

While here, drive around the city of Kanopolis. It was given that name because it was envisioned as "the Central Metropolis of the state and in due time its capitol," from the Commonwealth, May 4, 1885. It was laid out to provide for a city of 150,000 people by the Kanopolis Land Co. with offices at Kanopolis and at Springfield, Ohio. Gen. J. Warren Keifer was the attorney for the company and J. S. Crowell, Springfield publisher, was the secretary. Ross Mitchell, Springfield millionaire, was the president and C.D. Harter, a millionaire manufacturer for Canton, Ohio, and Harry C. Cross, president of the First National Bank, Emporia, Kansas, were some of the backers.

The three major salt mines (the independent still operating) and the present-day brick plant remind us that the founders planned for, and in most cases secured - a soap factory, a brewery, a carriage factory, a woolen mill, pottery and brick plants, an iron foundry, etc. Prices of lots ranged from \$300 to \$1,000.

The abutments of the old military bridge that Fort Ellsworth was guarding may still be seen southwest of this guardhouse. Fremont Hill, Mushroom Rock State Park and the Kanopolis Reservoir and State Park, as well as the Ellsworth County Museum, located at Ellsworth, five miles west of Kanopolis, are all landmarks of history and points of unusual interest.

OTHER PLACES OF INTEREST

Do not leave the area without seeing these:

1. Hodgden House (early day history) and the Rogers House (western art) both in Ellsworth.
2. Mushroom Rock (pioneer landmark) State Park - picnic facilities available.
3. In Kanopolis - see the salt mines and modern brick plant.
4. At Wilson - see the Czech capital of the United States.

Fort Harker Museum

Listed Among National Historic Sites

Kanopolis, Kansas
Ellsworth County Historical Society



In 1967 as Ellsworth County celebrated its One Hundredth Birthday, Fort Harker was well past its Centennial. What is now the city of Kanopolis had its beginnings in 1864 when Lt. Allen Ellsworth and a company of men established Fort Ellsworth about a mile and a half south of this Guardhouse Museum. In November, 1866, Fort Ellsworth was abandoned and Fort Harker established.

Besides the native stone Guardhouse building there remain in Kanopolis three other buildings, now used as residences that were part of the old frontier fort. Before these buildings were built, an account of the way men and families lived at Fort Harker is found in the description written by Mrs. Frank D. Baldwin as part of the book, "Memoirs of Maj. Gen. Frank D. Baldwin." She came as a bride to a dugout. The walls and ceiling were supported by logs. The room not used as kitchen had a "board floor, unplanned and full of slivers." Canvas covered the ceiling and dirt sides. It sagged slightly in the center and trembled under the scampering feet of pack-rats and prairie mice.

She also writes, "Two miles away from the lower cantonment where we lived in temporary quarters, were two companies of infantry and one troop of cavalry. They were occupying fairly comfortable huts on what was the site of the permanent quarters of Fort Harker, then in process of erection." She and her husband, then a 1st lieutenant, arrived there in January 1867. The commanding officer of the post was Col. Daingerfield Parker. The troop commander of the 7th Cavalry was Captain Gibbs and the quartermaster was Lieut. Wells Willard. Some enlisted men's wives were there, but only three other officer's wives.

Early in the spring, Major General Winfield S. Hancock arrived with a detachment of cavalry enroute to New Mexico. He commanded the whole region. Harpers Weekly of April 27, 1867, on display at this museum, adds that on April 1, 2,000 men, including the Seventh Cavalry commanded by Col. George Custer, with Gen. A.J. Smith as field commander of the entire unit went into camp on the Smoky Bottom just west of the post. "Wild Bill" Hickok was attached as a scout and "quite a number of Delaware Indians accompanied the command as scouts, hunters and interpreters."

