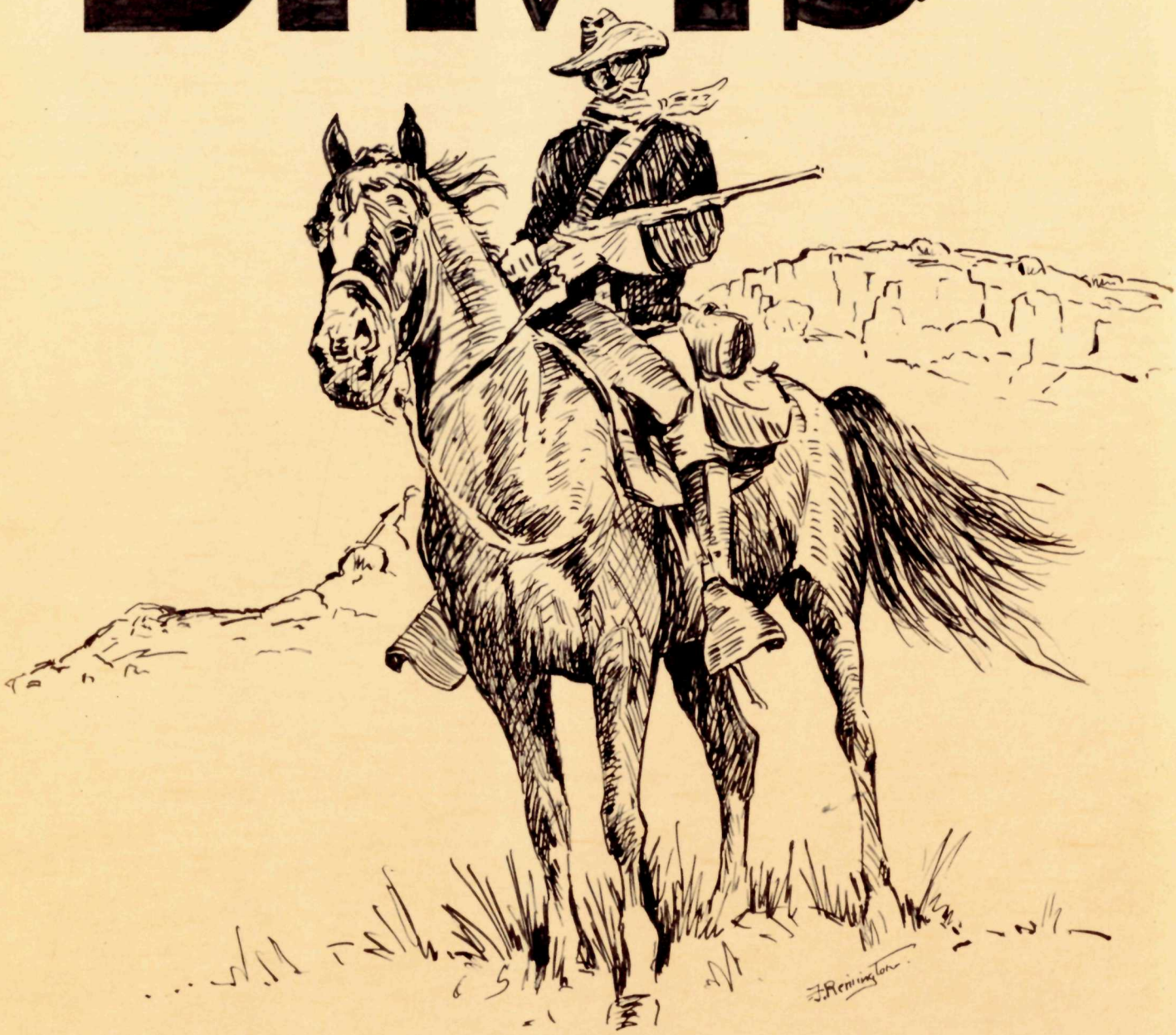
FORT DAVIS



The National Survey of
Historic Sites and Buildings

Special Report

on

FORT DAVIS, TEXAS

by

Robert M. Utley
Historian

June 1960

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
National Park Service
Region Three
Santa Fe, New Mexico

The great difficulties to be encountered in operating against Indians in Western Texas, throughout which there is a great scarcity of water, cannot be conceived by anyone unacquainted with the nature and extent of the country. Numerous rugged and precipitous mountain ranges, broken by cañons, rise from the plains, while the foothills, bordering the mountains, are cut into deep ravines and gullies, and the surface of the whole country is covered to a great extent, by immense Spanish bayonets, many varieties of cacti, and other thorny plants and entangling shrubs, affording hiding places in every way suitable to aid the roaming savages in their predatory incursions.

-- Col. Benjamin H. Grierson, 1880

PREFACE

Meeting at Grand Canyon National Park in October 1959, the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings, and Monuments considered the theme study "Military and Indian Affairs" prepared by the staff of the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings. One conclusion expressed in this study was that Fort Davis, Texas, possessed exceptional value for illustrating and commemorating the history of the United States, and merited further study for possible addition to the National Park System. The Board agreed with the judgment of the Survey staff and the Branch of History, National Park Service, and so recommended to the Secretary of the Interior.

In February 1960 two bills, S. 3078 and H.R. 10352, were introduced in the Congress by Senator Ralph Yarborough and Rep. J. T. Rutherford of Texas to authorize the establishment of Fort Davis National Historic Site as a unit of the National Park System. As a result of introduction of these bills, the Director of the National Park Service, by memorandum of March 16, 1960, asked the Regional Director, Region Three, to prepare and submit a detailed historical report and a suitability and feasibility report on Fort Davis. These studies are to form the basis of a report on the legislation to the Congress by the Department of the Interior. This historical report is submitted in fulfillment of the first requirement of the Director's memorandum.

Grateful acknowledgment is due a number of people for their assistance. Mr. Barry Scobee of Fort Davis, Texas, opened the collections of the Fort Davis Historical Society to me and gave me the benefit of his own vast knowledge of the history of the fort. Mrs. John C. Jackson of Houston, owner of the property on which the fort is located, made available historic photographs of the post. The staffs of the Library of the Museum of New Mexico, the State Law Library of New Mexico, the Libraries of the Universities of Arizona and New Mexico, and the National Archives assisted in the research. Mr. Clyde Arquero and Mrs. Mary Huey drew the maps, and Miss Joyce Fox designed the cover. All are cartographic draftsmen in the Region Three Office.

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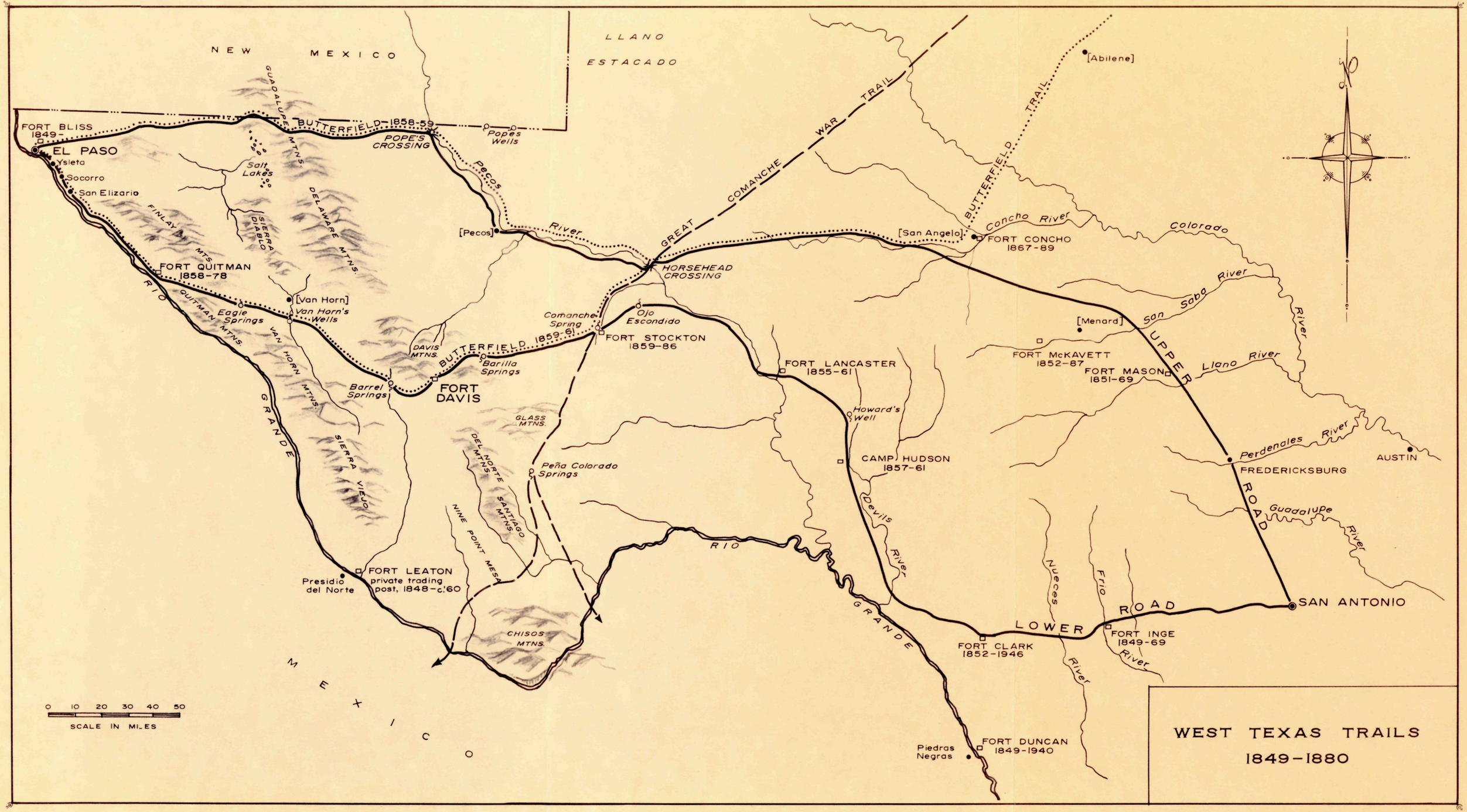
NEW MEXICO
LLANO ESTACADO
GUADALUPE MTNS.
BUTTERFIELD-1858-59
FORT BLISS 1849-
EL PASO
Ysleta
Socorro
San Elizario
POPE'S CROSSING
Pope's Wells
Salt Lakes
SIERRA DIABLO
DELAWARE MTNS.
FINLAY MTNS.
Pecos River
[Pecos]
GREAT COMANCHE WAR TRAIL
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Concho River
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Comanche Spring
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CAMP HUDSON 1857-61
[Menard]
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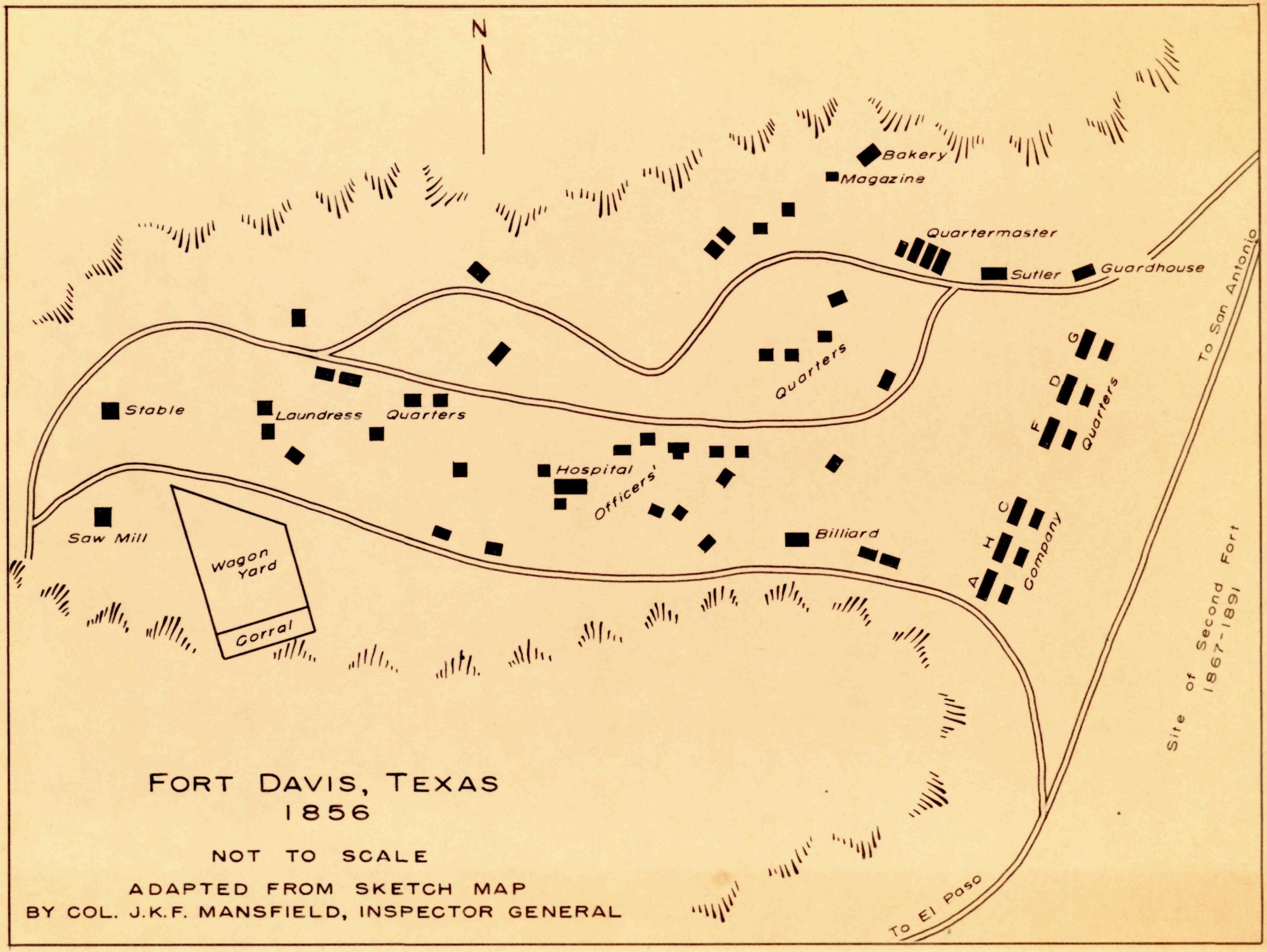
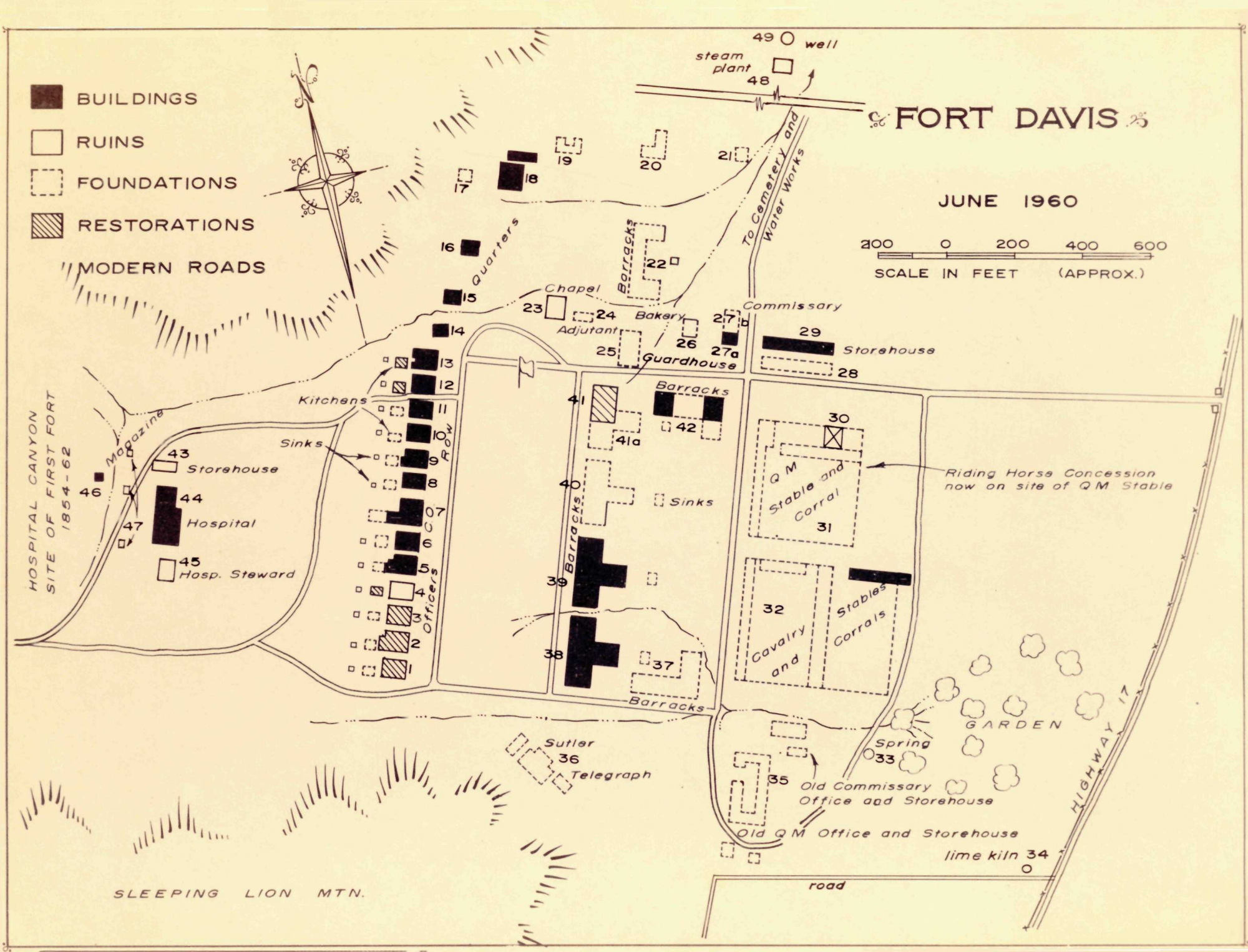
San Saba River
UPPER Llano River
Perdenales River
FREDERICKSBURG
AUSTIN
ROAD
Guadalupe River
Devils River
Nueces River
Frio River
LOWER ROAD
SAN ANTONIO
FORT INGE 1849-69
FORT CLARK 1852-1946
RIO GRANDE
Presidio del Norte
FORT LEATON private trading post, 1848-c.60
CHISOS MTNS.
MEXICO
Piedras Negras
FORT DUNCAN 1849-1940
0 10 20 30 40 50
SCALE IN MILES
WEST TEXAS TRAILS
1849-1880

