mexico. Detachments from Fort Union also participated in the Jicarilla Apache War of 1854 and the Ute War of 1855.

### *Battle of Glorieta Pass.*

Soon after the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, the Confederate brigade of Brig. Gen. Henry H. Sibley organized in Texas, embarked upon an invasion of New Mexico. Using New Mexico as a base, Sibley planned to seize the Colorado gold fields. To block the Confederate advance, Federal officers strengthened Fort Union by constructing the "star fortification." This was the second Fort Union.

The second fort never saw the action for which it was designed. A regiment of Colorado Volunteers reached Fort Union before the Confederates and marched southward to meet the enemy. On March 26, 1862, the two armies met at Glorieta Pass, a narrow mountain defile on the Santa Fe Trail 25 miles southeast of Santa Fe. Although the Confederates won a tactical victory, a Federal flanking column destroyed their supply train and forced them to give up the offensive. Sibley had no prospect of receiving more supplies from Texas, and he could not live off the country because it was too poor. He had no choice but to withdraw from New Mexico. This ended the Civil War in the Southwest.

### *Maintaining the Law in the Southwest.*

Construction on the third fort was begun in 1863. This fort was to be the supply depot for the Military Department of New Mexico. Such forts as Wingate, Craig, Stanton, and others, received supplies from Fort Union after 1867. The buildings of the new Fort Union had adobe walls, 18 to 24 inches thick, covered with a white lime plaster. The bricks used in decorative copings and in chimneys were kilned locally, bricks used in the ovens were hauled from St. Louis, Missouri. The foundations of the buildings were blocks of limestone quarried from the nearby mesa. Like

most Southwestern forts, Fort Union did not have a stockade.

Prior to the Civil War, Fort Union's importance had been due to its restraining influence on hostile Indians throughout the Southwest. To the south and west the Apaches of New Mexico and Arizona continued as a source of trouble, while to the east the Kiowas and Comanches ravaged caravans on the Santa Fe Trail. With the outbreak of the Civil War, the regular troops were withdrawn from the frontier and New Mexico and California Volunteers fell heir to the Indian problem. They turned first to the Navajos. By 1864 troops under Col. Kit Carson had marched into Canyon de Chelly, stronghold of the Navajos, and brought about their surrender. They were then moved to Bosque Redondo, southeast of Fort Union, and settled on a reservation near Fort Sumner. Carson then marched east from Fort Union to attack the plains Indians. In November, 1864, he dealt the Kiowas a severe blow at the Battle of Adobe Walls, in the Texas Panhandle.

But the plains tribes were yet to be subdued. To the regulars, returning to their frontier posts at the close of the Civil War, fell this task. Troops from Fort Union cooperated with other columns in General P. H. Sheridan's winter campaign of 1868 and the Red River War of 1874. By 1875 the power of the plains Indians had been broken, and the Army turned to the Apaches.

Even so, the Apache chiefs Victorio, Nana, and Geronimo ran wild among the settlers in southern New Mexico and Arizona for several years after the Southern Plains Indians were crushed. It was not until Geronimo's surrender in September 1886 that the Indian menace was removed from the Southwest. The last time troops from Fort Union were engaged in Indian fighting was in August 1882 when a small band of Apaches wandered from the Fort Stanton Reservation, in the southern part of New Mexico, and had to be returned. With this action, some 30 years of Indian fighting involving troops from Fort Union came to an end.

From 1879, when the railroad reached Las Vegas, until 1891, when the fort was finally abandoned, the troops were kept continually active by civil strife caused by bandits, mob violence, and feuds. Fort Union was in effect abandoned in 1883, when all except a small detail of troops were withdrawn. This small garrison remained until February 21, 1891, when the last troops were withdrawn.

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