Forts Harker, Wallace and Hays were built in that order to guard the route of the Butterfield Overland Despatch and the Smoky Hill shortcut to Denver "which passed through the most Indian infested region in Kansas." Fort Harker was also a link in the military trail from Fort Leavenworth, Fort Riley through Fort Zarah, Fort Larned and Fort Dodge. With the coming of the U.P. Railroad, many using the Santa Fe Trail took the railroad to Fort Harker and then followed the Fort Harker Fort Zarah trail to the Santa Fe Trail and on to New Mexico.

"The Frontier Defenses of Kansas" written by Marvin H. Garfield, says, "During its active career of nine years, Fort Harker proved to be a bulwark of defense against hostile Indians. It was one of the strongest of the western Kansas forts." Only scattered bands of marauding Indians dared to come into the area and they fled as soon as spotted by white settlers.

When it was proposed in 1871 to abandon Fort Harker the Kansas Legislature, on February 16, passed a joint resolution of protest, giving as reasons, first, "that Fort Harker was essential to the defense of the north-central Kansas frontier and, second, that it would be a great financial loss, since the buildings cost the U.S. \$1,000,000.00 and would sell under the hammer for about \$25,000.00" The government finally abandoned the fort in 1873.

The cholera epidemic that swept Fort Harker and other frontier military posts and all but wiped out the newly established city of Ellsworth in 1867 established Brevet Major George Sternberg as an authority on epidemic diseases. He later became the Surgeon General of the U.S. but the epidemic took the life at Fort Harker, of his wife. Eventually Mrs. Baldwin, mentioned above, was the only officer's wife left at the post. She writes, "News of our plight reached Fort Leavenworth and Sisters of Mercy, with two priests, were sent. "One of the priests, Father Martyn who administered to

the sick at Ellsworth as well as the post, was found dead midway between the two places. He had been stricken while on his way back to the post.

The guardhouse that now houses this museum is described in postmaster, from the National Archives. It says, "The guardhouse, a substantial two story stone building, is at the west end of the parade ground. The upper floor is divided into two large rooms and six small cells. This floor, which is reached by an outside staircase, has three windows. The lower floor is divided into three rooms, a guardroom 26 by 15 feet; a non-commissioned officers' room, 13 by 8 1/2 feet; and a small tool room. The guardroom is provided with three windows."

The building still answers this description although one partition has been removed downstairs and the cells are gone from the upstairs. Eventually, as work on the upstairs progresses, it is hoped that the cells can be restored. The bars on the upstairs windows are original, those downstairs are copies. A bar missing from one upstairs window is said to have been the means of escape by Chief Satanta who was a prisoner here.

The guardhouse sits at a 13 degree angle from the streets near it. This is because it was laid out by magnetic compass. The fort was named by General Hancock for Capt. Charles G. Harker. General Sheridan was in command at Fort Harker when Forsyth and 50 civilian scouts set out from there for the Indian territory and were massacred at the Arickaree fork of the Republican river.

Many of the early leaders of this county were officers or officials at Fort Harker who took land or established businesses after leaving the service. They included Maj. Henry Inman, author of several books about early days and D B. Long. Descendants of both still live at Ellsworth. Maj. Theodore Sternberg, whose uniform forms part of a display in this museum, was later Paymaster-General in the Philippines.

Uniforms of men from this area who served in WWI and WWII include uniforms and other equipment used by Dr. George Davis and memorialize the memory of this beloved physician who made his home in Kanopolis for 47 years.

The horse drawn ambulance in this museum is of the same type as was used to bring wounded men in from the Indian wars and also is mentioned by Mrs. Henry Inman and Mrs. Frank Baldwin as the transportation for families being moved from one post to another. General Baldwin, incidentally, was the only man prior to WWI who held two Congressional Medals of Honor. He served under Gen. Miles in several Indian campaigns. Generals Miles and Scully were among the colorful officers once at Fort Harker. How many others who served here achieved fame in other fields would make an interesting study.

When Fort Harker was abandoned as a military establishment in April, 1872, the Kansas legislature asked Congress to donate the 10,240 acres of the reservation to the state for educational purposes. The request was not granted and the huge reservation was opened for settlement by the act of June 15, 1880.