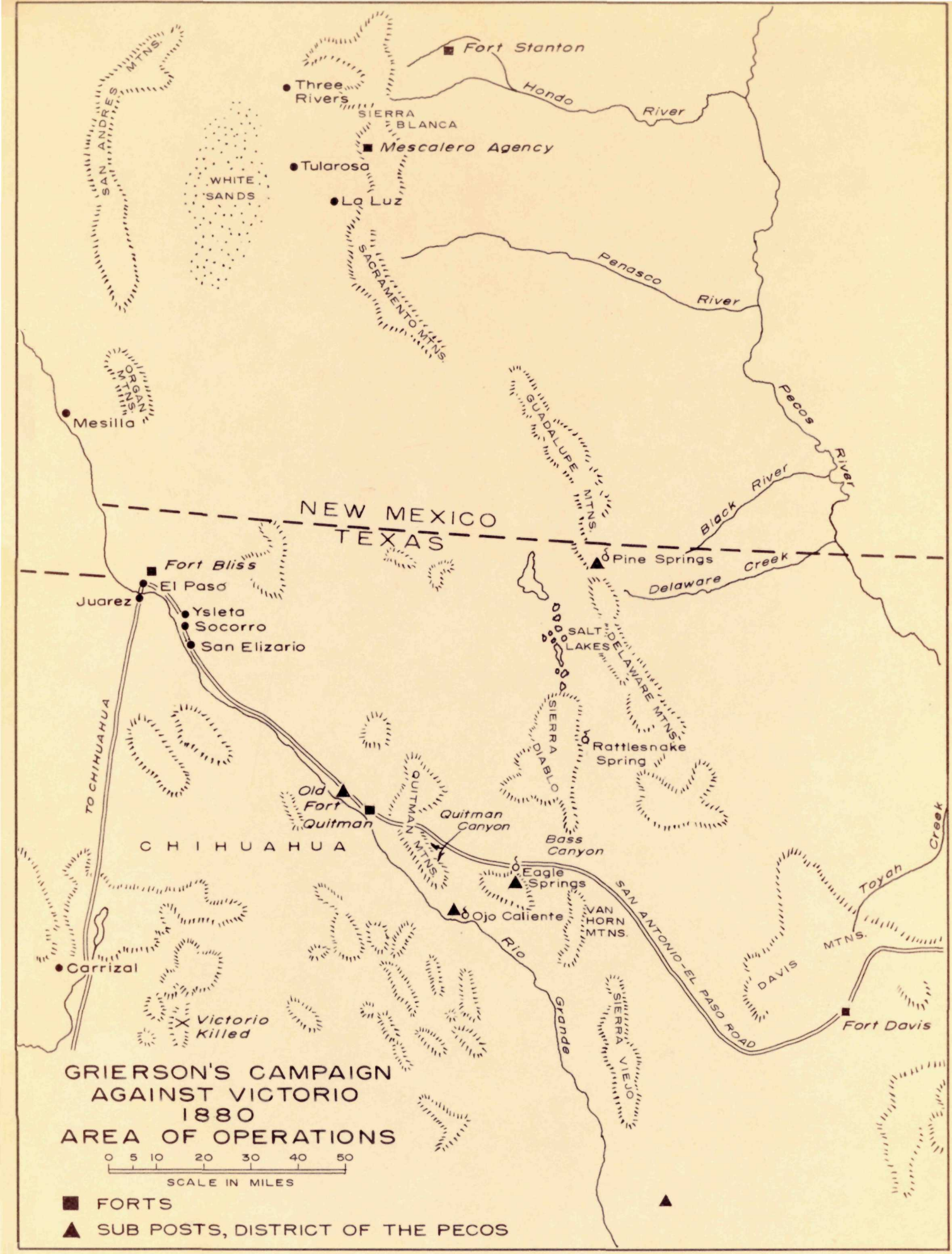


FORT DAVIS, TEXAS
1856

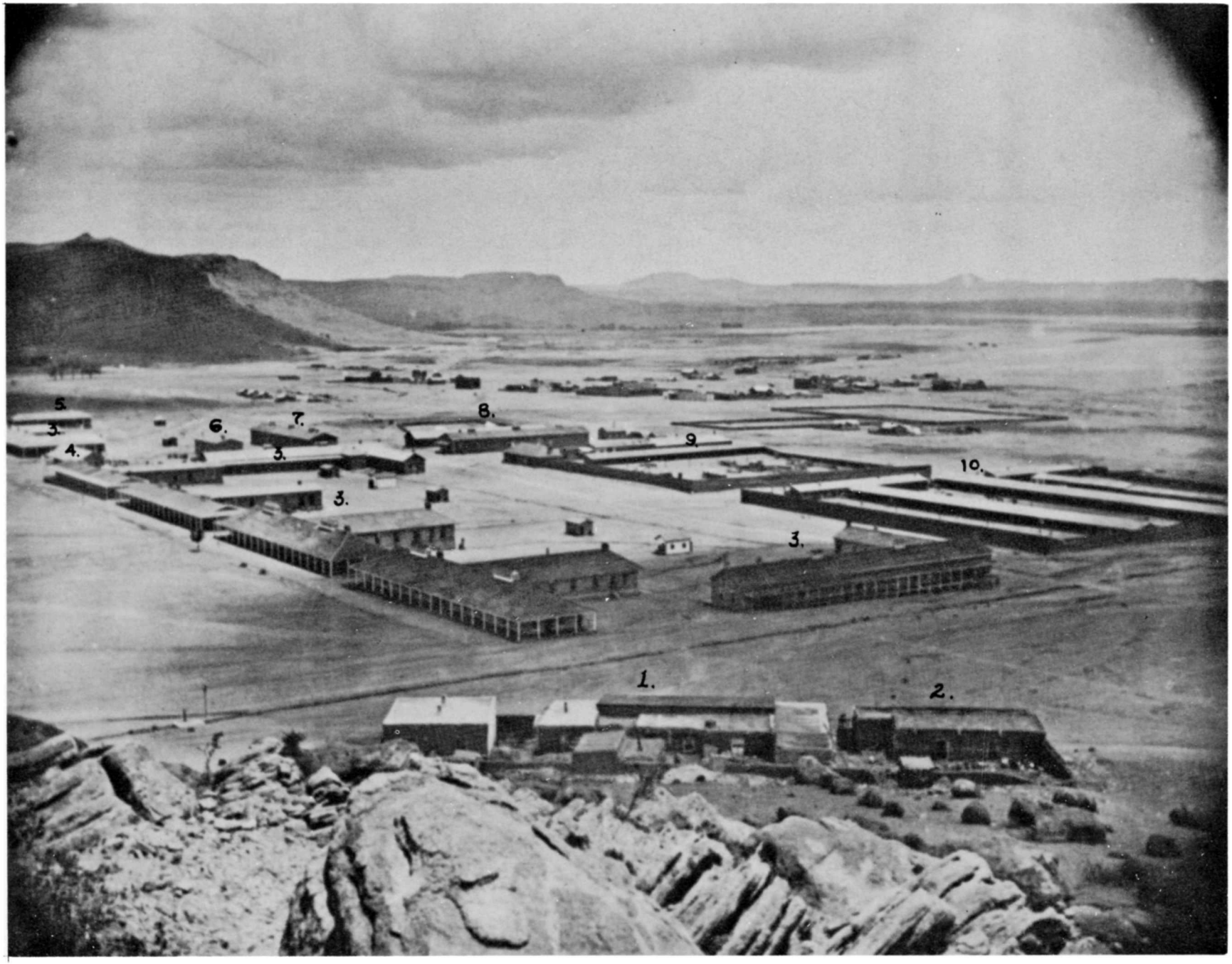
NOT TO SCALE

ADAPTED FROM SKETCH MAP
BY COL. J.K.F. MANSFIELD, INSPECTOR GENERAL


BUILDINGS
RUINS
FOUNDATIONS
RESTORATIONS
MODERN ROADS
FORT DAVIS
JUNE 1960
200 0 200 400 600
SCALE IN FEET (APPROX.)
49 well
steam plant
48
To Cemetery and Water Works
Quarters
Barracks
Chapel
Bakery
Adjutant
Guardhouse
Commissary
Storehouse
Kitchens
Sinks
Magazine
Storehouse
Hospital
Hosp. Steward
Officers Row
Barracks
Sinks
Barracks
Barracks
Q M Stable and Corral
Riding Horse Concession now on site of Q M Stable
Cavalry and Stables Corrals
GARDEN
Spring
Sutler
Telegraph
Old Commissary Office and Storehouse
Old Q M Office and Storehouse
lime kiln
road
HIGHWAY 17
HOSPITAL CANYON
SITE OF FIRST FORT
1854-62
SLEEPING LION MTN.


Fort Stanton
Hondo River
Three Rivers
SIERRA BLANCA
Mescalero Agency
Tularosa
La Luz
WHITE SANDS
SAN ANDRES MTNS.
SACRAMENTO MTNS.
Penasco River
ORGAN MTNS.
Mesilla
GUADALUPE MTNS.
Pecos River
Black River
NEW MEXICO
TEXAS
Pine Springs
Delaware Creek
Fort Bliss
El Paso
Juarez
Ysleta
Socorro
San Elizario
SALT LAKES
DELAWARE MTNS.
SIERRA DIABLO
Rattlesnake Spring
TO CHIHUAHUA
Old Fort Quitman
QUITMAN MTNS.
Quitman Canyon
Bass Canyon
CHIHUAHUA
Eagle Springs
Ojo Caliente
VAN HORN MTNS.
SAN ANTONIO-EL PASO ROAD
Toyah Creek
DAVIS MTNS.
Carrizal
Victorio Killed
Rio Grande
SIERRA VIEJO
Fort Davis
GRIERSON'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST VICTORIO 1880
AREA OF OPERATIONS
0 5 10 20 30 40 50
SCALE IN MILES
FORTS
SUB POSTS, DISTRICT OF THE PECOS

Officers of the Third Cavalry and 16th Infantry at Fort Davis, 1886 or 1887. Seated in center without hat is Lt. Col. D. R. Clendenin, Third Cavalry, post commander. From glass plate owned by Mrs. John C. Jackson, Houston, Texas.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Hospital and Hospital Steward's Quarters, Fort Davis, about 1885. From glass plate owned by Mrs. John C. Jackson, Houston, Texas.

Officers' Row, looking south. NPS photo, April 1960.

Hospital and quarters of Hospital Steward, looking northeast. NPS photo, April 1960.

Part I

BLAZING TRAILS IN WEST TEXAS, 1849-54

In 1849 West Texas was a vast stretch of wilderness that few Americans had seen. On the west, a scattering of Mexicans lived at points along the Chihuahua Trail, which led down the Rio Grande from Santa Fe through Paso del Norte to the Mexican city of Chihuahua. Six hundred miles to the east, Austin, Fredericksburg, and San Antonio traced the frontier of settlement in Texas. Between lay a barren, rocky desert broken in the west by a series of rugged desert mountains. Aside from the Pecos and the Rio Grande, a handful of springs and one or two permanent streams furnished the only water. One oasis relieved this hostile country. North of the Big Bend of the Rio Grande the desert yielded to the Davis Mountains, a jumble of conical peaks and palisaded canyons covered with thick grama grass, dotted with oak trees, and drained by several clear mountain streams.

Several bands of Mescalero Apache Indians lived in the Davis Mountains and, farther east, Lipans menaced the Texas frontier from haunts on both sides of the Rio Grande in the neighborhood of Eagle Pass and Laredo. Although these were the only Indians who made their homes in West Texas, it still bore heavy aboriginal traffic. For two decades before 1849 Mescalero bands from the Sierra Blanca and the Guadalupe Mountains of New Mexico had met the growing shortage of game by conducting forays into Mexico. The Kiowas and Comanches of modern Oklahoma met a similar problem in the same way. Their

raiding parties wore a broad and distinct path, the "Great Comanche War Trail," in the prairies and deserts between Red River and the Rio Grande. By mid-century raiding in Mexico had become an established institution upon which these tribes relied for supply and subsistence.[1]

Texans Look Westward

Until after the war between the United States and Mexico, Texans displayed little interest in the country west of the Pecos. The Republic of Texas had claimed territory as far west as the Rio Grande, including half of New Mexico, but except for the disastrous Texan-Santa Fe expedition of 1841 had made no real effort to explore or occupy it. The productive land lay east of the 100th meridian, and Comanche war parties stifled curiosity about what lay beyond.

The Mexican War changed this. For 20 years Texans had talked of stealing the lucrative "commerce of the prairies" that flowed between Missouri and Chihuahua over the Santa Fe Trail. A direct road from San Antonio to Chihuahua would considerably shorten the established route and, they hoped, divert the Santa Fe trade to

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1. C. L. Sonnichsen, The Mescalero Apaches (Norman, 1958), 60 passim; R. N. Richardson, The Comanche Barrier to South Plains Settlement (Glendale, 1933), 193-205.

Texas. In 1840 Henry Connelly of Missouri and Santa Fe, with a party of Mexican traders, had in fact blazed such a trail, corresponding roughly to the Comanche Trail between the Rio Grande and Red River, but the trading caravans continued to use the Santa Fe and Chihuahua Trails. Now part of the United States, at peace for the first time with Mexico, and possessing a solid claim to territory south and southwest to the Rio Grande, Texans believed such a project gave hope of success.

These sentiments prompted a group of San Antonio merchants in 1848 to raise $800 to finance exploration of a road between their city and Chihuahua by way of Paso del Norte, where a small American settlement was springing up on the north bank of the river across from the Mexican city of El Paso (now Juarez). Commanded by John C. Hays and escorted by 35 Texas Rangers under Capt. Samuel Highsmith, the expedition left San Antonio on August 27, 1848. Steering an extremely erratic course, they marched north to Fredericksburg, west up the Llano River, and south to Las Moras Creek. Following the Rio Grande, they reached the Big Bend, crossed into Mexico, and finally arrived at the Mexican settlement of Presidio del Norte. His command exhausted and destitute, Hays gave up the attempt to reach El Paso and, after recouping at the trading post of Fort Leaton, on the American side of the river, struck northeast across the desert to the Pecos. Descending the river, the explorers arrived at San Antonio three and one-half months after their departure. Hays and Highsmith had found no road to El Paso,

but had learned something about traveling in the trans-Pecos bad-lands.[2]

Coinciding with the return of Hays and Highsmith, news of the discovery of gold in California awakened even greater interest in West Texas. Through letters and promotional literature sent to eastern newspapers, Texans proclaimed the virtues of the southern trails to California and urged prospective argonauts to come by way of Texas. They pointed to the Mexican War reports of Lt. Col. Philip St. George Cooke and Lt. William H. Emory as proof of the feasibility of the southern trails in New Mexico and Arizona, and, somewhat misrepresenting the experience and findings of Hays and Highsmith, wrote in glowing terms of the fine pasturage and abundant water to be found throughout West Texas. The flood of gold-seekers that descended on the Gulf ports of Texas in 1849 furnished ample testimony to the effectiveness of the promotional campaign.[3]

At this point the interest of Texas coincided with that of the United States. Through Senators T. J. Rusk and Sam Houston, Texans were already urging the southern route as the most feasible for a transcontinental railroad. In its obligation to explore the territory

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2. W. Turrentine Jackson, Wagon Roads West (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1952), 36-37; A. B. Bender, "Opening Routes Across West Texas, 1848-1850," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXXVII, 2 (October, 1933), 119.

3. Cf. Ralph P. Bieber (ed.), Southern Trails to California in 1849, Southwest Historical Series, V (Glendale, 1937), 30-31, 135-56.

newly acquired from Mexico, to seek out the best railroad route, to protect westward migration from hostile Indians, and (under the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo) to prevent Indians based in the United States from raiding in Mexico, the United States discovered a community of interest with the Texans.

After reviewing the report of Hays and Highsmith, Maj. Gen. William J. Worth, commanding the Eighth Military Department, ordered Lt. William H. C. Whiting of the Corps of Engineers and Lt. William F. Smith of the Topographical Engineers to attempt the quest in which the Texans had failed. He also lent Federal support to another private venture, organized by the citizens of Austin and led by Dr. John S. Ford, by dispatching Maj. Robert S. Neighbors, United States Indian Agent for Texas, to join the party and locate a wagon road to El Paso.[4]

The Whiting-Smith Expedition

Lieutenants Whiting and Smith, guided by Richard A. Howard, a Texan well versed in the ways of the desert, left San Antonio on February 12, 1849. They were escorted by nine Texas frontiersmen and had two Mexican interpreters. Instructions from General Worth directed the lieutenants to resurvey the route of Hays and Highsmith

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4. Unless otherwise cited, the following account is based on Jackson, Wagon Roads West, Ch. 3; Bender, "Opening Routes Across West Texas," 116-35; and William H. Goetzmann, Army Explorations in the American West, 1803-1863 (New Haven, 1959), 225-39.

to Presidio del Norte, then ascend the Rio Grande to El Paso. The General preferred a route following the Rio Grande as closely as possible, but if this were found impractical Whiting and Smith might return by a more direct route.

The expedition marched northwest through Fredericksburg to the head of the San Saba River, then turned west across Devil's River to a crossing of the Pecos near the mouth of Live Oak Creek, about 50 miles south of Horsehead Crossing. Camping at Escondido and Comanche Springs, the explorers in mid-March 1849 approached the Davis Mountains from the northeast.

On March 17, riding up a narrow valley leading towards the mountains, the 15 Americans found themselves suddenly surrounded by 200 yelling Apaches brandishing lances and strung bows.[5] They poured out of gorges on both flanks and blocked the valley front and rear. While the Texans quietly moved to a slight elevation to prepare for a fight to the finish, Whiting and Howard parleyed with the Mescalero leaders. There were five chiefs, including Gomez, Cigarito, and Chino Guero. Whiting protested his peaceful intentions. Four of the chiefs turned out to be reasonable enough, but Gomez, "the terror of

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5. This episode is drawn from Whiting's Journal in Ralph P. Bieber (ed.), Exploring Southwestern Trails, 1846-1854, Southwest Historical Series, VII (Glendale, 1938), 243-350. Bieber's Introduction to this volume, pp. 30-38, contains a good account, supplemented from official correspondence in the National Archives, of the Whiting-Smith reconnaissance. See also Lieutenant Smith's report, dated May 25, 1849, in "Reconnaissances of Routes from San Antonio to El Paso," Senate Ex. Doc. No. 54, 31st Cong., 1st sess. (1850), 13-14.

Chihuahua . . . was hostile and insulting and evidently desirous to fight us." The warriors grew less belligerent, however, when the Texans stuffed their mouths with bullets and significantly cocked their rifles.

The Lieutenant and the chiefs reached a compromise whereby the Americans accompanied the Apaches to their camp nearby. Here several hundred horses and cattle bearing Mexican brands told that the war party was returning from a raid south of the Rio Grande. Whiting selected the best position he could find and his men sat down on their packs to see what would happen next. The Indians, too, sat down and glared at the whites. Finally, Gomez rode over and asked innocently why the Americans did not scatter out and gather wood for cookfires. Patting his rifle stock, Whiting replied that "we held wood enough in our hands."

That night there was another conference. Whiting convinced all but Gomez that he meant no harm and should be allowed to continue unmolested. Gomez got up and thundered. He was the greatest man in his country and in Mexico. He feared no man or nation, not even the Americans. His insulting speech left no doubt that he had only contempt for Whiting and his followers and would much prefer to end the whole matter on the spot in the time-honored Apache tradition.

All night the Americans lay on their weapons while the Mescalero chiefs argued their fate. Gomez was outvoted, and next morning Cigarito invited Whiting to accompany him to his village in the Davis Mountains.

Whiting had no choice but to agree. As they were leaving camp, Gomez made one more try. He "demanded our powder and balls, for which, he said, as we were friends to the Apache, we had no use." Whiting said no, and Gomez "left me in an insulting manner."

Amid "superb scenery of the mountains" the Whiting party spent a pleasant afternoon and evening at Cigarito's village. During the night the Indians, "certainly the most accomplished thieves I know," relieved the Americans of an assortment of cooking utensils and clothing. Whiting lost, besides the brass buttons from his coat, a packet containing most of his official papers. Next morning Cigarito admonished his new friends to beware of the evil Gomez and sent them on their way with a guide to show them the best pass through the mountains.

On March 19, as night drew on, they ascended a canyon and made camp.

> The daylight [March 20] showed us, on awaking, a fine pass. Through the gorge, now running at the base of the dark cliffs of basaltic columns, now winding amid the prettier grouping of trees and in little mountain valleys, is a clear stream. We followed it through the range, delighted at the promise of a successful passage of the road where wood and water should obtain in plenty. Wild roses, the only ones I had seen in Texas, here grew luxuriantly. I named the defile "Wild Rose pass" and the brook the "Limpia." At twelve we left the valley of the pass for a while and emerged upon a bald elevated plain. . . . To our left we saw an extensive pond of water. Catching a glimpse off to the right of the green cottonwoods of the Limpia and warned of the dangers of the plains by our recent meeting with the Apache, I directed the march towards them. At about one we came to camp in a grove of lofty álamos [cottonwoods]. The Limpia here forms a clear, deep pool of blue water; and here it issues from the mountains, now on our right hand, in a southerly course and follows hence the pass we have just come through. The large trees are marked with the rude sketches of the Comanche.

Here, at "Painted Comanche Camp," where the Limpia flowed from the mountains and turned north down Limpia Canyon and through Wild Rose Pass, Whiting made camp. Countless immigrant parties were to camp here in the next few years, and here, in 1854, the Army was to build Fort Davis.

Whiting was still uneasy about Gomez, and signal smokes spiriling from mountain peaks in every direction did nothing to allay his fears. He spent the afternoon at Painted Comanche Camp. After nightfall his men kindled lively campfires, then at eight p.m. mounted their mules and stole away to the southwest, hoping to be far advanced by the time Gomez found out that he had been tricked. Signal fires, now and then blinking as Indians passed in front of them, crowned peaks on every side. A brilliant fire flared on the left about 11 p.m. Convinced of their discovery, the Americans hastened on and about one a.m. forted up on a knoll to await daylight.

Dawn of March 21 revealed no trace of Apaches, and Whiting knew that he had eluded them. The explorers continued to Presidio del Norte, then marched up the Rio Grande to El Paso. The Rio Grande route favored by General Worth had been found extremely rough, and Whiting and Smith decided to return by a more direct route, which left the Rio Grande 70 miles below El Paso and headed in a direct line through the Davis Mountains to the Pecos. On May 1 they were back in familiar surroundings:

At first the bluffs on the right and left looked natural; then appeared the tall cottonwood groves, the first we had seen since we left the Rio Grande. Doubts were at length removed by our coming upon the "Painted Trees." But how changed from the fresh, green, quiet spot we had left the evening of our gloomy and anxious march! To be sure, it was as still, but the grass had been trampled by the hoofs of hundreds of horses. More than two hundred lodges had been placed around our camp fires. Their frames met the eye in every direction. The whole force of Gomez's bands had gathered here the morning after we left, called in by the signal smokes and beacon fires which then sprang on every hill. . . .The collection of Comanche painting had received some rich additions of Apache designs. Several rudely done in charcoal represented Indians on horseback at the pleasant pastime of lancing ourselves on mules, and one which roughly portrayed our running away roused the ire of some of my Texans. Entering now the Wild Rose pass, we soon halted for the night about a mile below the Painted Camp.

At the Pecos the explorers again changed their course from that followed coming west. They turned south for 60 miles, crossed to the Devil's River, descended almost to its mouth, and struck directly east to San Antonio.

During the months of the Whiting-Smith reconnaissance, Neighbors and Ford had been similarly occupied farther north. Leaving Austin in March 1849, they headed north and west to the Concho, crossed the Pecos at Horsehead Crossing, and struck west in a direct line across the deserts north of the Davis Mountains to El Paso. They returned by a still more northerly route, hugging the New Mexico-Texas boundary, passing through the Guadalupe Mountains, and reaching the Pecos about 100 miles north of Horsehead Crossing. The expedition followed the right bank of the Pecos southward, forded at Horsehead Crossing, and reached San Antonio in June 1849, shortly after the arrival of Whiting and Smith.

General Worth had died of cholera on May 7, and the leaders of the two parties turned in their reports to the new commander, Brevet Brig. Gen. William S. Harney, Colonel of the Second Dragoons. Both reported that the routes by which they had returned from El Paso could, with some improvement, be made into good wagon roads. The Neighbors-Ford route came to be known as the "Upper Road," the Whiting-Smith route as the "Lower Road." Although the latter became the favorite route, both bore heavy traffic until the coming of the railroads.

The Upper and Lower Roads

Early in June 1849 General Harney organized two topographical parties to inspect the Upper and Lower Roads and to make any improvements necessary for their use by wagons. Lt. Francis T. Bryan left San Antonio on June 14 to perform this mission on the Upper Road. Impressed by Whiting's report, Harney was more interested in the Lower Road. Six companies of the Third Infantry under Capt. Jefferson Van Horne, with a large quartermaster train under Capt. Samuel G. French, were then at San Antonio preparing to march to El Paso and garrison the military post that later became Fort Bliss. After reading Whiting's report, Harney directed Van Horne to use the Lower Road. The second topographical party was attached to this command. Harney placed in charge his chief topographical officer, Capt. Joseph E. Johnston, assisted by

Lt. W. F. Smith and Richard Howard, both of whom had been with Whiting.[6]

Captain Johnston's group joined the expedition on the Frio River in mid-June 1849. With two minor exceptions the route followed duplicated that of Whiting. Assisted by work details from the infantry, Johnston's 20 civilian laborers improved the road at stream crossings and other difficult points. August found the troops marching up the Limpia through Wild Rose Pass. They bivouacked at Painted Comanche Camp and, delighted with the scenery and the abundance of wood, water, and grass, scattered out to explore the country. Captain French climbed one of the peaks and surveyed the landscape. In every direction there were hills "as countless as the billows of the ocean. Far and wide these ten thousand single conical mountains rise, intersecting each other at their base, or higher up their sides, forming an impassable barrier, had not some convulsion of nature seemed partly to have opened the pass and cañon through which the road runs." On the banks of the Limpia, a short distance above Painted Comanche Camp, the soldiers discovered the brush wickiups of a Mescalero ranchería. Corn grew on the edge of the stream. But no Indians showed themselves. If Gomez, Whiting's antagonist, was in the vicinity, he kept a respectable distance from the infantry battalion.

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6. Reports of Johnston, Dec. 28, 1849, and French, Dec. 21, 1849, in Senate Ex. Doc. No. 64, 31st Cong., 1st sess. (1850), 26-28, 40-54. See also sources cited in notes 2 and 4 above.

Van Horne's command reached El Paso on September 8 and went into camp on the American side of the river, opposite the town. Lieutenant Bryan, whose survey of the Upper Road had ended at El Paso on July 29, reported to Johnston. After spending a month surveying the Rio Grande Valley from Doña Ana, New Mexico, to El Paso, the topographical party returned to San Antonio by the Upper Road, arriving on November 23. Johnston and Bryan reported to Brevet Maj. Gen. George M. Brooke, Harney's successor, that both routes provided good wagon roads, and recommended further improvement.

Beginning in 1849 the Upper and Lower Roads became the two recognized routes of transportation and communication in West Texas. The gold rush furnished the first heavy traffic. During 1849 alone, some 3,000 argonauts made their way to the California gold fields by way of Texas. Although many used trails through the north Mexican states, a large share followed the Upper and Lower Roads. Some companies left San Antonio as early as February and March, thus preceding the official Army surveys. Guided by Texans, Mexicans, or Indians, some of whom had been with Hays and Highsmith, they took their wagons and mules over the Upper Road even then being explored by Neighbors and Ford and soon to be improved by Bryan. After Whiting's return in late May, the Lower Road came into general use. A large company, led by John C. Hays, marched west as far as El Paso under the protection of Captain Van Horne's infantry battalion. The immigrant parties that crossed West Texas encountered their share of hardship. Some flew apart from internal dissension and strung out

over the road in small groups. Besides suffering from heat and lack of water, many were not properly provisioned, and before reaching El Paso found themselves subsisting on the meat of horses, mules, or even snakes.[7] The migration continued throughout the 1850's, and the Painted Comanche Camp on the Limpia played host to several thousand travelers who, like Whiting and Van Horne, were delighted by the pleasant campsite with its abundant water, grass, and fuel.

The gold rush gave birth to an American settlement on the Rio Grande opposite the Mexican city of El Paso. First called Magoffinsville, it was named Franklin in 1852 and El Paso in 1859. The Santa Fe-Chihuahua trail here crossed the Texas-California trails, and local merchants enjoyed a lively business supplying the large numbers of travelers who used these routes. Freight trains began to ply the Lower Road, reaching Chihuahua and Santa Fe by way of El Paso. The trans-Pecos trails became established avenues of commerce, and Texas at last had her long-sought share of the Santa Fe-Chihuahua trade.

In 1853 the Lower Road became part of a Federal mail route, Line No. 12,900, connecting San Antonio with Santa Fe by way of El Paso. The contract went to Capt. George H. Giddings, who was destined to make an impressive reputation in Texas stagecoaching. At first Giddings carried the mail by mule, but before long branched out and inaugurated passenger service.[8] Frederick Law Olmsted observed

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7. Bieber, Southern Trails to California in 1849, 36-40.

8. Emmie G. Mahon and Chester V. Kielman, "George H. Giddings and the San Antonio-San Diego Mail Line," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, LXI, 2 (October, 1957), 226-28.

the Giddings mail train, westbound for El Paso, at Fort Inge in the spring of 1854. It consisted of two wagons and an ambulance for passengers, each drawn by four mules and leading a fifth. Passengers paid $100 for the trip to El Paso. They were allowed 40 pounds of baggage and, advertised Giddings, "are not required to stand guard."

> The train is attended by a mounted guard of six men, armed with Sharp's rifles and Colt's repeaters. Their pay is forty dollars a month. . . . After passing Fort Inge, there is no change of team for more than five hundred miles. The train camps from ten o'clock at night till four in the morning. At eight o'clock, a stop of an hour or more is made, to graze the mules, and for breakfast. Another halt is made between three o'clock and sunset. The average distance accomplished in a day is over fifty miles. . . . The commander was an old Texan Ranger captain, and the guard, we understood, was composed of old rangers. They had, however, so much the appearance of drunken ruffians that we felt no disposition to join the party.[9]

Olmsted commented, also, that "A man is lost on nearly every trip out and back, but usually through his own indiscretion." Mail carriers, freighters, and immigrants all risked Indian attack on the journey to El Paso. Almost from the edge of San Antonio to the Davis Mountains, they rode in constant terror of Comanche war parties traveling between Mexico and their northern homes. From the eastern edge of the Davis Mountains to the outskirts of El Paso, Mescalero war parties might at any moment dash upon a luckless train.

Perhaps alarmed by the arrival at El Paso of Van Horne's formidable command, a band of Mescaleros came in from the Davis

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9. Frederick Law Olmsted, A Journey Through Texas (New York, 1860), 286-87.

Mountains in 1850 and asked the Captain to make a treaty with them. Van Horne delayed and requested instructions from department headquarters in Santa Fe, but the Indians never returned.[10] Early in 1854 Col. John Garland, commanding at Santa Fe, complained that the Mescaleros had been "infesting the road leading from El Paso to San Antonio, committing murders and robberies," and ordered Capt. Daniel T. Chandler and 180 men of the Third Infantry out of Fort Bliss to take corrective action.[11] No report of Chandler's success appears in the records, and it may be assumed that he did a great deal of marching but caught no Apaches.

The Comanches, too, furnished travelers many an anxious moment. Maj. William H. Emory, U. S. Boundary Commissioner, met a typical group in 1851 at Comanche Springs, where the Lower Road crossed the Great Comanche War Trail. With an escort of only 15 men badly in need of water, he approached the springs only to find them held by about 30 or 40 warriors under Mucho Toro. Near the watering place grazed close to a thousand horses and mules, fruits of a plundering expedition to Mexico. Emory's small squad put on a bold front and acted like the advance guard of a regiment that might arrive at any time. Mucho Toro may or may not have been taken in by appearances, but he repressed

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10. Sonnichsen, Mescalero Apaches, 62.

11. Report of the Secretary of War, 1854, House Ex. Doc. No. 1, 33d Cong., 2nd sess., 36.

what must have been his natural inclination. Not to be out-bluffed, however, he informed Emory that his party was but the advance guard of 400 warriors led by the dreaded Bajo Sol. Indians and soldiers alike spent an uneasy night. Still displaying an attitude of confidence, Emory and his men next morning headed west toward the Limpia. Crossing a ridge, they saw an immense dust cloud rising from the Comanche Trail south of the springs. Mucho Toro had not been bluffing, for, as the Major later learned, beneath the cloud was indeed Bajo Sol with his 400 warriors.[12]

Not all travelers were as fortunate as Emory. With mounting frequency Indians swept down on wagon trains and mail parties, ran off the stock, and, if the prey were weak enough, killed the whites and plundered the wagons. This they could do with impunity, for once a traveler left Fort Clark, 130 miles west of San Antonio, he could expect to see no soldiers until he reached El Paso. By 1854 military protection of the El Paso road had become a necessity.

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12. William H. Emory, Report on United States and Mexican Boundary Survey, House Ex. Doc. No. 135, 34th Cong., 1st sess. (1857), I, 86-88.

Part II

THE EARLY YEARS OF FORT DAVIS, 1854-1861

Brevet Maj. Gen. Persifor F. Smith, Colonel of the Regiment of Mounted Rifles, commanded the Department of Texas in 1854. To defend a frontier arching about 800 miles from the Red River to the mouth of the Rio Grande, he had 135 officers and 2,540 enlisted men--his own regiment plus the Second Dragoons and portions of three infantry and three artillery regiments.[1] Divided among four posts guarding the international boundary and five more on the line of frontier defense against Indians, they had their hands full without performing such missions as patrolling the road to El Paso.[2] Nevertheless, the need for a fort in the trans-Pecos region had become abundantly clear by 1854, and during the spring General Smith had Lt. Col. Washington Seawell, Eighth Infantry, assemble six companies of his regiment at Fort Ringgold for duty west of the Pecos.

Establishment of Fort Davis

The location of the new post had not been chosen, but the advantages of Painted Camp on the Limpia were well known in San

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1. Report of the Secretary of War, 1854, House Ex. Doc. No. 1, 33rd Cong., 2nd sess., 58-59.

2. For a discussion of the scheme of frontier defense in Texas before the Civil War, see W. C. Holden, "Frontier Defense, 1846-1860," West Texas Historical Association Year Book, VI (June, 1930), 35-65.

Antonio by 1854. It offered plenty of wood, water, and grass, requisites for a frontier military installation. Strategically situated on the Lower Road, it commanded the Mescalero country and lay within striking distance of the Comanche War Trail and the favorite Indian crossings of the Rio Grande. That it was considered in San Antonio a leading candidate is suggested by the action of one John James, a surveyor. Since there was no Federal public domain in Texas, the Army had to lease its military sites from the State or from private landowners. On May 19, 1854, James became such a landowner, obtaining from the Texas Land Commissioners a certificate of filing for a section of land embracing the Painted Camp on the Limpia. In July he headed for California, but paused long enough on the Limpia to survey his section.[3]

General Smith had not made up his mind, however, and early in September set out to inspect the troublesome western half of his department. He planned to journey all the way to El Paso and Fort Bliss, but arranged to meet Lieutenant Colonel Seawell and his command at Painted Camp early in October. Two long wagon trains, travelling several days apart, transported Headquarters, Staff, Band, and Companies A, C, D, F, G, and H of the Eighth Infantry, together with large quantities of provisions, west on the Lower Road during

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3. Barry Scobee, History of Fort Davis, Ms. in preparation in 1960 quoting letter of John James' grandson and deed records in office of County Clerk, Jeff Davis County, Texas.

September. On October 7 the first train made its way up Limpia Canyon and the troops bivouacked at Painted Camp. On the 11th the second train arrived.[4]

General Smith had already reached the rendezvous. Returning from El Paso, he had gained some first-hand experience with the Mescalero problem. On October 1, about 100 miles east of El Paso, he and his escort of Mounted Riflemen had met a party of travelers who reported that Apaches had run off their stock the day before at Eagle Springs. When the troops reached the scene of the theft, Smith sent Capt. John G. Walker and Lt. Eugene A. Carr with 41 men to follow the Indian trail, which led south towards the Rio Grande. Walker lost the trail in the night, but next morning picked up another. It led north across the Lower Road towards the Sierra Diablo. When Walker saw three Indians ahead, he divided his company, giving Lieutenant Carr command of half and retaining command of the other half himself. Carr's men put spurs to their mounts and had almost overtaken the quarry when a party of about 40 Mescaleros poured out of a canyon and collided with the troops. A hand to hand melee followed. Carr went down with a severe wound, but his men held out until Walker came to the rescue and drove the Indians into the mountains.

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4. Smith to Adjt. Gen. S. Cooper, Painted Camp, Oct. 14, 1854, RG 94, National Archives.

The Mescalero camp, 60 to 70 lodges, lay just inside the canyon. Walker quickly took possession of it, but the slopes on either side swarmed with about 150 angry warriors.

> The firing now became very animated /Walker recalled/ the Indians coming boldly down the sides of the mountain discharging their arrows while those who had firearms (twelve or fifteen) concealed themselves behind rocks and fired down upon us, but entirely without effect whilst every few minutes one of our rifles or Sharp's carbines would tumble a warrior from his horse, amidst the cheers of our men below answered by a fierce yell from the Indians above. . . . Up the mountains and along the face of the rocky spurs these bold riders would dash at full speed, with the confidence and security of goats and now and then swooping down from the mountains, dashing with the speed of thought at some unprotected point, and when foiled as hastily escaping up the mountain sides amid a volley of rifle shots, waving his shield in defiance and disappearing over the crest, this was frequently repeated, sometimes by single horsemen, and sometimes by dozens and twenties, and the instinct of their horses frequently bore their dead or wounded riders (whose legs were tied under their bellies) up the mountain out of our reach.

Lieutenant Carr's wound was found to be very dangerous, and Walker considered it imperative to get him to a surgeon. He therefore mounted the company and withdrew from the canyon. A group of warriors made a parting dash at the rearguard and loosed a volley of arrows. Private White stopped one and fell from his horse dead. The rearguard fired back and sent the attackers into the mountains with the loss of a chief and two warriors.

Walker's casulaties were one killed and Carr and the guide, Policarp Rodriguez, wounded. He estimated six or seven of the enemy killed and 12 or 14 wounded. Carr later recovered and, after the Civil War, became a distinguished Indian fighter in his own right.

The Riflemen reached Painted Camp on October 5, apparently the same day on which Smith arrived.[5]

Smith seems to have been favorably impressed with the Painted Camp as the site of the fort, but wished to inspect the country around Presidio del Norte, in the Big Bend to the south, before reaching a final decision. He waited for the arrival of the second division of Colonel Seawell's train, then on the 14th left for Presidio del Norte. He was back by the 23rd, convinced of the superiority of Painted Camp.[6]

The General himself selected the site of the new fort, in a canyon about one-half mile southwest of the Limpia, near a bubbling spring on the prairie.[7] On three sides palisaded rock walls 300 feet high rose abruptly from the canyon floor and, at the top, gave way to flat mesas. Considering the tactical situation, this was not the wisest choice, for an enemy might, and in fact did, approach very near without discovery.

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5. Walker to Bvt. Capt. Alfred Gibbs, Camp on Limpia El Paso route, Oct. 6, 1854, RG 94, National Archives.

6. Smith to Cooper, Camp on Rio Grande 90 miles below El Paso, Sept. 30, 1854; ibid., Painted Camp, Oct. 9, 1854; ibid., Painted Camp, Oct. 14, 1854, RG 94, National Archives.

7. "Fort Davis was established on the 7th of October, 1854, by Lt. Col. Washington Seawell, 8th Infantry, the site having been selected by General P. F. Smith." Lt. Thomas M. Jones to Quartermaster General, Fort Davis, Sept. 19, 1857, Records of the Q.M.G., copy in collections of Fort Davis Historical Society.

Smith had also been maturing plans for an immediate campaign against the Mescaleros. Reporting the details of Walker's fight with the Indians to the Adjutant General, he declared that "as these /Mescaleros/, with some neighboring bands of the same tribe, have been committing depredations on this road, I propose to send up some of the Texas volunteers and other mounted troops to drive them out of the country."[8] His order to Colonel Seawell for the establishment of Fort Davis reflected this optimistic intent:

Head Quarters, Department of Texas
Painted Camp on the "Limpia"
October 23d, 1854

Order No. (unnumbered)

Lieutenant Colonel Washington Seawell with his command of six companies of the 8th Infantry will occupy the Camp where he is at present in position, which will be called "Fort Davis," where he will proceed to make his command as comfortable as circumstances will admit of for the winter. He will immediately make requisitions for the necessary stores, provisions and forage for the half year commencing November 1st next, drawing as little as possible upon forage already, and about, to be delivered.

Preparations will be made for an additional quantity of provisions, supplies and forage for detachments which may shortly be expected for service in the field.

By order of Bvt. Maj. Gen'l. Smith
A. Gibbs
Bvt. Capt. A. D. C. & A.A.A.G.[9]

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8. Smith to Cooper, Oct., 7, 1854, loc. cit.

9. Medical History of Fort Davis, RG 94, National Archives. I have used a typed copy in the collections of the Fort Davis Historical Society.

Thus the General decreed that the new post would be named after the Secretary of War, Jefferson Davis, and would serve as base of operations for an immediate campaign against the Mescaleros.

Fighting the Mescaleros, 1855

Smith had no sooner returned to San Antonio than he organized a mounted expedition against the Mescaleros. The command consisted of three companies of the Regiment of Mounted Rifles and three companies of Texas mounted militia. Under Maj. John S. Simonson, R. M. R., this force arrived at Fort Davis in December 1854. Company F, Eighth Infantry, Capt. Robert P. Maclay, joined at Davis. Fifty thousand rations were hauled up from San Antonio for use of the command.[10] The fort served throughout as the supply center and communications link with San Antonio, but, since field operations focused on the deserts west of the Davis Mountains, the tactical base shifted from place to place as Simonson found necessary.

The Mescalero campaign of January and February 1855 was a large operation involving also the Department of New Mexico. The activities of the commands of Capt. Richard S. Ewell and Lt. Col.

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10. Medical History of Fort Davis. One company of Texas Volunteers got drunk and ran amuck at the village of D'Hanis, near San Antonio. Its officers were placed under arrest and the company discharged. Simonson therefore had but two militia companies in the field. See Smith to Cooper, March 14, 1855, Report of the Secretary of War, 1855, House Ex. Doc. No. 1, 34th Cong., 1st sess., 52; clipping from San Antonio Zeitung, c. Nov. 1854, in Olmsted, Journey Through Texas, 507.

Dixon S. Miles in the Sacramento and Capitan Mountains of New Mexico are well known. The Mescaleros in that area were crushed and forced to settle on a reservation guarded by newly built Fort Stanton.[11] But the activities in Texas of Major Simonson and Capt. James Longstreet, out of Fort Bliss, are unknown. The key reports that would fill this historical void have not yet been located in the National Archives. Two reports from General Smith to the Adjutant General are merely tantilizing. On March 14, 1855, he wrote: "I have reports from Major Simonson, R. M. riflemen, commanding the expedition beyond Fort Davis, up to the 15th of February. He was thoroughly scouring the mountainous district north of the El Paso road, and between Fort Davis and the Rio Grande. The Indians had left it, he thinks, and gone northward, having received intelligence of the expedition. ...Maj. Simonson has been as far north as Capt. Marcy's road, and met Brevet Major Longstreet, 8th infantry, with a command from El Paso, in the Guadalupe Mountains." And on June 2 he wrote: "I have late reports from the whole of the frontier. The efforts of the troops have been successful in driving the Indians entirely out of that part of the State forbidden to them and the roads on the frontier are travelled with security."[12]

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11. Sonnichsen, Mescalero Apaches, Ch. 5; Report of the Secretary of War, 1855, House Ex. Doc. No. 1, 34th Cong., 1st. sess., 56-58.

12. Report of the Secretary of War, 1855, House Ex. Doc. No. 1, 34th Cong., 1st sess., 52-54.

The General's evaluation was too optimistic. The bulk of the Mescaleros had gone to the Fort Stanton reservation. But a few bands continued to live in the Guadalupe and Davis Mountains, where Gomez still lurked, and in the Big Bend below Presidio del Norte. The Fort Stanton Indians, moreover, were not above joining their wilder kinsmen in raids to Mexico or on the El Paso road. When Simonson's command in May 1855 returned to permanent stations east of the Pecos, therefore, Capt. Charles F. Ruff and his company of Mounted Riflemen remained in the field. Ruff established a subpost of Fort Davis at Eagle Springs to keep watch on the segment of the El Paso road between the Davis Mountains and the Rio Grande.

In July Lt. Horace Randall led a scouting party of this company in an exploration of the country between Van Horn's Wells and the Rio Grande. In one of the many rugged canyons that drain the mountains bordering the river, Randall flushed a party of 15 Mescaleros. The troops charged, drove the warriors up a mountain side, and followed, climbing up the steep slope on their hands and knees. After 20 minutes of brisk firing, eight dead Indians littered the incline. Two others, "badly wounded and maddened by a fit of despair," jumped off a 60-foot cliff and killed themselves. Four others, although severely wounded, presumably made good their escape. The 15th Indian, a baby girl one year old, was found unharmed on the field after the fight. The troops suffered no casualties.[13]

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13. Randall to Ruff, Eagle Springs, July 23, 1855, RG 94, National Archives.

Ruff's company probably returned east at the end of the summer, for no other record of it appears.

Building Fort Davis

While Simonson and Ruff campaigned against the Mescaleros, Lieutenant Colonel Seawell's men kept occupied building the new post on the Limpia. The site selected by General Smith had been leased from John James for $300 a year,[14] but Colonel Seawell was very unhappy with its location. The rocky canyon walls afforded Indian raiders cover and concealment to the very limits of the post. They frequently availed themselves of this fortunate circumstance to dash into the animal herds and make off with cattle or mules. They were usually well on their way to safety before a pursuing party could get organized and mounted for the chase.

When Inspector General J. K. F. Mansfield visited Fort Davis in 1856, he learned of one such raid that had recently relieved the beef contractor of his entire herd. The cattle were grazing on a mountain ledge that was thought inaccessible except for the entrance. "Yet the Indians in a single night," he reported, "altho' not 500 yards from the post, forced them up thro' a pass that took off the hair from some, and captured them all beyond recovery." At the time of Mansfield's visit, Lt. Z. R. Bliss (who returned to command Fort Davis 20 years later) was out chasing warriors who

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14. Scobee Ms., quoting a report of the Quartermaster General.

had run off some stock. He marched 200 miles, but "as a matter of course his pursuit was a failure."[15]

For this cogent reason Seawell wished to move the post out of the canyon, and voiced such an intent to Colonel Mansfield in 1856. His proposed location was near the spring on the prairie where the fort was finally built in 1867.[16] Presumably because the site had been designated by General Smith himself, however, Seawell hesitated to make the change, and contented himself with erecting temporary structures of pine slabs and canvas inside the canyon.

Construction began in the late fall of 1854. A scouting party under Capt. J. V. Bomford discovered a fine stand of pine in the mountains about 25 miles distant. Seawell set up a timber camp, and mule-drawn wagons hauled pine logs over a rough road to the site of the fort. Here a Page Circular Saw Mill powered by 12 mules cut the logs into slabs. A quarry of building stone was opened a mile from the post, but, since Seawell hoped later to build a permanent fort of stone outside the canyon, very little was used. With no attempt at lasting construction, the buildings

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15. M. L. Crimmins (ed.), "Colonel J. K. F. Mansfield's Report of the Inspection of the Department of Texas in 1856," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XLII (1938-39), 356.

16. Ibid.

rose quickly. By the time of Colonel Mansfield's visit in June 1856, 61 buildings crowded the canyon.[17]

The troops of the Eighth Infantry were first housed in six rude shelters, one for each company, extending in a line across the mouth of the canyon. They were built of oak and cottonwood pickets thatched with grass, and each was 56 by 20 feet. By 1856 six stone barracks with thatched roofs and flagstone floors, each 60 by 20 feet, had been erected in a line immediately to the west. Aside from the stone bakehouse and blacksmith shop and the adobe magazine, these were the only substantial structures built on the site of the first fort. The original barracks thereafter served as kitchens and mess rooms.

The rest of the buildings were scattered at random up the canyon to the west. Built of pine slabs set vertically in the ground, they had plank or packed earth floors, roofs of thatched grass or canvas, and glazed windows. Officers lived in eleven sets of quarters, seven 32 by 20 and four 20 by 11. The

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17. This section is based on ibid., 351-57; Lt. Thomas M. Jones to Quartermaster General, Fort Davis, June 1857 and Sept. 19, 1857; and Asst. Quartermaster Fort Davis to Quartermaster General, July 4, 1859, copies in Fort Davis Historical Society. The last source gives the distance of 20 to 25 miles from Fort Davis to the Pinery. Lieutenant Jones, in the second source cited, says 70 to 75, which is unreasonable given the local geography, and may well have resulted from the copyist mistaking 2 for 7. Smith to Cooper, March 14, 1855, Report of the Secretary of War, 1855, House Ex. Doc. No. 1, 34th Cong., 1st sess., 52, says 11 miles. Local tradition places the Pinery in Madera Canyon, which is about 20 to 25 miles northwest of Fort Davis.

Commanding Officer enjoyed the luxury of a two-room house, 38 by 29, with exterior weather boarding. Each set of quarters had an adjacent kitchen 18 by 14. Hospital (85 by 20), adjutant's office (28 by 16), 13 houses (16 by 14) for married soldiers and their families, stable, sawmill, sutler's store and "billiard room," storehouses, corral, wagon yard, and wood yard completed the physical layout of Fort Davis.

By 1857 the slab buildings had deteriorated badly. The slabs had been installed green and had warped, shrunk, and rotted. The houses of the officers, testified Lieutenant Jones from experience, "are altogether very uncomfortable and insufficient quarters." The hospital, held together by wooden pins because the supply of nails had run out, was "in a very rickety condition." The flimsy wooden frames covered with canvas that served as storehouses provided scant protection to supplies when new, and in 1857 were about to fall down. One carpenter, sometimes two, kept constantly occupied repairing the buildings of Fort Davis.

There were some compensations, however, for Fort Davis, despite its unfortunate housing problem, had advantages envied by the tenants of many other frontier posts. It had attractive scenery and pleasant climate. Limpia Creek provided plenty of fresh, clear water. For drinking purposes, it was superior to that at the spring east of the post. The spring proved a fine site for the post garden. Its vegetables and melons varied the diet of the garrison and delighted travelers on the sterile road to El Paso and San Antonio.

The main item of food, however, was beef. The troops ate 5,000 pounds of beef each month, purchased by contract for 15¢ a pound. Beans at $2.48 a bushel and flour at 12 1/2¢ a pound came from Mexico, although after 1858 Simeon Hart supplied the flour from his mill at El Paso. All other subsistence stores--pork, bacon, coffee, sugar--as well as quartermaster and ordnance supplies were furnished from the military depot at San Antonio. Corn for stock forage was obtained under contract from Mexico and fuel for $6.50 a cord from timber in the Davis Mountains.

With most of the necessities and some of the comforts of life, the inhabitants of the post on the Limpia might have enjoyed as pleasant an existence as life on the frontier of the 1850's could afford if only their quarters had been of better construction. But the old post in the canyon continued to rot away while Colonel Seawell doubtless dreamed of the fine stone fort he wanted to build on the prairie to the east. Not until after the approaching Civil War, however, was this dream realized.

Protecting the Lower Road

Colonel Seawell's command had been advanced beyond the organized line of frontier defense to protect the mounting volume of traffic on the Lower Road from San Antonio to El Paso. The campaign of 1854-55 temporarily cleared the Mescaleros from the western reaches of the road and produced a great deal of useful information about the topography of trans-Pecos Texas. But it failed to intimidate

the Apaches, and they promptly resumed the sport of preying on freight caravans and mail parties on the Lower Road. To the east, the Comanches had yet to encounter any military interference with this activity.

The Lower Road took on added importance with the increase of mail and passenger service. Capt. James H. Giddings' San Antonio-Santa Fe Mail, inaugurated in 1853 (see p. 14), paused at Fort Davis each month. Between 1854 and August 1857 the Army ran a monthly military express between San Antonio and Fort Davis. In 1857 James Birch won a Federal contract for carrying the mail between San Antonio and San Diego. At first using wagons, the company soon had Concord coaches providing semi-monthly service to the Pacific. As general superintendent, Birch appointed I. C. Woods, who in turn selected George H. Giddings as agent for the eastern division, San Antonio to El Paso. Although Giddings pooled his stock and equipment with those of the Birch line, he continued to operate between San Antonio and Santa Fe under his own contract. Thus the Giddings coaches stopped at Fort Davis once a month, and the Birch coaches, captained by such frontier figures as Thomas McCall, Henry Skillman, and Big Foot Wallace, twice a month.[18]

Within a year the rival and more famous Butterfield Overland Mail, St. Louis to San Francisco, had moved in on Birch's territory,

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18. Mahon and Kielman, "George H. Giddings and the San Antonio-San Diego Mail Line," 226-235.

duplicating his route between El Paso and Fort Yuma. In Texas the Butterfield Trail struck the Upper Road on the Pecos and followed it through the Guadalupe Mountains to El Paso. Water on this trail proved scarce, however, and in 1859 Butterfield moved south, crossing the Pecos by ferry at Horsehead Crossing and reaching El Paso on the Lower Road by way of Fort Davis. Here the company built a station a half-mile northeast of the post. From 1859 to 1861, when both Butterfield and the Birch line discontinued service, the two companies operated through Fort Davis.[19]

To Apaches and Comanches, the stagecoaches were inviting prey. They carried fewer defenders than most freight trains and made their way across Texas with predictable regularity. Giddings recalled an event that illustrates the danger that threatened every coach on the San Antonio-El Paso run:

> At another time as I was crossing the Escondido about nine miles from Fort Davis our party was attacked. There were two men besides myself in the coach. Jim Spears, the driver, and a contractor named Parker Burnham were on the box. The Indians had no guns, but used bows and arrows exclusively. One of these missiles struck Burnham in the neck. Jim Spears placed the wounded man in the boot of the compartment in the rear of the coach. The six horses attached to the stage were then given their heads and ran all the way to Fort Davis, the Indians following close to the post. The coach was filled with arrows which they shot into it and which stuck in it. We kept up a steady fire from our revolvers at them, but I do not know how many, if any, we killed or wounded. . . . One of

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19. R. P. and M. B. Conkling, The Butterfield Overland Mail, 1857-1869 (3 v., Glendale, 1947), II, 26-28; R. N. Richardson, "Some Details of the Southern Overland Mail," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXIX (1925-26), 13; J. W. Williams, "The Butterfield Overland Mail Road Across Texas," ibid., LXI, 1 (July, 1957), 1-19.

our horses dropped dead, just as we pulled up at Fort Davis Post Office. We left the wounded Parker Burnham with the surgeon at the fort. The troops went out after the Indians, but I never learned whether they got any of them or not.[20]

A. D. Richardson, who rode a Butterfield stage cross-country in 1859, recorded another incident that occurred in Wild Rose Pass north of Fort Davis. Apaches waylaid a Birch mail wagon, killed the guard, and made off with the mail. They stopped to examine the loot, and, discovering a bundle of illustrated newspapers, grew so absorbed in the engravings that they allowed themselves to be surprised by a pursuing detachment of soldiers. Caught off balance, the war party lost 14 men. The survivors, convinced that the pictures had somehow led to their punishment, thereafter avoided them with superstitious fear.[21]

With the Lower Road an important Federal mail route, the Army increasingly felt an obligation to protect it. Brig. Gen. David E. Twiggs voiced the sentiment of most commanders of the Department of Texas when he lamented in 1858, "The road from this /San Antonio/ to El Paso is travelled almost daily, and large amounts of property transported on packs and trains. The San Diego mail makes two

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20. Giddings' memoirs in San Antonio Daily Express, June 1, 1902, quoted in Mahon and Kielman, "George H. Giddings and the San Antonio-San Diego Mail," 232.

21. A. D. Richardson, Beyond the Mississippi (New York, 1867), 234.

trips a month to San Diego from this place. It is important that this road be well guarded, but I have not the force to do it."[22]

More troops nevertheless had to be drawn from the frontier line for the El Paso road. The infantrymen of Fort Davis, even though often mounted on mules, could effectively police only a small fraction of the 600-mile road. Several more outposts were therefore established. Two companies of the First Infantry built Fort Lancaster in August 1855 near the ford where the Lower Road crossed the Pecos. In 1857 Fort Hudson was established at the crossing of Devil's River southeast of Lancaster. In September 1858 a company of the Eighth Infantry from Fort Davis built Fort Quitman where the road struck the Rio Grande 80 miles below El Paso. And in 1859 Fort Stockton was founded at Comanche Springs, the strategic crossing of the Lower Road and the Great Comanche War Trail.

As at all of these posts, the troops of Fort Davis spent much of their time in the arduous, unspectacular duty of escorting mail and freight trains, pursuing but rarely catching raiders who had attacked travelers or a mail station, and covering their sector with a series of scouts that were usually unrewarding. Occasionally there was action, but it involved small numbers on both sides. Few detailed accounts of these operations have survived. One documented episode, however, illustrates the type of warfare in which the men of the Eighth Infantry found themselves engaged.

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22. Twiggs to Cooper, Aug. 9, 1858, in Report of the Secretary of War, 1858, House Ex. Doc. No. 1, 35th Cong., 2nd sess., 260.

During the summer of 1857 considerable hostile activity developed on the long stretch of the El Paso road between Fort Clark and Fort Davis. Both Comanches and Apaches were involved. East of the Pecos, patrols out of Forts Mason, Hudson, and Clark fought five engagements with Comanche and Lipan raiders between April and November. One of these fights, near the head of Devil's River, earned for Lt. John B. Hood a commendation from Gen. Winfield Scott as well as a severe arrow wound.[23] West of the Pecos, troops from Fort Davis participated in a dramatic encounter with the Apaches.

On July 24 a raiding party of about 80 Mescaleros discovered a party of travelers on the right bank of the Pecos 25 miles west of Fort Lancaster. It was the monthly military express from San Antonio, an ambulance and wagon, bound for Fort Davis. Escorted by Sergeant Schroeder and six men of the Eighth Infantry from Fort Davis, it was accompanied by a wood detail from Fort Lancaster, Sergeant Libbey and six men of the First Infantry. Sergeant Schroeder placed the two wagons parallel and formed his men between. The Indians tried to approach under a white flag, but when Schroeder told them to clear out they opened fire. Schroeder fell, mortally wounded, and Sergeant Libbey took command. He ordered a retreat and, carrying Schroeder, the soldiers withdrew. The Indians charged, but stopped

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23. Report of the Secretary of War, 1857, Senate Ex. Doc. No. 11, 35th Cong., 1st sess., 54-57, 131-33; ibid., 1858, Senate Ex. Doc. No. 1, 35th Cong., 2nd sess., 20-21.

to plunder the wagons and thus allowed the infantrymen to escape. They made their way back to Fort Lancaster, abandoning Schroeder's body enroute. It was later found scalped by the Indians.[24]

Capt. R. S. Granger, commanding Lancaster, organized a pursuing party of 40 men of the First Infantry under Lt. A. M. Haskell. Lt. Edward Hartz and 40 men of the Eighth Infantry from Fort Davis were camped at Lancaster. Hartz joined Haskell and took command of the two units. He loaded the men in wagons, drew the canvas covers, and set forth on the road to Fort Davis under the guise of a provision train. The Indians took the bait, and about 45 miles west of Lancaster swept down on the train. The infantrymen piled out of the wagons, opened fire, and brought down three warriors before the attackers discovered what had happened and called off the assault. Hartz deployed half the command as skirmishers and advanced, but after an exchange of fire lasting several minutes the Indians pulled back out of range.

The Apaches next fired the prairie, hoping the flames would destroy the train and create a smoke screen under which to mount another attack. But Hartz moved the wagons to a depression bare of vegetation and had his men lie on their faces. When the wall of flames had moved on, the troops again advanced, firing, upon the Indians, who gave up the fight and withdrew. Hartz continued

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24. Capt. R. S. Granger to Asst. Adjt. Gen. Dept. of Texas, Fort Lancaster, July 25, 1857, RG 94, National Archives.

west towards Comanche Springs until he met the east-bound mail from Fort Davis and escorted it to Lancaster.[25]

Several factors combined to reduce, though not eliminate, Comanche depredations on the Lower Road during the late 1850's. The establishment of Fort Stockton placed troops astride the Great Comanche War Trail. The forts making up the line of frontier defense received more mounted troops in 1856 when the entire Second Cavalry, with Albert Sidney Johnston as colonel and Robert E. Lee as lieutenant colonel, arrived in Texas. With greater mobility than the usual infantry garrison, these troops operated more effectively against the swift-moving raiders. Finally, a command under Capt. Earl Van Dorn in 1859 carried the war to the home country of the Comanches north of Red River and inflicted severe losses at the battle of Rush Springs on October 1.[26]

To the west, however, the Mescaleros continued to ravage the Lower Road, and the garrisons of Forts Davis, Quitman, and Bliss were kept constantly in the field providing escorts and conducting scouts. The presence of Fort Davis had not driven the Apaches out of the Davis Mountains, and they continued to commit depredations within a short distance of the fort. In October 1859 they attacked

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25. Hartz to Granger, Fort Lancaster, July 30, 1857, RG 94, National Archives.

26. See Report of the Secretary of War, 1858, Senate Ex. Doc. No. 1, 35th Cong., 2nd sess., 268-78, for reports of this campaign.

the Barilla Springs stage station, 15 miles north of Fort Davis, and made off with 14 mules belonging to the Butterfield and Birch lines. Lt. James P. Van Horn led 27 men in pursuit, but there is no record of his success.[27]

Such conditions prevailed throughout the 1850's. By the outbreak of the Civil War, when Federal troops withdrew from Texas, the Army had made little real progress towards a permanent solution of the problem. And the Civil War wiped out the few gains that had been made.

Camels Come to Fort Davis

Besides affording a measure of protection to traffic on the Lower Road, Fort Davis played a role in the famous camel experiment of Secretary of War Jefferson Davis. The Secretary believed that the vexing problem of supply and transportation in the arid western lands might be solved by the use of camels. At his urging, Congress in 1855 appropriated $30,000 to conduct experiments. Maj. Henry C. Wayne was sent to the Levant with Lt. David Porter, U.S.N., and the vessel Supply to bring back some of the animals. With 33 camels, three Arabs, and two Turks, Wayne landed at Indianola, Texas, on May 14, 1856. Porter made another trip and returned with 41 more,

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27. Lt. W. N. E. Dye to Van Horn, Oct. 9, 1859; Seawell to Asst. Adjt. Gen. Dept. of Texas, Oct. 10, 1859, in "Record of Fort Davis," Fort Davis Historical Society.

reaching Indianola on February 10, 1857. Under Major Wayne's supervision, the animals were quartered in a corral near San Antonio, then in August 1856 moved to a permanent station, Camp Verde, 60 miles northeast of San Antonio. After extensive tests, all observers joined in praising the utility, endurance, and carrying capacity of the camels.

Lt. Edward F. Beale, U.S.N., assigned to survey a wagon road from Fort Defiance, New Mexico, to the Colorado River, obtained permission to use 25 of the camels. He picked them up at Camp Verde in June 1857 and took the Lower Road to El Paso. At Fort Clark Capt. Arthur T. Lee, his wife and infant son, with 15 infantrymen, joined the expedition. He had been on leave in San Antonio and was returning to his station at Fort Davis. The death of Captain Lee's child at Fort Lancaster saddened the entire expedition. As they approached Fort Davis, Beale recorded the admiration that the camels had already won from the soldiers:

> . . . It is a subject of constant surprise and remark to all of us, how their feet can possibly stand the character of the road we have been travelling over for the last ten days. It is certainly the hardest road on feet of barefooted animals I have ever known. As for food, they live on anything, and thrive. Yesterday they drank water for the first time in twenty-six hours, and although the day had been excessively hot they seemed to care but little for it. Mark the difference between them and mules; the same time, in such weather, without water, would set the latter wild, and render them entirely useless, if not entirely break them down.

On July 17 the expedition camped at Fort Davis and delayed an extra day to permit repairs to the "Francis Metallic Life Wagons," which had broken down. Beale enjoyed the hospitality of the officers

of Fort Davis, his men the diversions of the post trader's store. A 17-year-old youth along for adventure noted "some of our young men coming into camp with a gait that denoted a slight indulgence in alcoholic stimulants. Subsequently I was informed that the whole party who were in the Fort after dark got very funny." Beale left Fort Davis on July 18. His experience with the camels in Arizona led him to accord them high praise, but they later suffered from neglect and many strayed while the rest were sold at auction in California in 1864.[28]

To test further the practicability of camels, Secretary John B. Floyd, Davis' successor, in 1859 directed Brig. Gen. David E. Twiggs, commanding the Department of Texas, to explore the trans-Pecos for a shorter route to Fort Davis. With an escort from Fort Davis under Lt. Edward L. Hartz, Lt. William E. Echols left San Antonio early in May 1859. His supplies were carried by 24 camels and 24 mules. From Fort Stockton the command made reconnaissances south on the Great Comanche War Trail to Independence Creek and return, south and west to Fort Davis and return, and again south to the Rio Grande in the Big Bend and return. The camels performed admirably

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28. Journals of Beale and May H. Stacey in Lewis B. Lesley (ed.), Uncle Sam's Camels (Cambridge, 1929), 49-64 and 163-65 for Fort Davis.

and went for days without water, while the mules suffered terribly and became so jaded as to be almost useless.[29]

The following year, 1860, Secretary Floyd directed that the reconnaissances be continued in rougher terrain. Lieutenant Echols received his orders from the acting department commander, Lt. Col. Robert E. Lee, and set forth early in June with 25 camels, 20 mules, and an infantry escort. Seeking a more direct route from the Pecos to Fort Davis, the troops indeed encountered rougher terrain. For five days, 120 miles, they found no water. Only the endurance of the camels, which carried much water but consumed none, saved the command from disaster. Reaching Fort Davis on July 10, Echols and his men spent four days resting and sampling fresh melons from the post garden and apples and pears imported from Mexico. From Fort Davis the expedition marched south to Presidio del Norte, explored the Big Bend seeking a location for a military post, then turned north to Fort Stockton. Again the camels had proved their worth. But for their "endurance, docility, and sagacity," wrote Colonel Lee, "the reconnaissance would have failed."[30]

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29. Frank B. Lammons, "Operation Camel: An Experiment in Animal Transportation in Texas, 1857-1860," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, LXI, 1 (July, 1957), 40-42; Hartz's Diary in Senate Ex. Doc. No. 2, 36th Cong., 1st sess.

30. Lammons, "Operation Camel," 44-48; Report of the Secretary of War, 1860, House Ex. Doc. No. 1, 36th Cong., 2nd sess., 34-44.

Despite their demonstrated value, however, the camels were not again used. Those at Camp Verde fell into the hands of Confederates in 1861 and the herd gradually scattered. After the war, any project associated with the name of Jefferson Davis was discredited, and no one ever attempted to revive the idea. The army mule continued to enjoy his customary supremacy.

Part III

THE CIVIL WAR

With the establishment of other posts along the El Paso road, Fort Davis relinquished some of the responsibility for guarding it to the sister stations. Colonel Seawell lost one company to Fort Hudson in 1857 and another to Fort Quitman in 1858. By the summer of 1860 only two companies of the Eighth, six officers and 124 men, garrisoned Fort Davis, and in July Colonel Seawell moved the regimental headquarters and staff to San Antonio.[1] With the approach of Civil War in the spring of 1861, Capt. Edward D. Blake and Company H, Eighth Infantry, alone held the post on the Limpia--and he looked forward to entering the Confederate service.

The Surrender of Fort Davis

The Texas Secession Convention met at Austin on January 28, 1861, and thereafter events moved rapidly to the formal withdrawal of the state from the Union on March 4. Over the vigorous objections of Gov. Sam Houston, the state formally entered the Confederacy on March 23. As early as February, however, three commissioners appointed by the Secession Convention's Committee of Public Safety had demanded of the department commander, Brig. Gen. David E. Twiggs,

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1. Tabular statements compiled by the Adjutant General of the Army showing the garrisons of each post in the Department of Texas are reproduced in the annual Reports of the Secretary of War, 1854-60. Colonel Seawell was preparing to leave Fort Davis when Lieutenant Echols and his camels arrived on July 10, 1860. See Echols' Diary, 43-44.

surrender of all Federal military property in Texas ($3 million worth), and the evacuation of all United States troops. Sympathetic to the Southern cause, and unable to get a clear directive from his superiors, Twiggs met this demand on February 18. For this act he was dismissed from the Army on March 1, 1861.

On February 24 the first of a series of orders governing surrender of the forts on the Lower Road came out of department headquarters. Early in April Capt. I. D. Reeve and his command evacuated Fort Bliss and marched east, collecting the garrison of Fort Quitman enroute. On April 13 Captain Blake and his company abandoned Fort Davis and joined Reeve. E. P. Webster and Diedrick Dutchover, stagecoach drivers who had settled in the Davis Mountains, remained in charge of the fort pending arrival of Confederate troops.[2] Reeve's command grew as he paused at Forts Stockton, Lancaster, and Hudson.

Meanwhile, war had broken out with the firing on Fort Sumter. Col. H. E. McCulloch, who commanded some 500 hastily recruited state troops, secured authority from the Confederate Secretary of War at Montgomery to seize Reeve's command, now numbering 10 officers and 377 men. Early in May, as they approached San Antonio, McCulloch took them into custody as prisoners of war. Some of the officers

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2. Barry Scobee, Old Fort Davis (San Antonio, 1947), 46.

joined the Confederacy, and the rest of the command was later exchanged.[3]

Detachments of 10 to 20 men each were detailed from McCulloch's force to garrison the forts evacuated by the Federals, and one such group went to Fort Davis.[4] It seems to have been replaced in late June, however, by a company of the Second Regiment of Texas Mounted Rifles. Lt. Col. John R. Baylor led this regiment west on the Lower Road to Fort Bliss, then moved north to invade New Mexico. He established the Confederate Territory of Arizona, with capital at Mesilla, New Mexico, in late July 1861. Small units remained at the forts on the Lower Road to protect Baylor's line of supply and communication. Company D, Second Texas Mounted Rifles, commanded by Lt. Reuben E. Mays and Lt. W. P. White held Fort Davis.

The Mays Massacre

Throughout the Civil War, the Confederates attempted to cultivate the friendship of the western tribes and to encourage them to make war on the Unionists. One beneficiary of this policy was a Mescalero chief named Nicholas, who lived in the Davis Mountains. He and his people drew rations at Fort Davis during the summer of 1861 and

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3. The War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Ser. I, Vol. I, 502, 594-636. (Hereafter O. R.); W. C. Holden, "Frontier Defense in Texas During the Civil War," West Texas Historical Association Year Book, IV (June 1928), 16-19.

4. Holden, "Frontier Defense During Civil War," 17.

professed great friendship for the Southerners. When Colonel Baylor reached Fort Davis enroute to New Mexico sometime in June, these Indians gathered at the fort to make a treaty with the soldier chief. Baylor in fact had instructions to conclude such a pact, but there was more urgent business at El Paso, where United States troops were thought to be menacing Fort Bliss from New Mexico, and he hurried on.

In late July, however, James McCarthy, sutler at Fort Davis, accompanied Nicholas by stage to El Paso. Baylor and the leading citizens of the town wined and dined the chief and loaded him down with presents. He responded with "abundant expressions of friendship," and made his mark on a treaty with the Confederate States of America. Nicholas and McCarthy boarded the stage and headed back towards Fort Davis. The coach stopped at Point of Rocks, a few miles west of the fort, to water the mules. McCarthy had laid his two pistols on the seat. Nicholas grabbed them, jumped from the coach, and disappeared in the hills before the white men could recover from their surprise. Several days later Nicholas and his warriors swept down on the fort, stole part of the horse herd, killed a number of cattle, and headed south towards the Big Bend.[5]

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5. Baylor to Maj. Gen. J. B. Magruder, Houston, Dec. 29, 1862, O. R., Ser. I, Vol. XVI, 914-18; clippings of articles from the El Paso Herald, c. 1902-1905, by George W. Baylor, brother of John R. Baylor, quoted in E. E. Townsend, "The Mays Massacre," West Texas Historical and Scientific Society Publications, Bulletin 48 (Alpine, 1933), 30-33.

On August 5 the post commander, Lt. Reuben E. Mays, set out in pursuit of Nicholas with 14 men, including a Mexican guide, Juan Fernandez. Mays picked up the trail and followed it into the Big Bend. On the 11th the detachment overhauled the Apaches and recovered 100 horses without a fight. But the next day Nicholas stopped running. He posted 80 to 100 warriors among the rocks on either side of a canyon through which the trail ran. Mays and his handful of men rode into the trap. When the smoke lifted all of the soldiers were dead and the Mexican guide was well on his way back to Fort Davis.

Juan told the story of the disaster to Lieutenant White at Fort Davis. White ordered out a detachment of 19 men and sent Juan to Fort Stockton for more troops. Capt. William Adams and his company from Stockton met the soldiers from Davis at Burgess Water Hole, near modern Alpine, and the combined command took up the trail of Lieutenant Mays. At length they reached the battlefield. It was littered with debris of the fight, but only one body could be found. What the Apaches did with the others remains a mystery. Nicholas, of course, had long since crossed the Rio Grande into Mexico, and the Confederates returned to their stations at Davis and Stockton.[6]

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6. Townsend, "The Mays Massacre," 29-43; Baylor to Van Dorn, Fort Bliss, Aug. 25, 1861, O. R., Ser. I, V, 4, 25-26.

The Mays tragedy ended the brief honeymoon of Confederates and Mescaleros. Thereafter, Colonel Baylor recalled, "outrages were committed frequently; the mails were robbed; in one or two instances the passengers were found hanging up by their heels, their heads within a few inches of a slow fire, and they thus horribly roasted to death. Others were found tied to the wheels of the coach, which had been burned."[7] The Confederates mounted no campaign against the marauders. They were in West Texas for one reason, to support an invasion of Union New Mexico, and the small units at the forts along the Lower Road remained on the defensive.

Abandonment of Fort Davis

While Baylor and his regiment held Mesilla, Brig. Gen. Henry H. Sibley organized a force at San Antonio to carry the invasion north into Colorado. During October and November 1861, Sibley's Brigade, the Fourth, Fifth, and Seventh Texas Cavalry, made its way by squadrons over the Lower Road, pausing at Forts Clark, Lancaster, Stockton, Davis, and Quitman.[8] Sibley took command at Fort Bliss on December 14 and moved north up the Rio Grande. Defeated by Colorado Volunteers at Glorieta Pass in March 1862, ragged, footsore, and destitute from the circuitous retreat

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7. O. R., Ser. I, XVI, 916.

8. Martin H. Hall, "The Formation of Sibley's Brigade and the March to New Mexico," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, LXI, 3 (January, 1958), 381-405.

over Apache-infested deserts and mountains, the remnants of the brigade were back at Fort Bliss by May. Many of the wounded were sent to Fort Davis, which became a medical receiving station, while Sibley hung on at Fort Bliss. In July 1862 advance units of the California Volunteers, Brig. Gen. James H. Carleton commanding, reached the Rio Grande. Sibley had no choice but to withdraw once more. His decimated regiments passed Fort Davis in early August, taking Lieutenant White's garrison with them. Local tradition holds that Sibley buried the last of his howitzers in the mountains west of the fort.

The California Column advanced cautiously down the Rio Grande from Fort Bliss in mid-August 1862. On the 22nd General Carleton sent Capt. John C. Cremony and a company of cavalry to hoist over Fort Quitman "the national colors, the old Stars and Stripes" and thus have the post once more "consecrated to the United States." He ordered Capt. Edmond D. Shirland to lead his company of the First California Volunteer Cavalry to Fort Davis and perform the same ceremony.[9]

Shirland found Eagle Springs clogged with refuse and carrion and Van Horn's Wells entirely filled in. He therefore sent his lieutenant back with most of the command, and himself continued to Fort Davis with 20 men. He reached the deserted post on August 27.

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9. General Order 16, Headquarters Column from California, Aug. 22, 1862, O. R., Ser. I, IX, 577.

Apaches had burned some of the buildings and generally wrecked the post. In the Butterfield Station Shirland found a dead Confederate, a bullet and an arrow in the head and one in the arm. The Captain believed him to have been left behind, sick, by the retreating Confederates and finished off by the Indians. The troops raised the United States flag over the quarters of the commanding officer and left it there for a day while writing down a detailed description of the fort and its condition.

The Californians left Fort Davis on August 30. The next day, 10 miles west of El Muerto, five Apaches appeared bearing a white flag. Captain Shirland tried to talk with them, but soon saw that they were delaying to gain time for 25 to 30 mounted warriors and another large group of footmen to surround his 20 cavalrymen. He broke off the conference and his men put spurs to their horses. The mounted Apaches gave chase, pursuers and pursued exchanging fire at a gallop for several miles. Four Apaches were killed and about 20 wounded (according to the Captain's count) before the Indians called off the fight and fell back to the Davis Mountains. Two of Shirland's men stopped pistol bullets in the fray but were not seriously hurt.[10]

For the remainder of the Civil War, the Mescaleros enjoyed undisputed possession of West Texas. The Confederates devised a

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10. Shirland to Cutler, Camp on the Rio Grande, Sept. 2, 1862, O. R., Ser. I, IX, 577-79.

line of frontier defense to protect the settlements east of the Pecos, and organized the Texas Frontier Regiment to protect it. General Carleton, who established headquarters in Santa Fe, had his hands full fighting Indians in New Mexico without worrying about West Texas. There was little travel on the Lower Road, and the scattering of Mexicans who remained in the trans-Pecos were left to defend themselves until the Americans patched up their fratricidal quarrel and once more looked west.

Part IV

REACTIVATION OF FORT DAVIS

For almost two years after Lee's surrender at Appomattox the Texas frontier and the road to El Paso lay exposed to Comanche and Apache raiders. United States troops had returned, but were too occupied with imposing Reconstruction rule on resisting Texans to devote much attention to Indian affairs. Attacks on frontier settlements and the El Paso road mounted in frequency, and at last, in the spring of 1867, the military authorities decided to reactivate the chain of frontier forts and the line of defense along the El Paso road.[1]

The Ninth U. S. Cavalry, one of two new colored cavalry regiments, drew Fort Davis. Under the Lieutenant Colonel of the regiment, Brevet Maj. Gen. Wesley Merritt, Troops C, F, H, and I marched from San Antonio in June 1867 and reached the abandoned and wrecked post on the Limpia on June 29. On July 1 it was officially reactivated.[2]

Rebuilding the Fort

The Fort Davis Military Reservation was again leased from John James for $900 a year.[3] On the prairie at the mouth of the

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1. J. Evetts Haley, Fort Concho and the Texas Frontier (San Angelo, 1952), 120-21.

2. Merritt to Actg. Adjt. Francis Moore, Fort Davis, July 1, 1867, Fort Davis Letters Sent (hereafter FDLS) Vol. I, RG 98, National Archives.

3. Scobee Ms.

canyon in which ruins of the old fort still stood, Lieutenant Colonel Merritt began building a fine stone post such as Colonel Seawell had envisioned in the old days. A row of 19 sets of officers' quarters would face, across a 500-foot parade ground, another row of six barracks, with offices and other utility buildings fronting the parade ground at either end. Although only a few buildings were finally built of stone, and some of the structures originally planned never emerged from the drawing board, the post that took shape proved commodious and vastly more comfortable than its predecessor of the pre-war years.[4]

About 200 civilian carpenters and masons went to work on Fort Davis. By March 1869, almost two years later, they had finished about half of the buildings and had begun work on the rest. On the 20th, however, the Department Quartermaster, Maj. J. D. Bingham, inspected the post and ordered all work halted. No reason is apparent, but it was probably an economy move. Thereafter, the fort expanded sporadically as limited construction funds became available. Not until the middle 1880's did it assume its final form. During the period of active field operations, therefore,

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4. Unless otherwise cited, this section is drawn from the Medical History of Fort Davis. This document is a month by month narrative history of significant events written by the post surgeon. It covers the period December 1868 to March 1882. During the tenure of Dr. Daniel Weisel, December 1868 to May 1872, it is an unusually complete and valuable record of the formative years of the second Fort Davis.

the garrison occupied ten sets of officers' quarters and two barracks, and discharged the routine duties of the post in limited office and utility space.

Although a detailed description of the physical layout that finally emerged is set forth in Appendix I, the long and, to the post surgeon, very trying ordeal of obtaining adequate hospital facilities is of particular interest. Merritt's plans called for a large stone hospital north of the parade ground, and the walls had risen eight feet when Major Bingham stopped construction. Dr. J. H. McMahon had meanwhile devised an expedient. In return for a promise of medical treatment should the need arise, the civilian mechanics and laborers contributed money and labor to the construction of a temporary hospital, which was completed during the summer of 1868. Situated behind officers' row, it was an adobe building with mud roof and floor and windows of cotton cloth. The doctor estimated its cost to the Government at $120.

Four years later the bare walls of the new hospital still stood unfinished, and Dr. Daniel Weisel worked in the temporary hospital. For three years it had required constant repair. The roof leaked in every rain and the cloth windows made the four small rooms impossible to heat in cold weather. Heavy rains in July 1872 flooded the interior and soaked the patients. Tarpaulins were stretched over the roof but water poured in through the windows. Dr. Thomas Landers warned that the building might at any time collapse on the

patients, and in fact the following month the storeroom roof did fall in, thus requiring a board of survey to fix responsibility for the resulting damage to medical supplies.

Every rain produced a new crisis, and successive post surgeons fairly begged for a new hospital. Finally, in 1874, six years after erection of the temporary structure, authority came from department headquarters to begin work on a new hospital. It was to house only 12 beds because the "healthful climate" made more unnecessary.[5] With elation that can be imagined, the surgeon in 1874 recorded in the Medical History, "The work on the new hospital was commenced Monday, Oct. 26th and has continued to the present date under the personal supervision of Col. George L. Andrews, 25th Infantry, and taking into consideration the limited force available, has progressed with considerable rapidity."

Probably because the approved plans called for a less pretentious edifice than had been started in 1869, a new site, in the canyon behind officers' row, was selected. Of adobe with stone corners, the building was finished sometime during 1875. The walls of the uncompleted hospital north of the parade ground were probably incorporated in infantry barracks later built on the site.

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5. "Chronological Notes Concerning the Affairs of Fort Davis," complied from records in the National Archives, Fort Davis Historical Society.

Men and Events, 1867-1882

The 15 years from 1867 to 1882 spanned the period of active operations against hostile Indians in West Texas. The history of Fort Davis during these years is the history of four regiments, all colored with white officers--the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry and the 24th and 25th Infantry. Colonel Merritt lost two of his four companies to newly reactivated Fort Quitman in 1868 and was reinforced by two companies of the 41st Infantry, which in 1869 was consolidated with the 38th to form the 24th. Thereafter, with occasional fluctuations, the garrison of Fort Davis consisted of two companies of cavalry and two of infantry, 10 to 15 officers and 200 to 400 enlisted men. The Ninth Regiment supplied the cavalry until 1876, when the Tenth took over and served until 1885. The infantry came from the 24th until 1870, from both the 24th and the 25th until 1872, and from the 25th from 1872 until 1880, when the 24th returned.[6]

As at all frontier forts, post commanders rotated with great frequency. Three in particular stand forth as unusually attentive to the condition of the post, welfare of the troops, and active prosecution of operations against hostile Indians. Lieutenant Colonel Merritt, who laid out the new post and built most of it,

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6. Tabular statements of the garrisons of each post compiled by the Adjutant General of the Army are printed annually in the Reports of the Secretary of War.

served from July 1867 until August 1869. He had been one of Sheridan's most brilliant cavalry leaders during the Civil War, later made an impressive reputation against the Sioux on the northern plains, and finally rose to command United States forces in the Philippines following the Spanish-American War. Brevet Maj. Gen. Edward Hatch, Colonel of the Ninth Cavalry, commanded Fort Davis from December 1869 to December 1870, and ten years later played an important role in the Victorio War. Lt. Col. William R. Shafter, 24th Infantry, replaced Hatch and served until June 1872. Dubbed "Pecos Bill" for his Texas campaigns, he later led the American Army in Cuba during the Spanish-American War. Others who commanded the fort for longer than a few months were Maj. Z. R. Bliss, who had been one of Seawell's officers at Davis back in the 1850's, and Col. George L. Andrews, 25th Infantry, who commanded from 1872 to 1873 and 1874 to 1878. Between 1878 and 1880 the command passed from one captain to another every few months. In 1880 Lt. Col. J. E. Yard took over, and the following year Shafter, now Colonel of the First Infantry, returned for a short time.[7]

Life at Fort Davis differed little from life at other frontier posts of the 1860's and 1870's. The Medical History provides an usual mosaic of the daily routine of Fort Davis as well as a chronicle of events that disturbed the routine. Scouts, patrols, and campaigns

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7. Ibid. and Medical History.

were part of the routine for the entire period, and will be dealt with in the following section. Here the intent is to convey an impression, derived chiefly from the Medical History, of what life was like at Fort Davis during the 15 years following the Army's return to the Limpia.

For officers and enlisted men alike, official activities in garrison followed the same monotonous pattern day after day. They drilled, practiced target firing, cared for weapons and horses, policed the buildings and grounds, and performed a variety of fatigue labors. Officers and noncommissioned officers supervised every detail. Lieutenants detailed as commissary and quartermaster officers, housed in offices and warerooms north and south of the corrals, carried out the unheroic but necessary function of keeping the soldiers fed, clothed, quartered, and supplied. Presiding over the whole from executive offices strategically located at the north edge of the parade ground sat the Commanding Officer and, in an adjoining office, the powerful voices of his authority, the adjutant and the Sergeant Major.

In January 1864 a typical day at Fort Davis, regulated by the orderly trumpeter at headquarters, went like this:

Reveille	Sunrise
Stable Call	Immediately after
Sick Call	7:15 a.m.
Breakfast Call	7:20 a.m.
Fatigue Call	7:50 a.m.
Grazing Call	-- a.m.
Guard Mount	8:45 a.m.

Water Mount	9:30 a.m.
Drill Mount	10:30 a.m.
Recall from Drill	11:30 a.m.
Recall from Fatigue and Dinner	12:00 noon
Sergeant's Call	12:00 noon
Fatigue Call	12:45 p.m.
Drill Call	1:00 p.m.
Recall from Drill	2:00 p.m.
Water Call	3:00 p.m.
Stable Call	4:30 p.m.
Recall from Fatigue	5:10 p.m.
Dress Parade and Retreat	5:45 p.m.
Tattoo	8:00 p.m.
Taps	8:30 p.m.

The troops ate their meals in buildings housing kitchen and messroom adjoining each set of barracks. Staple fare had changed little since the 1850's. In 1877 the meat ration consisted of three-tenths bacon and seven-tenths fresh beef, although the surgeon in this year recommended that two-tenths mutton replace a like portion of beef. Beans and flour were purchased locally, and 600 loaves of bread daily came from the bakery on the northeast corner of the parade ground. Scurvy swept the garrison in the spring of 1868, and Dr. Weisel stressed the necessity of including plenty of fresh vegetables in the diet. In 1869 he talked Merritt into starting a post garden. Two in fact were planted, one of four acres for the post, on the Limpia northeast of the fort, and one of three acres for the hospital, at the spring southeast of the corrals. These gardens flourished year after year until abandonment of the fort in 1891. Some of the officers' wives kept chickens, but Major Bliss thought they made the post look decidedly unmilitary and decreed that "On and after Feb. 1, 1874, no fowls will be kept

within the limits of this garrison." Dr. Weisel thought it worth noting that, unlike white troops, colored soldiers customarily ate their entire ration.

Water for all purposes was hauled from the Limpia in water wagons. The troops suffered from chronic dysentery, and everyone blamed the water. Dr. Weisel, however, insisted that it was pure, and that "the water is made a shield of carelessness and neglect in enforcing necessary hygienic and sanitary measures." Nevertheless, in 1875 the spring was substituted for the Limpia as the source of water. By 1878 the drainage ditch leading to the spring had become "the resort of pigs" (chickens were probably back too, now that Major Bliss had left), and the water took on impurities. Finally, in 1883, the fort got a new water system, with a well and steam pump on the Limpia and pipes leading into the post.

The state of sanitation and hygiene was a constant source of worry to Dr. Weisel, although his successors seem not to have been nearly as concerned. He complained that the squad rooms in the barracks were "very untidy, dirty and disorderly," that the kitchens and messrooms were equally as dirty and untidy," that the sinks were "in a very bad condition," and that "offal and slops" were not hauled away as often as necessary. He regretted that a succession of short-term commanders had permitted the superior conditions maintained by Merritt and Hatch to degenerate badly. Weisel also tried to get orders issued requiring every soldier to bathe at least

twice a week during the summer months in Limpia Creek, but appears not to have been successful. "The difficulties of a medical officer with an efficient and conscientious discharge of his duties in view at a frontier post can only be fully estimated by actual and trying experience," and, he added, "much more might be said."

For diversion the troops had a band, a post library, a post chapel, and a post school, usually presided over by the chaplain. But the chief off-duty passtimes were gambling, drinking, and sampling the pleasures of the little village of Chihuahua, just off the reservation. These led to a good deal of bloodshed not induced by hostile Indians. In October 1870, for example, someone shot Pvt. Anderson Merriweather, Ninth Cavalry Band, with an army pistol. The bullet tore up his stomach and Dr. Weisel could not save him. Several months later Pvt. John Williams of Troop K got into an altercation with another soldier and was stabbed by a butcher knife and killed instantly. Similar incidents occurred regularly. Diversions took their toll on officers, too. On January 16, 1870, Capt. James G. Birney died "of acute inflamation of the stomach produced by intemperance."

Major Bliss, the officer who disliked chickens, tried to put a stop to some of this sort of trouble. In November 1873 he issued two general orders, one forbidding gambling on the post, the other forbidding enlisted men from "carrying concealed weapons of any description, especially knives, razors, slingshots and pistols."

There were also more wholesome forms of amusement. Especially did the garrison look forward to the annual fourth of July holiday. After the ceremonies commemorating American independence, the men, freed of duty requirements, played baseball and organized competition in foot racing and wheelbarrow racing. An accident marred the celebration of 1873. A soldier fired the salute gun before Pvt. John Jordan had withdrawn the rammer. Jordon received severe powder burns on the face and got speared in the arm by the broken rammer.

A few events occurred that were somewhat removed from mere routine. During the early hours of December 19, 1873, fire broke out in the adjutant's office. The garrison turned out and labored for several hours as firemen. They saved the 1,200 volumes in the regimental library of the 25th Infantry, but all the property of the Sergeant Major went up in flames. Pieces of charred tentpoles discovered in a hole under the floor strongly suggested arson, but the arsonist was never identified. Two terse entries tell a big story. February 14, 1881: "a daughter was born to Capt. N. Nolan and wife, 10th Cavalry." June 5, 1881: "Mrs. Nolan, wife of Capt. Nicholas Nolan, died." The last entry in the Medical History, March 22, 1882, recorded perhaps the outstanding non-routine event of the 15 years: General of the Army William T. Sherman and his staff arrived to inspect Fort Davis.

Field Operations, 1867-77

When the troops returned to Fort Davis in 1867, they found the Mescalero Apaches running wild. Although the Guadalupe and

Davis Mountains bands had continued to raid in Mexico and on the Lower Road, the bulk of the tribe had been subdued by the campaign of 1855 and confined to the Fort Stanton reservation. When Union troops abandoned the fort in 1862, however, the Mescaleros broke loose again. After the Confederates evacuated New Mexico, Gen. James H. Carleton sent Col. Kit Carson to reoccupy Fort Stanton and to war on the Mescaleros. The campaign was successful, and in 1863 they were confined to a new reservation on the Pecos River in eastern New Mexico and Fort Sumner established to keep watch on them. But the following year Carleton also settled the recently conquered Navajos on the same reservation. The two tribes did not get on well at all, and in November 1865 all of the Apaches fled. By 1867, when Merritt and the Ninth Cavalry reached Fort Davis, the entire Mescalero tribe was once more at war.[8] Comanches, too, occasionally found their way south from Indian Territory to prey on the El Paso road.

The first responsibility of Fort Davis was to protect the El Paso road. With the Civil War over, the flow of traffic resumed its pre-war level. Ben Ficklin provided scheduled stagecoach service on the Lower Road between San Antonio and El Paso. Detachments from Fort Davis regularly patrolled the road and at times furnished escorts for trains or coaches between Forts Stockton and Davis

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8. Sonnichsen, Mescalero Apaches, Chs. 6 and 7.

and between Davis and Quitman. Small detachments, regularly rotated, guarded the mail stations at Barilla Springs, El Muerto, and Van Horn's Wells.[9]

The Apaches delighted in running off stock belonging either to the Army or to the Ficklin stage lines. A detachment always went in pursuit, frequently recovered the stolen animals, and occasionally had the good fortune to kill one or two of the thieves. In September 1868 a pursuing column from Fort Davis had extremely good fortune.

About 200 Indians raided a train near Fort Stockton and headed south towards Mexico with the stock. Merritt sent Lt. Patrick Cusack and 60 men of the Ninth Cavalry, together with 10 civilian volunteers, to chase the Indians. In the Santiago Mountains of the Big Bend Cusack overhauled his quarry and attacked. Although badly outnumbered, the soldiers won a decisive victory. The Apaches lost 25 killed and as many wounded, 200 head of stock, and all of their camp equippage. Two soldiers received severe wounds. Cusack recovered two Mexican children, captives of the Apaches, and returned with a baby Indian girl.[10]

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9. "Record of Fort Davis," compiled from records in the National Archives, Fort Davis Historical Society, passim; Merritt to Asst. Adjt. Gen. Fifth Mil. Dist. Austin, Fort Davis, July 5, 1869, FDLS Vol. II, RG 98, National Archives.

10. "Record of Fort Davis," Sept. 1868; Merritt to Asst. Adjt. Gen. Fifth Mil. Dist. Austin, Fort Davis, Sept. 15, 1868, FDLS Vol. I, RG 98 National Archives; Report of the Secretary of War, 1868, House Ex. Doc. No. 1, 40th Cong., 3rd sess., 716.

Colonel Hatch, who relieved Merritt in 1869, believed in offensive action--seeking out and destroying the enemy in his home country. During the single year of 1870 he mounted three separate expeditions against the Mescaleros hidden in the Guadalupe Mountains. The records so far discovered reveal few details of these campaigns, but they may well have played some part in inducing the Mescaleros, the following year, to settle once more at Fort Stanton.

The first expedition, six troops of the Ninth Cavalry, including two from Fort Davis, rendezvoused at Fort Quitman in January 1870. Under Capt. F. S. Dodge, they marched north and, on January 20, surprised a ranchería in the Guadalupe Mountains, killed about 25 Apaches and captured their stock and camp. The troops were back in garrison by the last of the month. In April Lt. Gustavus Valois and 27 men from Davis joined a battalion formed by Maj. A. P. Morrow at Fort Quitman. The troops again struck at the Guadalupe Mountains, but this time killed only one Indian. Finally, in December, Major Morrow led another command, including two troops from Davis, back to the Guadalupes, with what result has not been discovered.[11]

Lieutenant Colonel Shafter followed Hatch, and in the summer of 1871 turned what started out to be a routine pursuit of raiders into a remarkable exploration of the virtually unknown southern

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11. "Record of Fort Davis," Jan. 1870; Capt. John W. French to Actg. Asst. Insp. Gen. Dept. of Texas San Antonio, Fort Davis, Jan. 28, 1871, FDLS Vol. II, RG 98, National Archives.

reaches of the Staked Plains. On June 17 a party of 15 Comanches relieved the Army of 41 mules and three horses at Barilla Springs, north of Fort Davis. Shafter mounted all of his available cavalry, 24 troopers of the Ninth, and sent to Fort Stockton for another 39. Led by Shafter himself, the combined command set out on the trail of the Comanches, which led northeast towards the Staked Plains. For two weeks, following one trail after another, Shafter marched to and fro in the vast emptiness near the southeastern corner of New Mexico. He penetrated the rolling dunes of the Monahans Sands, which travellers had always avoided. The horses grew gaunt and weak from the wearing service, but Shafter refused to give up. On one very long day the command marched 70 miles without water. He discovered a village of about 200 Indians, but the inhabitants scattered before the tired horses could carry their riders within attacking distance.

Shafter did capture a Mescalero squaw, however, and from her, through an interpreter, gained information that threw much light on Indian affairs. For one thing, she said, the Comanches and Mescaleros had just met in the White Sand Hills and concluded a peace. These tribes had always been enemies, and their alliance was an index of the intensity of their hostility to the white man. On the heartening side, the squaw told him that the Mescaleros were going west to Fort Stanton to give themselves up and settle on the reservation. Finally, explaining the bar lead stamped with the trademark of a St. Louis firm that Shafter found in the captured village, she said that traders from

New Mexico regularly came to the Staked Plains to trade with the Indians. Not until several years later did the true proportions of this Comanchero trade, and its role in supplying the hostile Comanches, fully dawn upon the military authorities in Texas.

His horses on the verge of collapse, Shafter reluctantly decided to return to Fort Davis, arriving on July 9 after 22 days in the field. He had killed no Indians but had done important service. For the first time since the war, a military expedition had penetrated the heart of the Staked Plains. Shafter had shown the Army that troops could campaign there and had brought back the geographical knowledge necessary for future operations. And, perhaps more important, he had shown the Indians that no longer could the Staked Plains be counted upon to afford refuge from pursuing bluecoats.[12]

J. Evetts Haley appropriately concluded:

> While there is a physical appropriateness in calling one of those useless bodies of water shimmering in the mirages of the Staked Plains by the name of Shafter Lake, the man who won the Spanish-American War in Cuba with a minimum loss of life deserves a more striking monument in this land of his seasoning than an alkali hole in the ground.[13]

Shafter's captive squaw had told the truth. The principal bands of Mescaleros in fact turned up at Fort Stanton in September 1871

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12. Shafter to Asst. Adjt. Gen. Dept. of Texas San Antonio, Fort Davis, July 18, 1871, FDLS Vol. II, RG 98, National Archives; Medical History of Fort Davis.

13. Haley, Fort Concho and the Texas Frontier, 167.

and agreed to live peaceably on the reservation. But not the bands farther south. Although the Davis Mountains group had apparently moved elsewhere, those in the Guadalupes and the Big Bend continued to terrorize West Texas. They attacked trains, killed isolated ranchers now trickling into the trans-Pecos, and occasionally ran off stock from the mail stations. A detachment from Fort Davis usually went in pursuit, but rarely with success.

Shafter believed that extensive scouting, even though no engagements were fought, produced valuable results. "My experience has been that Indians will not stay where they consider themselves liable to attacks," he informed his superiors, "and I believe the best way to rid the country of them . . . is to thoroughly scour the country with cavalry."[14] His scout to the Staked Plains in June 1871 seemed to support this thesis, and in October of the same year he led Troops I and K, Ninth Cavalry, and Company G, 25th Infantry, out of Fort Davis to apply the technique to the Big Bend. Like the Staked Plains, the area of the present Big Bend National Park had not been "thoroughly scoured" by military expeditions. Again Shafter killed no Indians. But he found plenty of evidence of their use of the Big Bend as a sanctuary, and added considerably to geographical knowledge of the country.[15]

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14. Shafter to Asst. Adjt. Gen. Dept. of Texas, Fort Davis, Feb. 12, 1872, FDLS Vol. III, RG 98, National Archives.

15. Ibid., Feb. 1, 1872.

Perhaps more than coincidentally, no sooner had the command returned to Fort Davis in November than an Apache chief sent word from Presidio del Norte that he wished to surrender. The chief had gone to Presidio to negotiate with the Mexican authorities for release of some children of his band who were held captive. Shafter sent Lt. I. H. McDonald to receive the surrender. But the Alcalde of Presidio warned the chief that his departure would prejudice release of the children. McDonald returned to Fort Davis empty-handed. Shafter agreed with him that "the local authorities at Del Norte do not want [the Apaches] to make or keep peace with the U. S."[16] The Mexican population gained its living largely by supplying United States Army posts.

Having scouted the Staked Plains and the Big Bend, Shafter laid plans early in 1872 for further testing his theory. He intended during the spring to spend a month combing the Guadalupe Mountains and another two months exploring the long stretch of broken country along the Rio Grande west of the Pecos.[17] But in March 1872 the perpetual rotation of command overtook Shafter, and his replacement did not prove as energetic.

Fort Davis continued to respond to depredations with pursuing detachments, but this represented an essentially defensive attitude.

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16. Shafter to McDonald, Dec. 8, 1871; Shafter to Asst. Adjt. Gen. Dept. of Texas, Jan. 4, 1872, FDLS Vol. III, RG 98, National Archives.

17. Shafter to Asst. Adjt. Gen. Dept. of Texas, Fort Davis, Feb. 12, 1872, FDLS Vol. III, RG 98, National Archives.

The raiders grew bolder. In May 1876 and again in July they killed Mexicans within pistol shot of the fort. The garrison took on added responsibility with the abandonment, in 1877, of Fort Quitman. During this year, too, depredations occurred with mounting frequency. Twice, men were killed within four miles of Fort Davis. Stagecoaches were attacked, the drivers occasionally killed. Mutilated corpses of travelers were found all along the road from the Davis Mountains to San Elizario, on the Rio Grande below El Paso. The only explanation for the growing number of atrocities seemed to be participation by the "peaceful" Mescaleros at Fort Stanton. The agent at Fort Stanton protested such charges, but the troops at Fort Davis, during 1878, followed the trails of many parties of marauders directly to the Fort Stanton reservation.[18] The quickening tempo of hostile activity reached a climax in the Victorio War of 1878-81.

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18. For a catalog of depredations during 1877 and 1878 see Report of the Secretary of War, 1878, House Ex. Doc. No. 1, 45th Cong., 3rd sess., 82; and P. H. Sheridan, Record of Engagements with Hostile Indians within the Military Division of the Missouri from 1868 to 1882 (Washington, 1882), excerpts reprinted as "Record of Engagements with Hostile Indians in Texas 1868 to 1882," West Texas Historical Association Year Book, IX (October, 1933), 112-114.

Part V

THE VICTORIO WAR

In April 1878 the growing threat to settlers and travelers in West Texas led the department commander, Brig. Gen. E. O. C. Ord, to strengthen and tighten the military organization of this portion of his command. He formed the District of the Pecos, embracing all of trans-Pecos Texas. He designated as district commander Col. Benjamin H. Grierson, with headquarters at Fort Concho, and instructed him to cover the district with a network of temporary subposts. Troops assigned to these stations were to control Indian movements by watching the principal water holes; to protect the mail route, ranches, settlements, and surveying parties of the Texas Pacific and Southern Pacific Railroads; and to gain intimate knowledge of the country making up the district. Fort Concho staffed two such posts, and Forts Stockton and Davis three each. The three maintained by Fort Davis were at Eagle Springs, Seven Springs, and Pine Springs, the latter an abandoned Butterfield station in the Guadalupe Mountains.

At this time three companies of the 25th Infantry and three troops of the Tenth Cavalry, Grierson's regiment, garrisoned Fort Davis. The three cavalry captains, Charles D. Viele, Louis H. Carpenter, and Thomas C. Lebo, were unusually aggressive and capable officers with long records of frontier service. With some participation by the infantry, their commands, operating mainly from the subposts,

earned Fort Davis the highest scouting mileage for 1878 in the Department of Texas--6,724 miles. They occasionally skirmished with a raiding party but more often simply marched great distances. This activity, in General Ord's judgment, was responsible for the reduction in the number of depredations in West Texas in 1878. The knowledge of the country thus gained, moreover, was to prove extremely useful in 1879 and 1880.[1]

Outbreak of Hostilities

The outrages in the Fort Davis area traceable to Fort Stanton Indians originated in an explosive situation that had developed at the reservation. During the early 1870's white settlements multiplied in New Mexico, and soon ringed the Mescaleros. Whites and reds regarded each other with suspicion, and the constant tension led to occasional bloodshed. The anarchy produced by the cattlemen's war that broke out in neighboring Lincoln County in 1878 had its effect on the Indians. To make matters worse, the Mescaleros suffered from factional quarrels among themselves. Small war parties, using the reservation as a base and a refuge, raided in Texas and Mexico. At least two bands broke away to join their kinsmen in the Guadalupe Mountains and the Big Bend. All that was needed to transform the

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1. Report of the Secretary of War, 1879, House Ex. Doc. No. 1, 46th Cong., 2nd sess., 90-96, 113-114. A tabular statement of scouts by troops from Fort Davis is printed on pp. 103-106.

uncoordinated raids into a full-scale outbreak was an aggressive leader. At this time Victorio appeared on the scene.[2]

In leadership and mastery of the arts of Apache warfare, Victorio ranked all of the Apache leaders, including Geronimo. He had learned the business from Mangas Coloradas himself. Victorio and the core of his following were not Mescaleros but Warm Springs Apaches and, not without provocation, had made a great deal of trouble for several years. Their home country was in the Cañada Alamosa, just west of the Rio Grande. In 1877 the Government decided to consolidate them with other Apaches at San Carlos Reservation in Arizona, a decision decidedly objectionable to the Warms Springs people. The mistake soon became apparent to officials of the Indian Bureau, and in August 1878 they moved these people back to New Mexico. No sooner had the transfer been accomplished, however, than orders came to return the band to San Carlos. Victorio had had enough, and the following April he took to the hills.

In June 1879 Victorio showed up at the Mescalero Agency. Old Nana, with a few Chiricahua followers who had decamped with Victorio, had also put in an appearance. While awaiting a decision from Washington on Victorio's petition to settle on the Mescalero Reservation

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2. Unless otherwise cited. This section is drawn from Sonnichsen, Mescalero Apaches, Chs. 8 and 9; and Paul Wellman, Death on Horseback (Philadelphia, 1947), 365-71.

these alien Indians fomented considerable trouble, repeatedly staged tiswin sprees, and treated Agent S. A. Russell with contempt. Russell finally sent for troops, but before they arrived Victorio and Nana, joined by the wilder Mescaleros, pulled out and headed west. Leaving a trail of destruction through southern New Mexico, they found safety from pursuit in Old Mexico.

By September 1879 Victorio was back in New Mexico on a recruiting expedition, hoping by successful raids to inspire reservation Indians to join him. On the fourth he fell upon the herd guard of a troop of the Ninth Cavalry at Ojo Caliente, killed eight soldiers, and made off with all 46 of the unit's horses. He murdered settlers and travelers and plundered ranches all over southern New Mexico. Warriors flocked from the reservation to follow his standard, and soon he had from 125 to 150 fighting men. Maj. A. P. Morrow got on his trail and fought several indecisive engagements before the hostiles slipped back into Mexico early in October.[3]

They camped in the Candelaria Mountains, from which they could watch the road to Chihuahua. In November 1879 a volunteer party of 15 citizens from Carrizal set out to find the enemy. Victorio saw them coming, and devised a clever ambush in a mountain pass through which the trail ran. The Mexicans had not the remotest chance, and

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3. Report of Brig. Gen. John Pope, Sept. 22, 1880, Report of the Secretary of War, 1880, House Ex. Doc. No. 1, 46th Cong., 3rd sess., 86-90.

every one of them was killed. Another group, numbering 14, rode forth to find out what had happened to their neighbors. They had discovered the scene of the tragedy and begun to bury the dead when Victorio's warriors, having carefully prepared the same trap, opened fire from above and annihilated the second party.[4]

The favorite Indian crossings of the Rio Grande lay between Fort Davis and El Paso. During the winter of 1879-1880 Captains Viele and Carpenter, operating from the subpost of Eagle Springs, systematically patrolled the river looking for sign that Victorio had crossed. Lt. George W. Baylor and a detachment of Texas Rangers based at Ysleta assisted. But Victorio stayed in Mexico all winter.[5]

Disarming the Agency Indians

In the spring of 1880 the commander of the District of New Mexico, Col. Edward Hatch, came south to take personal charge. Convinced that Victorio was drawing supplies and recruits from the Mescalero Reservation, he decided to disarm the agency Indians. He planned to march on the agency from the west, and his superiors

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4. The best account of Victorio's activities in Mexico is by a member of Baylor's Ranger detachment, which helped bury the dead of the Carrizal parties: James B. Gillette, Six Years With the Texas Rangers (San Antonio, 1925); see also Wellman, Death on Horseback, 374-79; and Walter P. Webb, The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense (Boston and New York, 1935), 397-99.

5. Report of the Secretary of War, 1880, 138.

in the Department of Missouri arranged with General Ord to have Colonel Grierson and five troops of the Tenth Cavalry converge from the east. April 12 was fixed as the date of arrival.

Grierson gathered in his command from their scattered stations. From Fort Davis Captain Lebo and K Troop joined the expedition, Carpenter and Viele remaining to cover the Rio Grande. Grierson moved up the Pecos into New Mexico. On April 6 he sent Captain Lebo and his troop to scout the Guadalupe Mountains. The next day he picked up an Indian trail. It led through the mountains, then north towards the agency. On the ninth he caught up with the quarry and attacked, killing a chief and capturing four squaws and a child. Lebo recovered a Mexican boy who had been taken captive near Presidio del Norte in March, which proved to him that these were hostile Indians, and discovered in the camp a quantity of provisions issued at the agency, which indicated that the hostiles were in fact drawing supplies at the reservation. The troop rejoined Grierson, and the command reached the agency on April 12, the appointed day.

Hatch had already arrived, more convinced than ever that the agency Indians were not as innocent as Agent Russell maintained. Marching towards the agency, he had encountered a large force of hostiles, probably under Victorio himself, in Hembrillo Canyon of the San Andres Mountains. After a bitter fight, the enemy escaped, but Hatch found agency identification tags on the bodies

of several warriors killed in the fight. This discovery reinforced his conviction that the Mescaleros at the agency must be neutralized.

Grierson wanted to surround the agency at once, disarm and dismount the men, and pack the whole off to Fort Stanton under guard. But Agent Russell said that he could persuade his charges to submit without such a show of force, and Hatch, reluctant to bring on a contest between military and civil authority, delayed day after day to give Russell a chance. By the 15th about 320 Indians had assembled at the foot of a mountain across the creek from the agency. Hatch decided that the disarming would take place on the 16th.

The next morning Lt. Charles B. Gatewood's company of Apache scouts, from Arizona, opened fire on a party of Indians driving a herd of horses, killing two Mescaleros. Gatewood contended that he had shot at Indians who had stolen stock and were attempting to escape. The agent claimed that they had gone out after stray animals and were driving them back to the agency when fired upon. Whoever was right, the effect was bad. By noon the Mescaleros had grown even more nervous and suspicious.

The plan was for Capt. Charles Steelhammer's company of the 15th Infantry to cross the creek to the Mescalero encampment and disarm the Indians. Grierson urged that his cavalry stay within supporting distance, but Hatch bowed to Russell's demand that only a small force be sent. In case he needed help, Steelhammer

would fire three shots in quick succession. At one p.m. the infantry marched across the stream.

Two o'clock came and went. Shortly afterward Grierson and Hatch observed a stir in the encampment. Soon a party of Indians started up the mountain slope across the valley, Chief Nautzila in the lead. Grierson asked to take the cavalry and bring them back, but Hatch thought the Chief himself was trying to pursuade his people to return. More and more Indians took to the mountains, and finally, at 2:30, the three signal shots announced that Steelhammer had lost control.

Hatch unleashed Grierson, and the Tenth charged across the creek. Part surrounded the village and the rest, carbines banging, swarmed up the mountain. The Indians had scattered in numerous small parties, but each found troops in pursuit. Several Indians were killed and a number wounded. Nautzila and about 250 people gave up and returned to the agency under guard, but between 30 and 50 made good their escape and probably joined Victorio.

Leaving a strong force to guard the agency, Hatch headed west after Victorio. Grierson combed the Guadalupe and Sacramento Mountains for a week, flushed several hostile parties, and, after a brief skirmish, killed a chief and captured his small group of followers.

The command left New Mexico on May 4, and reached Fort Davis four days later. Grierson had planned to spend a month or so

scouting west of the Davis Mountains. But orders had arrived transferring the entire 25th Infantry to Dakota, and the administrative details required the attention of the district commander. In exchange, Fort Davis received four companies of the 24th Infantry, Lt. Col. J. E. Yard commanding, but retained its three troops of the Tenth Cavalry.[6]

So far the soldiers of Fort Davis had played only supporting roles in the struggle against Victorio. In the next act they held the spotlight.

Grierson's Operations, July-August 1880

After the affair at Mescalero in April 1880, Victorio outran Colonel Hatch and escaped to Mexico, where he again set up headquarters in the Candelaria Mountains. Hatch knew that, once the hostiles had rested and replensihed their supplies, they would again enter the United States and probably head stright for the Mescalero country of southern New Mexico. He therefore asked that Colonel Grierson and the Tenth Cavalry once more be assigned to his district. Grierson protested. He wished instead to string his command along the Rio Grande west of Fort Davis, and thus transfer the battleground from New Mexico to Texas. This would avoid the

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6. Reports of Grierson and Hatch, Report of the Secretary of War, 1880, 93-98, 154-58. See also Thomas Cruse, Apache Days and After (Caldwell, 1941), Ch. 6, for a graphic description by one of Hatch's officers.

danger of leaving Texas unprotected and, he hoped, keep Victorio away from the Mescalero Reservation and the adjacent settlements. General Ord consulted with Lt. Gen. P. H. Sheridan, and on June 28 wired Grierson to go ahead with this plan.[7]

The Colonel immediately concentrated eight troops of his regiment at Fort Davis, and went there himself. He had also at his command the four companies of the 24th Infantry stationed at Davis, Troop K of the Eighth Cavalry, and a detachment of Pueblo scouts recruited at the old Indian towns of Socorro and Ysleta, below El Paso. Baylor's Texas Rangers, at Ysleta, stood ready to help. During the ensuing campaign Fort Davis served, as it had in 1855, as supply center and communications link with San Antonio. The infantrymen shuttled wagon and pack trains between Davis and the field, and kept the highly mobile cavalry units well supplied throughout.

On July 18 Grierson, at Fort Davis, received a message from Colonel Valle, commanding a force of 400 Mexican soldiers, that he had taken the field against Victorio, who was heading towards the Rio Grande and the abandoned Fort Quitman. Grierson promptly strengthened the subposts along the river--Viejo Pass, Eagle Springs,

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7. This section is drawn from Grierson's report, Sept. 20, 1880, in Report of the Secretary of War, 1880, 158-163. For operations of the Texas Rangers, see Gillette, Six Years a Texas Ranger; Webb, Texas Rangers, 390-406; and John L. Waller, "Colonel George Wythe Baylor," Southwestern Social Science Quarterly, XXIV, 1 (June, 1943), 23-35.

and Quitman--as well as the station at Pine Springs, in the Guadalupes to the north. By July 27 he was at Quitman, and the following day Colonel Valle's exhausted and very forlorn Mexican soldiers, destitute of almost all supplies, camped across the river. Valle had gotten in front of Victorio but had completely worn out his command trying to find him. Grierson gave the Mexicans a large quantity of food and forage, then set out to control his screen of troops. Now that the Mexicans were out of the way, he predicted that Victorio would make a dash for the Rio Grande.

The road to Eagle Springs crossed the Quitman Mountains at Quitman Pass, then dropped into Quitman Canyon. At a waterhole in the canyon, Tinaja de las Palmas, a courier from Capt. John C. Gilmore, commanding at Eagle Springs, met Grierson with word that Victorio had crossed the river, fired on two patrols, and was riding up Quitman Canyon. The Colonel's escort consisted of a lieutenant and six men in addition to his teenage son Robert, "who, just through school, was out in search of adventure and suddenly found it." Grierson knew that Victorio must stop, the next day, at Tinaja de las Palmas for water. That night, with his seven men and a boy, he fortified the waterhole and sat down to wait. At this time Victorio and his whole band were camped ten miles to the south.

Stagecoaches passed during the night, the drivers taking word to the subposts at Eagle Springs and Quitman to send reinforcements promptly. At four a.m. Lt. Leighton Finley and 15 cavalrymen reached

Grierson. Captain Gilmore had sent him to escort the Colonel to Eagle Springs. "As I had no thought of being escorted there, or anywhere else," Grierson later wrote, "I immediately sent two of these men back with peremptory orders that all available cavalry be at once sent to my support." Twenty-one men now held the water, and Captain Gilmore had no difficulty understanding what the Colonel wished.

At nine the next morning, July 30, Victorio and his warriors, some 150 strong, rode up the canyon. Seeing the troops strongly entrenched, they tried to bypass the waterhole to the east. At Grierson's order, Lieutenant Finley took ten men and charged. The Indians stopped to return the fire, and the two sides skirmished until ten o'clock.

At this juncture Capt. C. D. Viele and C Troop came charging down the road from Eagle Springs. The advance mistook Finley's men for Indians and opened fire, forcing the detachment to withdraw to the waterhole, pursued closely by a swarm of warriors. The rest turned to meet Viele's charge. Troop C and the hostiles exchanged fire for perhaps an hour. Then word came to the Indians that Capt. Nicholas Nolan and Troop A were advancing on the road from Quitman. Part of the warriors withdrew, and Viele joined Grierson. The rest tried once more to cross the road and break through to the north, but the cavalry cut them off and forced them back. At this moment Nolan's troop came on to the field and the Indians "fled in great haste and confusion toward the Rio Grande."

The fight had cost Victorio seven killed and a large number wounded. Grierson lost one man killed and Lt. R. S. Colladay wounded. Victorio pulled back across the river into Mexico, but Grierson knew that he would soon be back. He went to Eagle Springs to wait. Colonel Valle and his Mexicans were marching down the Rio Grande from Quitman. Grierson sent word that Victorio was back in Mexico. On receipt of this news, Valle turned around and marched in the opposite direction, away from the place where the hostiles had recrossed the river.

On August 2 Victorio crossed the river south of Ojo Caliente and collided with a cavalry patrol. Grierson took two troops and rode east to Bass Canyon, near present Van Horn, to intercept the Indians. They doubled back, however, and on August 4 slipped through the screen of soldiers and rode north on the west side of the forbidding Sierra Diablo range. Grierson found out at once. He raced north on the east side of the Sierra Diablo, marching 65 miles in 21 hours, and camped at Rattlesnake Springs. At two p.m. the next day, August 6, Victorio made his way down Rattlesnake Canyon towards the springs. There sat Grierson and Viele with C and G Troops, defying the Indians to take the water. Victorio tried, but at this fortuitous moment Capt. L. H. Carpenter with Troops B and H charged into the fight. The warriors scattered back into the canyon.

By four p.m. they had gathered in the mountains west of Rattlesnake Springs. To the southeast, about eight miles distant, they spied a string of wagons rounding a mountain spur and crawling on to the plain separating the Sierra Diablo from the Delaware Mountains. It was a provision train from Fort Davis guarded by Captain Gilmore and Company H of the 24th Infantry plus a detachment of cavalry. At once the Indians rode out of the mountains and attacked. Gilmore met them with a destructive volley, and Carpenter, sent by Grierson to help Gilmore, took them in the rear. The attackers fled in confusion to the southwest and lost themselves in the Carrizo Mountains.

Captain Lebo and K Troop reached Rattlesnake Springs during the afternoon of August 7. For four days he had been scouting the Sierra Diablo and Carrizo Mountains. On the third he picked up the trail of a small band of Apaches, probably from the Guadalupes, who had come down to the Sierra Diablo to join Victorio. He failed to overtake them, but captured and destroyed their camp, containing large quantities of provisions, high in the Sierra Diablo. The Indians fled to the Guadalupes and, on August 4, enjoyed a measure of revenge by ambushing Capt. William B. Kennedy and a detachment of cavalry out of the Pine Springs subpost. Kennedy lost one man killed but chased his attackers north into the Sacramento Mountains.

On August 8 Baylor and 15 Texas Rangers joined Grierson, who had now gathered in most of his command. He divided it into three squadrons of two troops each and set them to combing the mountains for sign of Victorio. Carpenter and Nolan picked up the trail on August 11, but their horses were too tired and thirsty for rapid pursuit.

At Quitman Canyon Victorio waylaid an east-bound stagecoach. The driver wheeled the coach and raced back for Fort Quitman, but the Indians overtook it and killed him and the passenger, General Bynum, former U. S. Marshal in Galveston. The bullet struck Bynum in the thigh "within an inch of the wound he received at Gettysburg," reported Ranger Captain Baylor. "We buried him (a mixed crowd of Confederates, citizens, and U. S. soldiers) and fired a couple of volleys over his grave."[8]

Nolan's men reached the Rio Grande on August 13. The hostiles had crossed the night before.

Grierson had not destroyed Victorio. But he had out-generaled the greatest of Apache leaders and, an accomplishment few others could boast, had prevented him from going where he wanted to go.

The End of Victorio

Victorio went back to the Candelaria Mountains. Grierson's command returned to the monotonous but exacting duty of patrolling

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8. Quoted from Baylor's report in Webb, Texas Rangers, 401.

the Rio Grande frontier. Troops from Arizona and New Mexico converged on the Mexican border from the west, and, with consent of the Mexican Government, an expedition under Col. George P. Buell rode into Chihuahua. With a large force of Mexican volunteers and Tarahumari Indian scouts, Col. Joaquin Terrazas had already mounted a campaign against Victorio. Throughout September 1880 the American and Mexican troops searched in vain for sign of the hostiles. Finally, in early October, they discovered a trail leading to the Tres Castillos Mountains. The enemy located, Terrazas blandly informed the Americans that he considered the presence of Capt. Charles Parker's Chiricahua Apache scouts objectionable, and requested all United States soldiers to withdraw from Mexican soil. They had no choice but to comply.

On October 14 Terrazas caught Victorio in his canyon stronghold. Either the crafty Apache had grown careless, or he had come to believe the old Apache saying that Mexicans were so harmless they could be killed with stones. The soldiers worked into rocky positions surrounding the Indian camp, and for a day and a night the adversaries waged a bitter and bloody battle. A Tarahumari sharpshooter dropped Victorio, abruptly ending the career of this remarkable leader who had terrorized New Mexico, Texas and Chihuahua for two years. His following was all but annihilated. Old Nana

and the survivors joined Geronimo in the Sierra Madre to carry on the traditions of Victorio for another five years.[9]

When Terrazas attacked the hostile stronghold, two parties of Victorio's followers were absent. One, numbering 35 to 50 warriors, attacked a picket outpost of 12 men of the Tenth Cavalry near Ojo Caliente, on the Rio Grande below Quitman, on October 29, killing a corporal and three privates. Capt. T. A. Baldwin went in pursuit but the warriors crossed the river and probably joined Nana.[10]

The second party--12 warriors, four women, and four children--also crossed into Texas. In Quitman Canyon early in January 1881 they stopped a stagecoach and killed the driver, Morgan, and a gambler named Crenshaw. Baylor's Texas Rangers took the trail. It twisted and turned through mountain and desert, but Baylor hung on. He was reinforced on January 24 by Lt. C. L. Nevill and a detachment of Rangers who had been stationed at Fort Davis operating against a gang of outlaws. On January 29 the Rangers finally found the hostile camp high in the Sierra Diablo. A dawn attack caught the

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9. Gillette, Six Years with the Texas Rangers, gives the most complete and probably most authentic account available. See also Wellman, Death on Horseback, 388-91; Cruse, Apache Days and After, Ch. 7; and M. L. Crimmins (ed.), "Colonel Buell's Expedition Into Mexico in 1880," New Mexico Historical Review, X, 2 (April, 1935), 133-42.

10. Sheridan, Record of Engagements, reprint in West Texas Historical Association Year Book, IX, 114.

Indians off guard. Before they could scatter, four warriors, two women, and two children had been killed. The rest of the men, most of them wounded, escaped. Following this last Indian fight in Texas, the Rangers sat down to a hearty breakfast in the abandoned camp. They enjoyed but little coffee, however, for during the battle an Apache had been shot in the waterhole and his blood made the water unfit to drink.[11]

Lieutenant Nevill returned to Fort Davis with a captive squaw and the two children. At the fort Hospital Steward and Mrs. Wesseck adopted the children, who remained with the family when Wesseck left the Army and went to work for the Mexican Central Railroad.[12] The squaw, quartered in a tent near the hospital, was the victim of a "cowardly and brutal murder" when on January 8, 1882, "party or parties unknown" buried an axe in her head.[13]

The Last Years of Fort Davis

At the height of the campaign against Victorio in the summer of 1880 General Ord had created the District of the Bravo out of the southern half of Grierson's District of the Pecos. The entire First Infantry had just arrived in Texas. This regiment Ord assigned to the new district and appointed its Colonel, William R. Shafter,

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11. Webb, Texas Rangers, 403-406; Waller, "George Wythe Baylor," 31-32.

12. Maj. Anson Mills to Adjt. Gen. Dept. of Texas, Fort Davis, Sept. 26, 1882, "Record of Fort Davis," Fort Davis Historical Society

13. Medical History of Fort Davis, Jan. 1882.

district commander. By the time Shafter reached Fort Davis, however, the Victorio campaign had ended. He once more took command of Fort Davis and stationed troops at a line of subposts along the Rio Grande from the mouth of the Pecos to Old Fort Quitman. They occupied themselves in patrolling the frontier to discourage remnants of Victorio's followers from entering the United States, built a new and much shorter road (route of present Highway 90) between San Antonio and Fort Davis, and protected construction parties of the Southern Pacific Railroad.[14]

The Texas Pacific and Southern Pacific destroyed the trans-Pecos frontier. Settlers and cattlemen arrived in increasing numbers. Indians no longer endangered the region. Outlaw gangs committed occasional robberies and murders, but these were the responsibility of the Texas Rangers. For its last decade as an active post, Fort Davis afforded its garrison a tranquil, routine existence of drill and instruction. Colonel Grierson spent a pleasant three years, 1881 to 1885, as post commander, occupying himself largely with his long campaign to win promotion to brigadier general. The railroads had both bypassed the fort, and its utility increasingly failed to justify its expense. In 1888 the

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14. Report of the Secretary of War, 1880, 10, 159; 1881, House Ex. Doc. No. 1, 47th Cong., 1st sess., 52-53, 128-129.

department commander, Brig. Gen. David S. Stanley, expressed the reluctant but growing conviction of the Army:

> A great deal of money has been spent on Fort Davis . . . and /the/ lease runs for thirty years yet. But the post is out of place, 24 miles from the Southern Pacific Railway and 70 from the Texas Pacific Railroad--too far from the Rio Grande River (100 miles) to be of use as a frontier post. Under the circumstances, it would be good policy and true economy to discontinue Fort Davis, . . .[15]

In July 1891 the order arrived. "Fort Davis had outlived its usefulness," wrote General Stanley, "and yet it is to be regretted that it was discontinued, owing to its salubrious climate and its usefulness as a government sanitary hospital, to which enfeebled soldiers could be sent."[16]

Across the road from Fort Davis a recently arrived cattleman was building his new home. He probably watched the two companies of the 23rd Infantry turn over the post to a caretaker and march down the road to Marfa, to entrain for Fort Bliss. Brig. Gen. Benjamin H. Grierson, U. S. Army Retired, had come back to Fort Davis to begin the life of a rancher.

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15. Report of the Secretary of War, 1888, House Ex. Doc. No. 1, 50th Cong., 2nd sess., 144.

16. Report of the Secretary of War, 1891, House Ex. Doc. No. 1, 52nd Cong., 1st sess., 156.

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Appendix I

DESCRIPTION OF BUILDINGS OF FORT DAVIS

To compile a definitive physical history of Fort Davis would require considerably more research, principally in records of the Quartermaster General in the National Archives, than was permitted for this study. The following description is based chiefly on material in the collections of the Fort Davis Historical Society. This material consists of copies of, and notes from, official records. It is not sufficiently complete to permit a detailed history and precise description of every building, and in cases yields conflicting evidence that cannot be reconciled. Especially should the dimensions of structures be used with caution until actual measurements have been made on the ground. Although drawn from admittedly inadequate evidence, this description may serve a useful purpose in the prosecution of any further field studies that are required.

Officers' Quarters

A row of 13 sets of officers' quarters, each separated from the next by 24 feet, stretched across the mouth of Hospital Canyon. Six had been completed by 1870, the remainder by 1883. The basic unit of each was a rectangular building 21 by 48 enclosing two rooms separated by a hall 12 by 18. A fireplace heated each room. Pitched roofs were shingled. Each house had a front porch. Counting from the south end, No's. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8 had limestone walls, the remainder adobe brick covered with plaster. In the center of the line, No. 7, stood the residence of the Commanding Officer. In addition to the basic unit, this house had a wing in the rear 18 1/2 by 62 containing two additional rooms. Between 1875 and 1883 another wing, 18 by 26 1/2 of one room, was built on the north side. No's. 2 and 5 were designed for captains, and had one-room stone wings 18 by 21 in the rear. Some of the quarters on the north half of the line also had wings of adobe added at the expense of the occupants. On the northern end of the line, No's. 11, 12, and 13, the last two-story, are not mentioned in available records but appear as completed structures on a map of 1883. Behind each set of quarters was a separate adobe building 17 by 28 housing the kitchen, and another the privy.

In an irregular line pointing northeast from the north end of officers' row were four two-story adobe residences and a one-story pine slab house. These, also, are not mentioned in the documents, nor are they shown on the 1883 map. They appear, however, on a

photograph dated 1885. They probably replaced structures listed in an 1883 report as assigned to the Ordnance Sergeant and Chief Musician, the Commissary Sergeant, the Quartermaster Sergeant, and the Landresses; and described by the inspecting officer as in very bad condition. According to a recent visitor to Fort Davis, who lived in one as a child in 1887, they were used as residences by either officers or noncommissioned officers as required.

Of these 18 structures only the pine slab building has disappeared. The other 17 have impressive reamains. In fact, most of them may be described as wrecked instead of ruined buildings. All of the stone houses are virtually intact except for roofs. Nos's 1, 2, and 3 have been rehabilitated and are used for tourist accommodations. No irreparable damage, however, has been done to their historic appearance. Three of the kitchens have been restored, though not authentically, and are also used for tourist accommodations.

Barracks

Across a 500-foot parade ground four barracks, each separated from the next by 30 feet, faced officers' row. Two were finished by 1870, the other two between 1875 and 1883. Each was 186 by 27, with adobe walls plastered inside and out, pitched shingle roof, and covered porch on four sides. A hall 27 by 12 separated two squadrooms 24 by 82 with 12-foot ceilings. A fireplace heated each squadroom, and ventilation came from four windows on either side and from a ventilator housed by a cupola 20 by 4 surmounting the roof. Each barrack was designed to quarter a company. The men slept on iron bedsteads with wooden slats and straw-filled mattresses.

The passageway separating the squadrooms led to an adjoining structure 86 by 27 that contained a messroom, 50 by 24, a kitchen, 20 by 24, and a storeroom, 10 by 24. Two hundred feet behind each barracks was a "large and commodious" sink, 12 by 18, built of adobe with tin roof and consisting of two rooms.

Between 1883 and 1885 three additional barracks were built. One was erected behind and at a right angle to the barrack on the south end of the line, another in the same relation to the barrack on the north end of the line. Available documents afford no information about these two. But judging from the 1885 photograph they were, with two exceptions, the same as the original four. The kitchen was placed at the end of the building so that the complete unit took the shape of the letter L instead of the letter T, and the ends of the barracks had no porches. The third additional

barrack was built north of the guardhouse. It is shown as proposed on the 1883 map and as completed on the 1885 photo. It was shaped thus: [

The two barracks fronting the parade ground on the south end of the line today have standing walls covered with patches of plaster and two of the original four chimneys, but the roofs have fallen in. The foundations of the two barracks on the north end of the line are visible but the walls are gone. A building that houses trading post and museum of the Fort Davis Historical Society has been built on the foundations of one-half (one squadroom) of one of these barracks. The foundations of the remaining three barracks are also visible, and one has fairly extensive adobe wall ruins.

Hospital

Completed in 1875 (see pp. 55-56), the hospital was 63 by 46, adobe with tin roof and stone corners. It housed 12 beds. On the north side was an adobe storehouse, on the south side a two-story house where the Hospital Steward lived. The three structures were located in Hospital Canyon behind officers' row. No further details have been found. There are extensive ruins of all three of these buildings.

Chapel and School

Fronting the parade ground on the north, this adobe building measured 30 by 65, contained three rooms, and was roofed with shingles. It was built before 1883. Only one wall, partially plastered, is still standing.

Executive Offices

Located just east of the chapel, this structure was of adobe and enclosed three rooms 15 by 18 each, one for the Commanding Officer, one for the Adjutant, and one for the Sergeant Major. It had been built by 1873, when gutted by fire, and was repaired before 1875. Only the foundations remain today.

Guardhouse

This was an adobe building 68 by 18 1/2 with covered front porch. It contained four rooms for the guard and eight cells for prisoners. Newly completed in 1883, it stood on the northeast corner of the parade ground and replaced an earlier guardhouse that fronted the parade ground on the south. Only the foundations remain.

Bakery

The first bakery, 40 by 16, was built in 1871 south of the old commissary near the spring. By 1883 it had been replaced by a new bakery, a one-room adobe building 30 by 46 with tin roof located behind the new guardhouse. Its one oven had a capacity of 600 loaves a day. Only the foundations remain.

Commissary Storehouse and Office

The old commissary office and storehouse, south of the corrals, were finished in 1870. The warehouse was 28 1/2 by 104, adobe with shingle roof, and containing three rooms. The office was adobe with mud roof 20 by 38. There are no remains of these buildings above ground. By 1885, a new adobe commissary had been built northeast of the parade ground and east of the bakery. It was adobe, 105 by 27 1/2, and contained office and warehoom. The office part of this building is in exceptionally good condition, with roof intact and few repairs needed. The foundations of the warehouse part outline the remainder of the building.

Quartermaster Office and Warehouse

South of the old commissary warehouse stood the old Quartermaster storehouse and office, dimensions unknown. It was adobe with mud roof and contained nine rooms. Another warehouse, 110 by 27, stood north of the corrals. A new warehouse, 120 by 33, adobe with four rooms and corrugated iron roof, was completed in 1883 parallel to the earlier warehouse north of the corrals. There are no reamins above ground of the Quartermaster buildings south of the corrals. Of the two north of the corrals, one is still standing, with roof intact and in exceptionally good condition. Stone foundations outline the other.

Quartermaster and Cavalry Corrals

The Quartermaster corral was 245 by 300. A stable 448 by 15 formed the west side. A grain shed 18 by 135 lay perpendicular to the stables inside the corral. The cavalry corral, to the south, measured 347 by 465 and had two stables 504 by 15 as well as two workshops 75 by 28 for blacksmith and farrier. (Building inspection reports of 1883 and 1887 conflict with each other and with the 1883 map and 1885 photo, which themselves conflict. The above appears to be the best reconciliation of the evidence.)

One of the adobe shops is still standing and there are some foundation remains of the cavalry corral. A riding horse concession now occupies the site of the Quartermaster corral.

Sutler's Store and Telegraph Office

These buildings, three in number, were located on the south end of the parade ground slightly elevated by the base of Sleeping Lion Mountain. They are shown on the 1883 map and the 1885 photo, but no other information is now available. In the photograph they appear to be constructed of adobe.

Magazine

A stone building 13 by 11, it was located on a slope behind the hospital. The walls are still standing.

Cemetery

There were three cemeteries. The one that served the first fort was in the canyon immediately behind the officers' quarters of the second fort. In 1872 it contained about 12 unidentified bodies. The second cemetery, used from 1867 to 1872, was one-half mile southwest of the fort and is now a lost site. In 1872 the third cemetery was established about 300 yards north of the parade ground. The soldiers have all been removed from this cemetery, but still interred here is "Indian Emily," the Apache whom local tradition credits with saving the fort from a surprise attack. The grave is marked by a Texas Centennial monument.

Water System

From 1867 to 1875 water for all purposes was hauled in wagons from Limpia Creek. From 1875 to 1883 the spring southeast of the corrals supplied the water. There is a stone reservoir, now dry, at the site of the spring. When it was built is not known. In 1883 a water system was installed, and water pumped from the Limpia through pipes to hydrants spotted throughout the fort. The stone ruins of a reservoir and pump house are still standing on the south side of Highway 118 north of the fort.